



America's 10 Coolest Small Towns

From Budget Travel: A little bit hip and a little bit homey, these up-and-coming towns guarantee a fun detour on your next road trip. You'll be browsing the local real estate pages before you know it.

Newsweek

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Aug. 24, 2007 - **Collinsville, Conn.**

Population: 2,686

Nearest City: Hartford, 15 miles

Named for the family that owned the local ax factory, Collinsville is beginning to show a different sort of edge. "It's been attracting more and more young people," says Scott Juhl, a college student who works summers at the Collinsville Baking Co. (41 Bridge St., 860/693-4050). "They've staged an outdoor drumming circle on Main Street." The town is on the Farmington River, and Collinsville Canoe & Kayak is the largest specialty canoe and kayak store in New England (41 Bridge St., 860/693-6977, cckstore.com). A rail trail also runs through town, and the depot is now a pub, the Crown & Hammer, where acoustic musicians come by to play (3 Depot St., 860/693-9199, crownandhammer.com, burger \$8.50). At LaSalle Market & Deli, after orders get written up, they're flown by zip line across the restaurant (104 Main St., 860/693-8010, lasallemarket.com). Meanwhile, even more development is under way in Collinsville: The old ax factory is now being converted into riverside apartments and commercial lofts.

—*Christopher Percy Collier*

Milford, Pa.

Population: 1,292

Nearest City: New York, 71 miles

A resort town since the Gilded Age, Milford is popular with newcomers interested in its Victorian houses. Sean Strub (a direct-mail and publishing entrepreneur who moved here in 1997) and retired executive Richard Snyder spearheaded the town beautification effort, launched Milford Magazine, and in 2001 bought the 1880s-era Hotel Fauchère. Five years and \$6.5 million later, it reopened with heated slate bathroom floors, Frette sheets, and a price point that's ritzy for such a small town, not to mention Budget Travel (401 Broad St., 570/409-1212, hotelfauchere.com, from \$275). The 70,000-acre Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area is nearby (nps.gov/dewa); buy picnic supplies at Fretta's (223 Broad St., 570/296-7863). Kitchen and bath designer Derek Roberts moved to Milford in 1991. "My mountain bike is well used," he says. "After work, I like to go swimming in a waterfall." He has become such a civic booster that he began organizing Fluviarchy dance parties—named for the network of waterfalls—at The Emerson House (call the Fauchère for info). "Find me for free-drink tickets," he says.

—*Drew Limsky*

Millerton, N.Y.

Population: 925

Nearest City: New York, 103 miles

There's no such thing as a straightforward stroll down Millerton's Main Street, even if it is only a couple of blocks long. Inevitably, you're tempted to pop into one shop, zigzag over to another, or grab a latte and a scone at Irving Farm Coffee House, an offshoot of a Manhattan café (44 Main St., 518/789-6540, irvingfarm.com). The Dutchess County village lies within 30 minutes of prime second-home destinations, yet Millerton has remained affordable and unpretentious. "This town feels very real," says Susan Schneider, who moved her business, Shandell's, which sells vintage and new lamps, from Connecticut to Millerton in 2004 (34 Main St., 518/789-6603, shandells.com). In 2005, Robin Helfand, a former manager of New York City's Dean & DeLuca, opened a specialty food store, Millerton Market (21 Main St., 518/789-6677), and this past spring she launched another enterprise, Millerton Card & Candy Co. (28 Main St., 518/789-8669). Helfand credits Millerton's growing appeal to its old-fashioned Main Street: "It's full of independent businesses instead of chain stores," she says, "so you see products that reflect what the community really wants."

—*Shax Riegler*

Parkville, Mo.

