

# Greetings from **THE 'BURBS'**

*Laid-back city hamlets are becoming lively tourist destinations*

BY MATT ALDERTON

**F**or city dwellers, suburb shaming is a favorite pastime. Cities, they boast, are alive with diverse people, cultures and cuisines; flush with interesting art and architecture; and superior in everything from transit and technology to entertainment and employment. Suburbs, on the other hand, are sleepy. Instead of museums and nightlife,

urbanites jest, they have cul-de-sacs and big-box shopping. And don't get them started on strip malls.

But suburbs might get the last laugh: A 2018 analysis of U.S. population data by the Brookings Institution found that suburbs — which have a reputation for being safer, more spacious and more affordable — are growing faster than cities.

“What I and others previously heralded as

the ‘decade of the city’ may be less valid during the waning years of the 2010s,” Brookings demographer William H. Frey wrote in his analysis. “The trend seems to be shifting toward a renewed suburban advantage.”

If bedroom communities are such great places to live, one has to wonder: Are they also great places to visit? See for yourself by spending a weekend in one of these chic suburbs:



Evanston shoreline

## EVANSTON

Its coordinates north of Chicago and south of its northernmost suburbs makes Evanston the meat in a city-suburb sandwich. Because it's connected to Chicago via the city's elevated L train, Gina Speckman, executive director of Chicago's North Shore Convention & Visitors Bureau, says visitors can spend the day "in the hustle and bustle of the city" and the evening "walking along Lake Michigan and beautiful tree-lined streets."

**Evanston is located 20 miles north of Chicago.**

Some of those streets lead to Evanston's six beaches and others to **Northwestern University** ([northwestern.edu](http://northwestern.edu)), where noteworthy attractions include the stimulating **Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art** and the tranquil Shakespeare Garden.

Speckman's favorite eateries include **Next of Kin Restaurant** ([nextofkin.restaurant](http://nextofkin.restaurant)) for "artful American" cuisine and **Smylie Brothers Brewing Co.** ([smyliebros.com](http://smyliebros.com)) for beer and barbecue.

History buffs will enjoy the **Frances Willard House Museum and Archives** ([franceswillardhouse.org](http://franceswillardhouse.org)), home of women's suffragist Frances Willard, while connoisseurs of quirk will adore the **American Toby Jug Museum** ([tobyjugmuseum.com](http://tobyjugmuseum.com)), home to the world's largest collection of character-shaped ceramics.

As for lodging, Speckman recommends the **Margarita European Inn** ([www.margaritainn.com](http://www.margaritainn.com)), which once was a boarding house for working women.



ILLINOIS



Lakefront beach



Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art



# THE 'BURBS



DISCOVER GLENDALE GETTY IMAGES DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL



ARIZONA



## GILBERT

For much of its history, Gilbert was covered in alfalfa fields that exported hay all over the globe, earning it the moniker “Hay Capital of the World.” These days, however, tourism is what’s growing in Gilbert, according to Glenn Schlottman, the town’s tourism administrator. “Within the last 10 years our downtown has really grown up,” he says. “Because of that, we’re seeing increased visitation.”

Gilbert’s burgeoning downtown is known for its restaurants, which are as friendly to families as they are to foodies. Schlottman’s favorite spots include **Nico Heirloom Kitchen** ([nicoaz.com](http://nicoaz.com)) for a West Coast take on upscale Italian food, **Joe’s Real BBQ** ([joesrealbbq.com](http://joesrealbbq.com)) for sweet and spicy barbecue, **Arizona Wilderness Brewing Co.** ([azwbeer.com](http://azwbeer.com)) for creative brewpub cuisine, and **Liberty Market** ([libertymarket.com](http://libertymarket.com)) in a historic former grocery store.

Its pool makes the **DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Phoenix–Gilbert** a favorite for lodging, although the town’s most beloved water resource is the Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch, which offers hiking trails, fishing and wildlife viewing.

Don’t leave without seeing **Agritopia** ([agritopia.com](http://agritopia.com)), a live-eat-play community whose centerpiece is an 11-acre urban farm that offers U-picks and farm tours. A modern take on Gilbert’s agricultural past, it’s home to **Joe’s Farm Grill** ([joesfarmgrill.com](http://joesfarmgrill.com)), a restaurant utilizing home-grown ingredients, and **Barnone** ([barnoneaz.com](http://barnoneaz.com)), a maker’s marketplace where artisans sell their wares.



DoubleTree Hotel



# THE 'BURBS

## SUBURBAN STANDOUTS

These communities may be sweet, but they're definitely not cookie-cutter.



