

resonance

2024

Europe's Best Cities Report

100 European Cities
Shaping Tomorrow
The definitive place
power rankings

[WORLDBESTCITIES.COM](https://www.worldsbestcities.com)

Empowering Places



Resonance creates transformative strategies, brands and campaigns that help destinations, cities and communities attract talent, tourism and investment.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT • ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT • URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[RESONANCECO.COM](https://resonanceco.com)

resonance

Welcome to Europe's Best Cities in 2024

Resonance Consultancy is building the most comprehensive global and regional city rankings on the planet. Here's why this matters now more than ever as Europe—and the world—adapts to a new post-pandemic reality.



Chris Fair

President & CEO
Resonance Consultancy
cfair@resonanceco.com

As leading advisers in tourism development, urban development and economic development for regions and cities, our team at Resonance has conducted extensive research on the rise of cities, the key trends propelling their growth and the factors that shape our perception of urban centres as desirable places to live, visit and invest.

As our cities emerge from the pandemic that upended our perception of what we consider to be desirable in a place to live, work or play, we are seeing growing alignment in the way citizens, corporations and travellers choose cities as a place to set down roots, explore on a holiday or launch or grow a business.

Despite what you may have read during the pandemic about the decline of cities, urban centres remain as desirable as ever, especially Europe's cities with their special blend of history and diversity. What's changing is how we live and work within them.

Resonance Consultancy's Best Cities rankings are determined by analysing the performance of each city for a wide range of factors that have demonstrated moderate to strong correlations with attracting employment, investment and/or visitors. Yes, those include "livability" stalwarts like housing affordability and green spaces, but they also include increasingly coveted talent and prosperity drivers like nightlife, restaurants and biking.

These factors shape a city's "lovability," and our research indicates that they tend to drive investment and local prosperity more than, say, school quality or local crime rates.

The recognition of these attributes by locals and visitors alike further propels a city's performance in our rankings, via their resonance online and in social media, from exploratory research (captured in our Google Search subcategory) to on-the-ground user-generated marketing (captured in our measurement of Instagram hashtags and Facebook check-ins).

The kudos offered up a few years back by Bloomberg still reflect the core of our rankings: "The most comprehensive study of its kind; it identifies cities that are most desirable for locals, visitors and businesspeople alike, rather than simply looking at livability or tourism appeal." And generational economic sustainability for European cities is within reach today.

Geopolitical pressure for countries and corporations to reshore their manufacturing and operations—from microchip production to agriculture—is creating new economic opportunities, while remote work and the emergent "15-minute city" obsession among local governments is changing where consumption and production occurs within the city.

New initiatives range from the humble (Lyon's micro grants to help residents buy bikes as primary modes of transport) to the monumental (the 870-kilometre Baltica high-speed railway to connect Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to Poland and the rest of Europe). Speaking of rail, its renaissance continues with carbon-conscious travellers hopping on dreamy overnight connections offered by companies such as Nightjet and Midnight Trains, with routes like Paris to Venice, and one-change connections between Edinburgh and Porto.

That affordable mobility-while-you-sleep will only embolden entrepreneurship wherever inspiration (and local support for a startup ecosystem) strikes. And with that newfound freedom, many people are choosing to move to smaller—or more affordable, or more interesting—cities, taking their economic output and consumption with them. We see it in Belfast's Titanic Quarter, one of Europe's largest urban waterfront regeneration projects, as well as in that city's blazing pace of affordable housing construction. The same stories are echoed throughout our Top 100 city profiles in this report.

Despite the continental recovery, urban populations across Europe are dealing with fresh crises: economic, environmental and humanitarian. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has scarred our rankings for the second year in a row. In our view, no city can be a "Best City" if it is part of a country that is taking unprovoked action against another, and we have, once again, disqualified Moscow, St. Petersburg and all other Russian cities from this year's report.

Despite these challenges, there's never been a bigger opportunity for cities to act on their ambitions and do right by their citizens—current and future. The data we collect to produce these rankings will continue to track and monitor this pivotal transformation every step of the way, identifying the Best Cities to live, work and visit, now and in the years to come.