Population: 4,059

Nearest City: Kansas City, Mo., 10 miles

As Jennifer Stanton is telling how she ditched her corporate job in 2003 to open Wines by Jennifer in a circa-1903 house, the

Park University clock tower chimes: "That's my mantra to remind me to slow down and enjoy life," she says (405 Main St., 816/505-9463, winesbyjennifer.com). On Wednesday's Diva Night at Jeff and Lynn Anderson's River Rock Reserve, ladies enjoy fun stuff like free neck massages with their River Bottom cocktails; by day, the space reverts to a café (6325 Lewis St., 816/505-3663, riverrockcoffee.com). "We're just 10 minutes from downtown Kansas City," says Jeff, "but I feel like any minute someone's going to ask me to help with a barn raising." Didier Combe, the proprietor of Café des Amis, thinks Parkville is like a village in his native France: "After the last dinner is served, we often sit on the deck with friends and guests" (112½ Main St., 816/587-6767, cafedesamiskc.com, rack of lamb \$26). Over at The Power Plant Restaurant and Brewery, Angelo Gangai gives his beers historical monikers like Southbound Nut Brown, named after the trains that roll past (2 Main St., 816/746-5051, powerplantbrews.com). One caramely ale, Steamboat Stout, makes a dandy float when poured over vanilla gelato from The Sweet Guy (10 Main St., 816/505-2788, thesweetguy.com). At Bentley Guitar Studios, Mark Bentley has been teaching folks—and now their kids—guitar for nearly a decade (122 S. Main St., 816/746-9772, bentleyguitars.com). The Saturday jam sessions here have become so popular, they've taken over the sidewalk.

—Katie Van Luchene

Paia, Hawaii

Population: 2,499

Nearest City: Kahului, 8 miles

Paia is where Mauians go to relax. On the east side of the island, 15 minutes from Kahului, the town has maintained not just a mellow vibe but also many of its plantation-style wooden buildings. Lucinda Eddins likes Paia so much that she opened her latest beachwear store here. At Love the Beach, the most popular custom swimsuit is the "itty-bitty string with the little Brazilian bottom" for about \$100 (2 Baldwin Ave., 808/579-8044). Another chic shop is Bahama Mama (62 Baldwin Ave., 808/579-8188). A mile from town, the six-bedroom Kuau Inn is a 10-minute walk to Hookipa, a world-class windsurfing beach (676 Hana Hwy., 808/579-6046, kuauinn.com, from \$100). On the other hand, the surf and currents are gentle at Baby Beach, at the north end of Paia Bay. The Flatbread Company, which opened last November, makes pizza with organic produce and nitrate-free meats (89 Hana Hwy., 808/579-8989). One of the newest attractions in town is the Great Paia Lha Bab Peace Stupa shrine at the Maui Dharma Center, which hosts meditation sessions and similar events (81 Baldwin Ave., 808/579-8076, mauidharmacenter.org). The Dalai Lama blessed the shrine when he visited Maui this year.

—Tim Ryan

Peterborough, N.H.

Population: 5,883

Nearest City: Boston, 73 miles

Not too many small towns are home to two theater groups, or, for that matter, The MacDowell Colony, the country's oldest artists retreat. "There's a cool blend of artists and regular folks here, but there's no attitude," says Dave Chicane, a chef late of Cambridge, Mass., and now at Peterborough's Pearl Restaurant & Oyster Bar (1 Jaffrey Rd., 603/924-5225, scallops \$18). In 2003, Dave Szehi saw the community spirit firsthand when neighbors helped him renovate and expand Harlow's Pub (3 School St., 603/924-6365, harlowspub.com). Nearby, gourmet market Twelve Pine, inside a refurbished railroad warehouse, makes its own gelato (11 School St., 603/924-6140, twelvepine.com). In the summer, there are music jams in the park, pickup dodgeball games, and movies that kids can watch while floating in the community pool. Outdoors lovers know Peterborough because Eastern Mountain Sports is headquartered here, and accordingly, every other car has a kayak on top. EMS's flagship store is at 1 Vose Farm Road. (603/924-7231, ems.com).

—Melinda Page

Silver City, N.M.

