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THE BEST

THE TOP 10 CITIES FOR HISPANICS

FROM COAST TO COAST, WE LOOKED FOR CITIES THAT

showcase the lifestyle we want to live—surrounded by Latino representation, where Hispanic culture is woven into the fabric of daily life, where education and going green are priorities, and with a sense of physical and economic security. In these urban spaces, the Hispanic population is thriving, unemployment is low to average, the cost of living is manageable, Latinos are an active part of city leadership, environmental issues are on the city agenda, resources for Hispanic entrepreneurs are available, and the arts, media and cultural institutions serve the community. From the 100 largest cities in the country, we can argue that these metropolises come closest to fulfilling our wish list. In our annual feature, here we bring you the best places of 2009.

- Rebel With A Crew
Robert Rodriguez likes to challenge conventional wisdom when it comes to making films. He's teaching the next generation—his own kids—to do the same.
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- Design by the Numbers
Designer Wanda Colón, host of TLC's Home Made Simple, shares six simple tricks to update your surroundings, even in a tough economy.
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- Art Works
Latinos bring passion and a whole new perspective to the world of art. Meet four artist who are making an impact today.
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- Top 10 Cities for Latinos
While many factors can make a city a desirable place to live, but some towns offer Hispanics more opportunities and comforts than others.
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- The Achievers
Our Hispanic Achievers come from many walks of life, but they all hold something in common: devotion to excellence and commitment to their community.
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albuquerque

Frequently named to various "Best City" lists, (among its honors include being a smart city, good for young people, good for dogs, good for corporate offices, good for business) its most recent honor was by U.S. News and World Report, which dubbed it one of the Top 10 Places to Live in the U.S. Led by Mayor Martin J. Chavez, now in his third term, the city is one of a growing number of metropolises led by or led in part by Hispanic officials. And it's a good representation of the dynamic population—nearly half of the city's residents are Hispanic. It's evident in the leading Hispanic organizations that call the city home, such as the National Hispanic Cultural Center, the Hispano Chamber of Commerce, a Latino film festival and more. An easy climate, good home prices and low unemployment help make residence a joy.

austin

With its world-class academic, scientific and artistic communities, there is a lot to admire in this Texas capital. As the home of the University of Texas at Austin, the city attracts scholars from all over the world to take part in ground-breaking work in everything from astronomy to filmmaking. As the Live Music Capital of the World, Austin has developed a reputation as a mecca for musicians—who sing in English, Spanish and more. It's also home to a renowned Latino theater company. A lower than average cost of living, relatively low unemployment rate, manageable home prices and a health-wise and environmentally conscientious lifestyle add to the appeal.

dallas

The business of booming is doing just that in Big Dallas. As major cities worry about their bottom line and see residents leave for other locales, Dallas has experienced new growth—in fact, it's the second-fastest growing area in the U.S. Latinos represent nearly 60 percent of that, boasting a \$20 billion economic heft. Almost 13 percent of businesses are owned by Hispanics, much to the pride of the multi-award winning Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. As commerce grows, the city is attempting to keep its environmental impact in check. One of its new efforts includes increasing public transportation.

houston

The recent winner of a \$700,000 grant to help improve the city's air quality, Denver plans to give some of its vehicles a green makeover. It's another positive step the eco-conscious area is making to protect its moderate climate and picturesque natural landscapes. In addition to its sustainability programs, Greenprint Denver tracks the city's road to greener pastures. The city is also serious about representing its big Latino population. Denver's Latino Commission serves as a mayoral advisory board with its ear to the Hispanic community. It's a vibrant community at that, boasting numerous organizations such as the Museo de las Americas, the Latino Community Foundation of Colorado, the Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and more.

denver

With the positive changes the city is making, it seems Houston is taking stock. It is maintaining its status as the Energy Capital of the World, but also giving traditionally green cities a run for their money. In 2008, Houston was the country's top green power buyer, with about a fourth of that from wind energy. With one of the lowest costs of living for a major city, it's a great place to live economically, healthfully and environmentally.

miami

Its location and year-round balmy weather make Miami a great vacation spot as well as the gateway to Latin America. As a result its enormous Hispanic community (nearly 70 percent of the population) it is a dynamic area, representing many generations of Latinos from all over. Numerous media outlets, arts organizations, business associations and civic commissions serve the community. Few cities have as many active Latino city leaders as Miami, where both the city and county mayor are Hispanic. Although there are plenty of pluses to the Magic City, home prices are not as low as other locales listed.

phoenix

The weather's not the only thing that's sizzling in Phoenix. Home to a very active Latino community, some of the country's premier organizations call the city home, including the Hispanic Women's Conference, the National Catholic Conference for Hispanic Ministry and the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics. The desert locale makes the city very water and environmentally conscious. Phoenix also boasts relatively low housing, healthcare and utilities costs for such a large city.

san diego

Things are a bit more expensive in San Diego. With the highest cost of living of any city listed, residents can take heart that labor, too, is more expensive. Here workers earn higher wages. And the business minded find support in the impressive San Diego Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The active business community is matched by the vibrant arts scene, where the San Diego Latino Film Festival plays prominent. Plus the city boasts a number of Hispanic and Spanish-language media outlets. In terms of its environmental efforts, San Diego scores high marks for good public transportation and city planning.

san antonio

With the lowest unemployment rate of any city listed and one of the lowest costs of living, San Antonians have it made. People are taking notice, as today it's the fifth fastest growing city in the country. Its Hispanic community is well-known as the pulse of the cultural arena. With Hispanic landmarks, celebrations and arts woven into the tapestry of the city one could argue that San Antonio wouldn't be San Antonio without its strong Latino core. It's not dissimilar in the political world as well. With his recent election, Mayor Julian Castro joined the few Hispanic mayors in the country, and at 34, became the nation's youngest of a major American city. It seems fitting considering this was the first major American city to elect a Mexican American mayor—Henry Cisneros in 1981.

tucson

Tucson values its Hispanic heritage. An innovative Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and many Hispanic organizations keep the community active, although the city could use more Hispanic and Spanish-language media. Old style Spanish architecture is still stands today and the local culture is Mexican, Spanish, Western, Native American and European, all a vital part of the city's mix. So, too, is an appreciation for the outdoors. Tucson is often named to healthy cities lists (and to best places to live lists, good jobs lists, good food lists and more). Careful energy and water usage are big concerns. As a Solar America City, Tucson plans to install seven solar-electric projects by year's end. The city also boasts a citizen-driven Office of Conservation and Sustainable Development.

{honorable mentions}

Although we could only name our ten best, there are many cities throughout the country that boast dynamic Latino communities and otherwise lead the pack.

New York City:

Although a high cost of living makes residing in the Big Apple costly, it is home to one of, if not the most diverse Latino communities in the world. Residents from all over South and Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean reside here.

El Paso:

An enormous Mexican American population means that Hispanic culture is alive and well in this border city. Hispanics have successfully made their way into every cultural and civic arena, and head up major local organizations.

Washington, D.C.:

The nation's capital is the site of many national Hispanic organizations and the seat of progressive Latino policy development.

San Jose:

Home to the Latino Community Foundation, an organization as thriving as the community it serves, San Jose can take pride in its many attributes. The site of the National Hispanic University boasts a mild climate, a new focus on sustainability and large Hispanic population.

Chicago:

The only thing keeping the Second City off the top 10 list, where it is often named, was a slightly higher unemployment rate for the period evaluated. Otherwise, the diverse Latino community makes Chicago a definite contender for an excellent home.