If you'd like to connect with me about empowering your community, city or region, or about anything you read in this report, I'd love to chat.

- 05 Our Methodology:
How we ranked Europe's
best cities in 2024
- 08 Europe's Top 100
cities, in detail
- 55 Every city's Place Power®
Score, by category

Contents

Our Methodology

How we ranked Europe's best cities in 2024

Every year, Resonance analyses more than 180 European cities (principal cities of metropolitan areas with populations of more than 500,000) to determine the Top 100 by using a combination of core statistics and qualitative evaluations and recommendations by locals and visitors in digital channels such as Tripadvisor, Google, Facebook and Instagram.

While many factors shape our perception of cities as desirable places to live, work or visit, the Best Cities rankings are focused on factors that demonstrate moderate to strong correlations with the performance of cities when it comes to attracting talent, visitors and businesses based on our extensive analysis of a wide range of data sources. While factors such as time to commute to work, crime or public schools do indeed shape our perception of cities when it comes to choosing a neighbourhood, our research shows that they have little to no relationship with the performance of an urban area overall when it comes to attracting talent, tourism or investment—at least not in the short term.

So what are the factors influencing the performance of cities today when it comes to attracting visitors, talent and businesses? Based on our ongoing analysis, it's an eclectic mix that ranges from the number of Global Fortune 500 companies and ease of airport connectivity to the number of nightlife and outdoor recreation experiences and the volume of check-ins on Facebook and mentions on Instagram. And based on our ongoing analysis over the past decade, these factors can change and evolve over time, and so we have continually updated our methodology to reflect these shifts. Case in point: we have added factors like Average Rent and Green Space to this year's index and removed inputs like Weather and Safety to more accurately represent the latest verified drivers of talent, investment and tourism to a city.

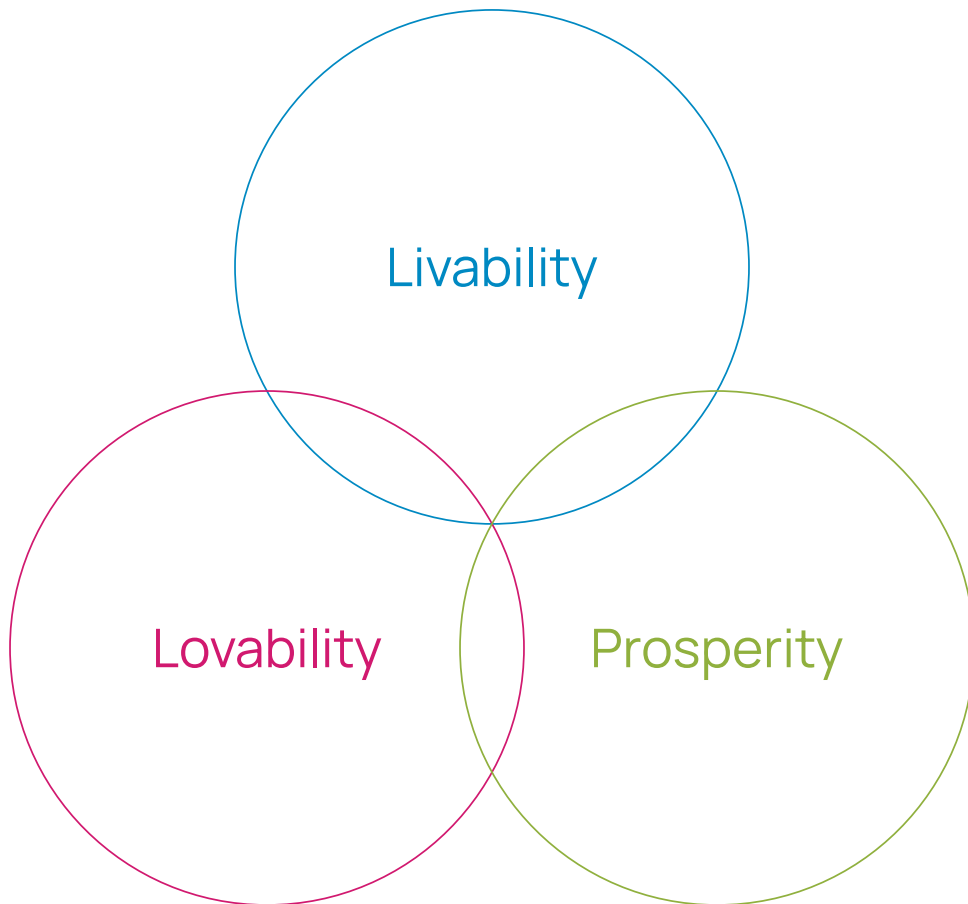
This year, we've regrouped our previous six categories (Place, Promotion, Product, Programming, People and Prosperity) into three larger pillars that we utilise in our work with clients—Livability, Lovability and Prosperity—to define each city's relative Place Power® Score.