Population: 10,545

Nearest City: El Paso, Tex., 154 miles

In New Mexico's southwest corner, Silver City isn't the kind of place people just stumble onto. Silver miners sought it out in the late 1800s, and more recently the town's Old-West charm and high-desert location made it a magnet for outdoorsy and creative types. The historic district is home to casual restaurants, like Nancy's Silver Café, that put the area's green chiles to good use (514 N. Bullard St., 505/388-3480, huevos rancheros \$7). Outside town, The Nature Conservancy runs Bear Mountain Lodge, a hacienda adjacent to birding, biking, and hiking opportunities in the Gila National Forest (505/538-2538, bearmountainlodge.com, from \$125). "You can choose the pace at which you want to live," says Jess Gorell, an artist and filmmaker who relocated from L.A. four years ago and teaches at The Bakshi School of Animation and Cartooning (109 N. Bullard St., 505/534-9291, thebakshischool.com), around the corner from the adobe galleries on Yankie and Texas Streets.

—Maria Finn

Tuscumbia, Ala.

Population: 7,856

Nearest City: Birmingham, 113 miles

"At first I wasn't sure I could make a living here," says photographer and designer Robert Rausch; the area native moved back in 2001. "But every week I was meeting another incredible person." Rausch opened Stellar Idea, a design firm, and GAS Studios, one of several galleries that host an artists' monthly open house on a rotating basis (109-A W. Sixth St., 256/383-7183). Tuscumbia boomed as a rail center starting in the mid-1800s but declined after World War II; as with many towns, sprawl diverted life away from the old downtown. Around 2000, Harvey Robbins, who made millions in flooring and plastics and hated to see his hometown suffer, began buying buildings, including the one now housing The Palace Ice Cream and Sandwich Shop (100 S. Main St., 256/386-8210, Harvey's milkshake \$3.50), and others that he rents to artists and small-business owners. Robbins also built the ColdWater Inn (712 Hwy. 72W, 256/383-6844, coldwater-inn.com <<http://www.coldwater-inn.com>>, from \$89), and funded a renovation of the 10-acre Spring Park, where there's an occasional 51-jet fountain show. "Just like any town, we've had our history, both good and bad," says Robbins. "What matters is how you end up in the end."
—Anne Kristoff

Waitsburg, Wash.

Population: 1,212

Nearest City: Walla Walla, 21 miles

Ross Stevenson and Leroy Cunningham settled in Waitsburg six years ago, in search of a quieter lifestyle. With two partners, they opened the Whoopemup Hollow Café in 2005. The Whoop, as it's known, dishes up jambalaya and Coca-Cola cake to wheat farmers and wine snobs alike (120 Main St., 509/337-9000, jambalaya \$19). Just across the street, Jim German recently opened Jimgermanbar, which specializes in classic cocktails and small plates (119 Main St., 509/337-6001). His wife, Claire Johnston-German, owns the AMO Art gallery next door (117 Main St., 509/876-1264, amo-art.com). Summers in Waitsburg can get hot, and the Laht Neppur Brewing Co. is the place to cool down (444 Preston Ave., 509/337-6261). After savoring a flight of eight mini pours, head over to the Monteillet Fromagerie, where the cheeses are made with milk from free-range goats and sheep (109 Ward Rd., 509/382-1917). Monteillet's sheep's-milk gelato is a revelation.

—Paul Gregutt

Yachats, Ore.

Population: 617

Nearest City: Eugene, 86 miles

In 2005, Dave Thomas and Deb Gisetto left Vermont for Oregon and soon found themselves awestruck by the scenery around Yachats (yah-hots). "It was just unbelievably beautiful," recalls Thomas. "And the people were possibly the most friendly in the country." Thomas and Gisetto put down roots by opening Green Salmon Bakery & Coffee House (220 Hwy. 101, 541/547-3077). Yachats also has cute shops, like Raindogs (162 Beach St., 541/547-3000, raindogsonline.com), and a deli called Grand Occasions where you can watch the sea roll in while you eat pie made with blackberries, strawberries, or whatever's in season (84 Beach St., 541/547-4409). After staying in a Shamrock Lodgettes beachfront cabin, you may move to Oregon, too (105 Hwy. 101, 800/845-5028, shamrocklodgettes.com, cabins from \$99).

—Colin Lingle

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