

Best Places to Live 2016

By **The Editors** / Men's Journal



The Sophisticated Southern Gem Everyone Is Flocking To

Greenville, South Carolina

Pedaling along the quiet, sun-dappled **Swamp Rabbit Trail**, or enjoying a quiet moment near the floating suspension bridge in Falls Park, you'd never know that you're standing in the very center of the New South. But Greenville, set in the southern foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, is at a kind of nexus of multinational industry: Fluor, Lockheed Martin, Michelin, and GE all have major facilities here, and BMW employs 10,000 at an operation that's the company's most productive worldwide. No wonder Greenville has one of the lowest unemployment rates in South Carolina.

Despite the business bustle, Greenville has managed to avoid the growing pains that plague similar boomtowns — sprawl, traffic, and soaring housing costs. As a result, the city is as hospitable to merchants and artisans as it is to the corporate set. An old-fashioned downtown sports live-work spaces and a sushi-to-Southern culinary scene that's beginning to rival that of Charleston's. And getting away from it all is just as easy as diving in. There is SUP at Saluda Lake and pedaling or hiking to be had in **Pisgah National Forest**, both an easy drive away. "You can go south, and ride relatively flat, or you can go north, toward tons of climbs on quiet country roads," says famed cycling pro George Hincapie, who owns **Domestique**, a boutique hotel north of town. "I can leave my house and not hit a stoplight for five hours."

My Town: *Mike Okupinski, 39, co-owner of the Community Tap*

"I moved to Greenville in 2000 and was immediately won over by the town's charm. I worked in government but always had a side job as a bartender because I love talking to people. And in Greenville they're positive, intelligent, and welcoming.

"Now I live in a beautiful house near Main Street with my wife and two kids, and co-own the Community Tap, a beer-and-wine store and taproom. There's a lot of opportunity for small-business owners here. You don't find the big-box, big-name stores. It's a lot of locally owned shops. The beauty of Greenville is that the cycling and mountain biking around here is phenomenal. I spend as much time as I can biking or trail running in Paris Mountain, a beautiful state park less than 10 minutes from downtown. Depending on the time of year, I can do a two-and-a-half-hour ride if I get out of work at 5:30."

Greenville by the numbers:

- Population: 62,252
- Median Home Price: \$143,000
- Unemployment Rate: 4.3%
- Cost of Living (relative to U.S. Median): -6.8%
- Median Income: \$44,783
- Average Annual Temperature: 61 Degrees

Credit: Daniela Duncan / Getty Images