Additionally, all Russian cities continue to be omitted from our annual ranking. Resonance made this decision in 2022 after the country's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Place Power[®] Score

Our methodology is a combination of core statistics from more than 180 European cities and resident and visitor perception indicators like user-generated ratings and reviews.

Resonance interprets this data through the lens of three key factors—Livability, Lovability and Prosperity—to define each city's Place Power[®] Score.



● Livability

Our most layered overarching category quantifies a city's physical sense of place. To score a city within our Livability category, we evaluate the perceived quality of its natural and built environments. This includes how much of an urban area is dedicated to green space, how bike-friendly its streets are and how many quality parks, sights, neighbourhoods and landmarks are recommended online by locals and visitors. We also look at key socioeconomic factors such as the affordability of monthly rents and the disposable household income of the city's residents—factors that not only retain talent, but also attract it (and, by extension, attract skill-seeking companies as well).

Biking Total kilometres of dedicated tracks and lanes for cyclists in a city (Mapped Bikeways)

Sights & Landmarks Number of sights and landmarks, rated above four stars, as listed on Tripadvisor (Tripadvisor.com)

Outdoors Number of outdoor experiences, rated above four stars, as listed on Tripadvisor (Tripadvisor.com)

Green Space Proportion of green space (parks, trees and so on) available in a city's urban area (OECD)

EV Charging Stations Number of EV charging stations within a city (Plugshare.com)

Disposable Household Income The income available to households living in a city, including wages and salaries, income from self-employment and unincorporated enterprises, income from pensions and other social benefits, and income from financial investments, less any payments of tax, social insurance contributions and interest on financial liabilities (OECD)

Average Rent Average rent of a two-bedroom apartment in a city (Zoopla/Properstar)

● Lovability

Lovability speaks to the relative vibrancy and quality of place of a city relative to its competitive set. Our research has shown for some time that the more vibrant a city is in terms of its culture, dining and nightlife, the more visitors, young professionals and large corporations it attracts. A city's lovability also inspires residents, businesses and visitors to promote that city to the world (usually on social media) more effectively than city marketers or chambers of commerce can ever hope to achieve. Resonance ranks a city's performance in each of these areas based on the number of stories, references and recommendations shared online about that city in key user-generated digital channels.

Culture Number of local concerts, shows and events, rated above four stars, as listed on Tripadvisor (Tripadvisor.com)

Nightlife Number of local nightlife experiences, rated above four stars, as listed on Tripadvisor, including bars, pubs and clubs (Tripadvisor.com)

Restaurants Number of quality restaurants and culinary experiences, rated above four stars, as listed on Tripadvisor (Tripadvisor.com)

Shopping Number of local shopping experiences, rated above four stars, as listed on Tripadvisor, including shopping malls, farmers markets, department stores, airport shops and factory outlets (Tripadvisor.com)

Attractions Number of quality family-friendly activities, rated above four stars, as listed on Tripadvisor (Tripadvisor.com)

Facebook Check-ins Total number of Facebook check-ins posted by residents and visitors in a city (Facebook.com)

Google Search Total number of unique results a city has on Google, choosing the larger total of the city (for example, "Paris") or the city and country ("Paris, France") (Google.com)

Tripadvisor Reviews Total number of reviews a city has on Tripadvisor (Tripadvisor.com)