### Golden

15 miles from Denver

Perched in the foothills west of Denver with a Rocky Mountains backdrop, Golden is home to the Colorado School of Mines and Coors Brewing Company. Golden borrows from both, feeling like a small mountain town, but more cosmopolitan.

**Stay:** The solar-powered **Golden Hotel** ([thegoldenhotel.com](http://thegoldenhotel.com)) is historic and sustainable.

**Eat:** Try **Abejas** ([abejasgolden.com](http://abejasgolden.com)) or **Woody's Wood Fired Pizza** ([woodysgolden.com](http://woodysgolden.com)).

**Play:** A tour of the **Coors Brewery** ([millercoors.com](http://millercoors.com)) — the world's largest brewery — is a must. To taste the Old West instead, check out the **Colorado Railroad Museum** ([coloradorailroadmuseum.org](http://coloradorailroadmuseum.org)) and the **Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave** ([buffalobill.org](http://buffalobill.org)).



### Round Rock

19 miles from Austin

Known for its Depression-era water tower, this Texas city is named for an actual "round rock" in the middle of Brushy Creek. It's Silicon-Valley vibe is thanks to companies like Dell, but its cowtown roots remain.

**Stay:** The new **Ruby Hotel** ([therubyhotel.com](http://therubyhotel.com)) is Round Rock's first boutique hotel.

**Eat:** Try **Greenhouse Craft Food** ([greenhousecraftfood.com](http://greenhousecraftfood.com)) or **Fuego Latino Gastro-pub** ([fuegolatinogastropub.com](http://fuegolatinogastropub.com)).

**Play:** Stop by **Dell Diamond** to watch the Round Rock Express or the Austin Elite, which play minor league baseball and major league rugby, respectively. Try your hand at fly-fishing at **Brushy Creek**, or cool down at **Rock'N River Water Park**.



### Bellevue

9 miles from Seattle

Although it's a corporate hub — Microsoft, Amazon, Boeing, Facebook and Nintendo are a few companies with offices there — every day is "casual Friday" in Bellevue, Wash.

**Stay:** The **W Bellevue** ([whotelbellevue.com](http://whotelbellevue.com)) is the kind of hip hotel you expect to find downtown.

**Eat:** Try **The Lakehouse** ([thelakehousebellevue.com](http://thelakehousebellevue.com)) or **John Howie Steak** ([johnhowiesteak.com](http://johnhowiesteak.com)).

**Play:** If it's raining, head to the **Bellevue Arts Museum** ([bellevuearts.org](http://bellevuearts.org)). If it's not, try kayaking on lakes Washington and Sammamish, zip lining at **Bellevue Zip Tour** ([bellevuezip.tour.com](http://bellevuezip.tour.com)), or imbibing in nearby **Woodinville Wine Country** ([woodinvillewinecountry.com](http://woodinvillewinecountry.com)).

VISIT GOLDEN; ROUND ROCK CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU; ANDY WELLS/VISIT BELLEVUE WASHINGTON



NEW JERSEY



Norwegian Benedict at Raymond's Restaurant

## MONTCLAIR

Montclair has everything people love about New York City — diversity, walkability, character, culture — and none of what they loathe — congestion, noise and high prices. “Our community captures the flavor of a suburb with a dash of city living,” says Mayor Robert Jackson.

One of the community’s greatest assets is its art, Jackson says.

Highlights include New Jersey’s first art museum, the 105-year-old **Montclair Art Museum** ([montclairartmuseum.org](http://montclairartmuseum.org)), renowned for its collection of Native American art; and the fledgling **Montclair Orchestra** ([montclairorchestra.org](http://montclairorchestra.org)), which will commence its third season this fall.

**Montclair is located 20 miles west of Manhattan.**

Although Montclair doesn’t feel like Manhattan, it tastes like it, thanks to the **Montclair Farmers’ Market** ([montclairfarmersmarket.org](http://montclairfarmersmarket.org)) and more than 120 diverse restaurants, including Italian gem **Fascino** ([fascinorestaurant.com](http://fascinorestaurant.com)), breakfast go-to **Raymond’s Restaurant** ([raymondsnj.com](http://raymondsnj.com)) and upscale bistro **Turtle + the Wolf** ([turtleandthewolf.com](http://turtleandthewolf.com)), whose chef/owner, Lauren Hirschberg, was culinary director at the restaurants of celebrity chef Tom Colicchio.

The best place to retire after your meal, Jackson says, is **The George** ([thegeorgemontclair.com](http://thegeorgemontclair.com)), a boutique hotel opened in 2018 by celebrity makeup artist and longtime Montclair resident Bobbi Brown.



The George hotel



Montclair Orchestra

RAYMOND'S RESTAURANT; GETTY IMAGES; THE (BERGEN COUNTY, N.J.) RECORD (2)