Instagram Hashtags Total number of posts with Instagram hashtags that include the name of a city (Instagram.com)

Google Trends Popularity on Google Trends in the past 12 months, relative to the other 180+ European cities analysed, choosing the larger total of the city (for example, "Paris") or the city and country ("Paris, France") (Trends.Google.com)

Museums Number of quality museums, rated above four stars, as listed on Tripadvisor (Tripadvisor.com)

● Prosperity

Human capital is becoming a city's most valuable resource when it comes to generating wealth and prosperity, and, for many cities, it is increasingly in short supply. To evaluate the relative strength of human capital from one city to the next, Resonance measures both the educational attainment level of the city's population and the percentage of people participating in the labour force. We not only include obvious indicators of prosperity such as GDP per capita, but also the poverty rate to evaluate how well that wealth is distributed among a city's population. Wealth and prosperity are also shaped by core statistics like business infrastructure (such as direct destinations served by the city's primary airport, measured by our Airport Connectivity subcategory) and the presence or absence of large, recognisable corporations—despite the fact that startups and innovation increasingly drive a city's development and economic growth. (We measure those, too.)

Educational Attainment Share of residents who have a bachelor's degree or higher (OECD)

Labour Force Participation Ratio of working-age population who are actively part of the labour force (OECD)

GDP per Capita Per person value of output created through the production of goods and services (McKinsey Urban World)

Poverty Rate Share of residents who are at risk of poverty in a city (Eurostat/National Statistical Offices)

Global Fortune 500 Number of companies headquartered in a city that are ranked on the Global Fortune 500 list (Fortune.com/Global500)

Startups Quantity, quality and overall state of a city's business environment that contributes to the success of startups in a city (StartupBlink)

Airport Connectivity Number of direct destinations served by the city's airports (Flightsfrom.com)

Creative Class Share of residents who are employed in professional, technical, financial or ICT services fields (Eurostat)

Foreign-Born Residents Share of people in a geographical area who migrated from their country of birth to their current place of residence (OECD)

Europe's Top 100 cities, in detail

01

London

United Kingdom



London's financial district and Tower Bridge

The storied metropolis is once again negotiating the uncharted terrain of a post-Brexit and geopolitically perilous world atop our Europe's Best Cities ranking.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 1 Livability
- 1 Lovability
- 1 Prosperity

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Culture
- #1 Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 12,435,000

For the second year in a row, London reigns over all European cities. Despite crippling COVID lockdowns and economic devastation. Despite Brexit. Despite a war in Europe.

The city is top of mind for students, foreign investors and tourists, all eager to get back out and plug into a place that topped all three of our overall indices: Livability, Lovability and Prosperity—the only city in this year's ranking to do so—reaching #1 in an astonishing 12 of our 27 subcategories, from Restaurants to Startups.

Not that the city's visitor economy needed any convincing: London ranked third on the planet (and first in Europe) for cities with the biggest international traveller spend in 2022, worth €14.88 billion. The soft pound certainly made bucket-list trips more affordable, combined with the voracious global appetite to see the world after the pandemic.

Heathrow Airport reported its highest-ever September traffic figures in 2023, welcoming

more than seven million customers, compared to 6.8 million in September 2019. Having long anticipated that the inflow of people into the city will only intensify (pandemic be damned), Gatwick Airport just unveiled its £250-million upgrade that includes the creation of a second concourse, a new entrance, eight new escalators, five lifts and wider access platforms. The original concourse also features new and expanded ticket gates and customer assistance infrastructure.

While the tourists are wonderful, the metric that has city leaders excited are the figures indicating that the COVID-era London exodus may finally be over, with the number of Londoners leaving the capital for more space falling to its lowest level in nine years in 2023, according to figures from real estate firm Hamptons and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs. In 2023, fewer than 70,000 homes were bought outside the capital by Londoners (the fewest in almost a decade), down from almost 101,000 in 2021 at the height of the pandemic.



Westminster Bridge

Indeed, the city's infrastructure is awaiting those back in town, operating pretty much at pre-pandemic capacity, if the Tube is any indication. There are even new metro stops as part of the transformational Elizabeth line buildout, with trains now running directly from Reading and Heathrow to Abbey Wood and from Shenfield to Paddington. The brand-new Bond Street station, at the heart of London's West End, also opened in late 2022. Returning transit aficionados won't believe the direct journeys now possible across the city.

Placemaking projects are everywhere, none more anticipated than next year's opening of the Camden Highline, the 1.5-kilometre-long greenway just north of Central London that will transform an unused train track into an elevated path similar to the famous urban landmark in New York.

And speaking of gathering people, the hand-wringing about the flight of talent and capital due to the pall of Brexit (and the follow-up spectre of an airborne pandemic), while warranted, now seems excessive.

London's foreign direct investment resilience, like its tourism appeal, has been buoyed by a sinking currency that has attracted previously priced out investment. And new residents.

New wealthy residents who can now afford to check off a big item on the multimillionaire bucket list: property in the planet's most coveted city. (London also topped Resonance Consultancy's World's Best Cities ranking earlier this year, for the ninth year in a row.)

Forecasters at London Central Portfolio are predicting upwards of 15% price growth in inner London over the coming four years, compared to 11% in Greater London and much less in the wider U.K.

The highest-profile new residents span the globally super-rich, from Middle Eastern buying activity hitting a four-year high in the second half of 2022 to the arrival of tech royalty, although aggressive tech-sector cost-cutting has brought the deep tech investment seen earlier this decade to a halt.

While the city remains Meta's largest global engineering base outside of the U.S., its two offices in London's King's Cross neighbourhood—opened in early 2022 after a three-year build (and designed by Bennetts Associates with interiors by TP Bennett based on a concept design by Gehry Partners)—are pretty sparse these days. Alphabet is still planning to open its 11-storey, 90,000-square-metre London HQ this year between King's Cross station and the

King's Boulevard, although the 4,000 anticipated employees won't be brought on for a while.

The office slowdown across the city has spotlighted the office vacancy crisis at Canary Wharf, London's 52-hectare banking district, with its stubborn vacancy rate that hovered in the high teens for most of 2023, the highest in the city. As a result, owners Canary Wharf Group are planning to invest their way out by building a "Canary Wharf 3.0" in the area, focused on residences, entertainment and a 70,000-square-metre life-sciences centre, which it says will be the largest commercial lab in Europe.

Despite these recent economic clouds, London is still hot globally. According to fDi Markets, the *Financial Times'* foreign investment tracker, London has lured the most foreign direct investments into tech from international companies since 2018, ahead of New York, Singapore and Dubai.

It's why by 2030 plans for the city's financial district buildout are staggering, as the Square Mile is projected to erect 11 new towers, including the tallest structure ever built here. The vision is the Manhattan-isation of the city's ancient, meandering streetscapes into an orderly grid anchored by the towers,

“London’s exceptional business growth environment continues to produce and attract top companies positioned to solve some of the world’s biggest problems, but also the very best talent and investors to help them get there,” notes Janet Coyle, CBE Managing Director of Grow London at London & Partners.

according to the City of London Corporation. The group has already approved and started construction on 500,000 square metres of new office space, with another 500,000 currently being proposed. The approved space equals a jaw-dropping 70 football pitches. And will be double that once pending approvals come through.

No wonder the City of London Corporation just opened offices in New York and Washington, DC, in an effort to help build stronger financial ties to the U.S. (and secure billions of dollars in leases).

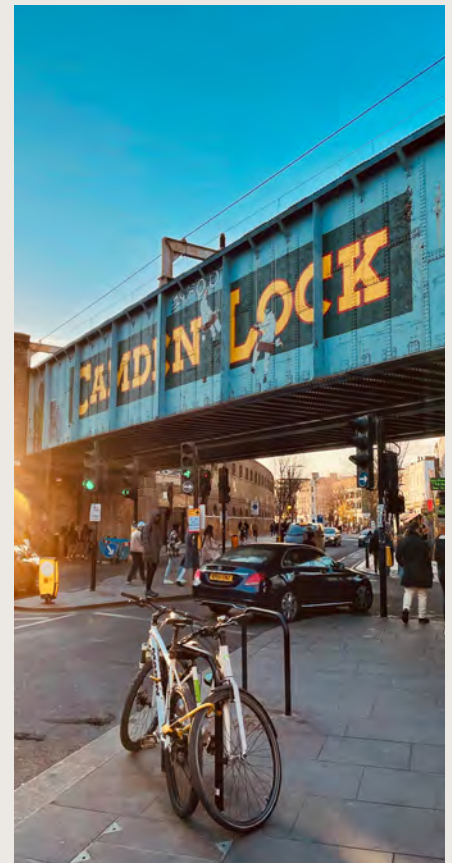
Working diligently alongside is London & Partners, the official publicity arm and the economic development organisation supplying financial perks for all that relocation. Recent tax incentives have included the lowest corporate tax rate among G7 countries and a cornucopia of research and development tax credits.

“London’s exceptional business growth environment continues to produce and attract top companies positioned to solve some of the world’s biggest problems, but also the very best talent and investors to help them get there,” notes Janet Coyle, CBE Managing Director of Grow London at London & Partners. “The fact that London is now second in

the world for climate-tech investment is a testament to the power and resilience of London’s ecosystem and what can be achieved when game-changing ideas are met with the nurture and support they need.”

The global investment in the city is also obvious in the dozens of newly opened and equally daring hotels, none more exciting than the urban reimagining of the Art’otel, with its 164 art-inspired rooms on the top levels of the recently reopened Battersea Power Station, a mid-1900s husk that today is stuffed with shops, restaurants, cinemas and a theatre. Or the OWO Raffles in the Old War Office Building in Whitehall—it’s the first time the neo-Baroque building, used by the Ministry of Defence until the 1960s, has been opened to the public. Joining them are gilded names like Mandarin Oriental Mayfair, Six Senses and perhaps the biggest indicator that London has never been hotter: the PPHE Hotel Group’s plans to develop a “predominantly subterranean” hotel on Vauxhall Bridge Road close to London Victoria station.

And here you thought the iceberg home went away with the last decade.



Camden Town

02

Paris

France



An unmistakable cityscape is increasingly accessible by foot and bike

No other city will coax global attention this summer more than the intoxicating French capital. While the 2024 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games will showcase athletic achievement, Paris will blow our minds with future-focused urban reinvention the likes of which the world has never seen.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 2 Livability
- 2 Lovability
- 2 Prosperity

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Sights & Landmarks
- #1 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 13,115,000

A lot of city leaders talk about learning from the pandemic, but La Ville Lumière is actually walking the walk, going all-in on those hard lessons and their applications to molecular urban change. And with half a decade and billions in investment to prepare for this summer's Summer Olympics, Paris has codified pedestrianism, biking and alfresco living like nowhere else on the planet.

While the face of Paris's pandemic evolution is Mayor Anne Hidalgo and her obsession with the empowerment of self-propelled mobility—from a city-wide motorised vehicle speed limit of 30 kilometres per hour introduced in 2021, to the promise of more than 700 kilometres of bike paths across most arrondissements by 2026—it's the citizenry's embrace of this master plan that is changing the city's fabric for good.

An incredible 70% of Parisians don't own cars, and they report better air quality and

personal health for the choice not to. The all-in commitment to biking, called Plan Velo, will place the city among the most bike-friendly on the planet, improving on its current #10 spot in our Biking subcategory. Act 2 of the plan will teach children to ride bikes in schools, create bike repair infrastructure in neighbourhoods and promote local cycling tourism to the world.

Late last year, city officials tracking local rush hour traffic on several of the city's main thoroughfares tabulated more bicycles than cars on the road.

Pedestrians are getting equal love, with local numbers citing that 65% of all journeys are made by foot, which has increased by 12% between 2010 and 2020. Since 2020, city leaders have taken credit for creating an extra 30 hectares of pedestrian areas via widened sidewalks and car-free zones (prioritising school zones in doing so).



The Seine flows through the city and the veins of Parisians

Measures like bollards, longer crossing lights and traffic police to protect pedestrians will also encourage walking in the city. The plan is for another 100 pedestrianised hectares to be implemented by 2030.

The biggest investment in the city's mobility and to get residents out of their cars is the expansion of the Paris Métro, already the envy of the world with its 800-kilometre, 16-line network seamlessly incorporated into a commuter rail system. In its most significant upgrade in decades, the Grand Paris Express will be a new 200-kilometre network boasting four additional lines, extensions to existing lines (11 and 14) and a mind-blowing 68 new metro stations. Started in 2016, it is, according to the French government, Europe's largest civilian infrastructure project.

The new lines prioritise access to the city's suburban towns, which were left out of the Parisian ascent for far too long. While the city was future-proofing itself with visionary sustainability and investment attraction, it has and is battling monumental social and economic challenges, perhaps unlike any

other capital city on the continent. Paris has been wracked by unemployment and economic calamity since 2020 and ranks #47 in our Poverty Rate subcategory, which tracks residents living under the national poverty line. The systemic inequality is a powder keg in the pockets where tourists rarely go. In the summer of 2023, the city (and country) exploded after the fatal, point-blank shooting of French teenager Nahel Merzouk by Florian Menesplier, a police officer, in the Paris suburb of Nanterre. Given the 17-year-old's Algerian and Moroccan descent, racism was alleged in the killing.

After a week of protests across the country, which caused an estimated billion dollars in damage, day-to-day city life has resumed as investigations into systemic racism in the regional police force and the murder trial proceed.

Even with the unrest, last year's international tourist spend continued its march to pre-pandemic levels. Of course, being able to enjoy a city ranked best in Europe in our Sights & Landmarks, Shopping and Restaurants

subcategories, as well as #2 in Museums (the city has well over 100), has a tendency to distract one from the perils of the modern world.

Paris was also recently crowned the world's most powerful urban tourist destination for 2022 by the World Travel & Tourism Council, with the city's hospitality industry worth €32.9 billion last year. And it's projected to grow to more than €44 billion by 2032.

More than three years without Paris is certainly driving the voraciousness, but so is the euro being near par with the U.S. dollar of late. The city remains among the most visited on the planet, with 44 million visitors in 2022, yet these numbers are still 13% below 2019 levels. With the Olympics returning this year, as well as the late 2024 unveiling of the Notre Dame renovation, this could be the year that Paris hits pre-pandemic tourism revenues, especially after the world feasts on how the sporting events have been woven into the legendary urban fabric.

And nowhere will the focus be more intense than the city's revered Seine River and its

President Macron committed €30 billion to the France 2030 plan: an effort to create “high-tech champions of the future” that is expected to yield 100 French tech unicorns by the end of the decade. There are 29 today, and the 20 of these in Paris are quickly establishing the city as a startup hotbed.

benchmark for Paris's efficacy in achieving a cleaner, healthier home. The plan is still to host swimming events in the river that has banned swimming since 1923 due to pollution and sewage, and organisers are working around the clock to ensure that Mayor Hidalgo can fulfil her promise to go for a swim before the opening ceremonies (which will feature a flotilla of boats on the Seine). Whatever happens, escaping those Paris heatwaves will certainly be easier in the coming years.

Outside the city, Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (ranked #2 in Europe in our Airport Connectivity subcategory) used the past three years of lower volume to invest €250 million into a renovation of Terminal 1. Reopened last year, it now has a colossal junction building and a central lobby full of the latest tech to improve the traveller experience.

Rail access and infrastructure are also unprecedented. Direct high-speed TGV routes linking other capitals have launched over the past year, with more ambitious directs like the Venice-to-Paris Midnight Trains coming in 2025.

Too often in the Paris narrative, the city's economic might gets forgotten. This is the place with the most Global Fortune 500 headquarters on the continent, and the second-most startups. In 2021, President Macron committed €30 billion to the France 2030 plan: an effort to create “high-tech champions of the future” that is expected to yield 100 French tech unicorns by the end of the decade. There are 29 today, and the 20 of these in Paris are quickly establishing the city as a startup hotbed, with the State of European Tech noting that France has seen the strongest growth in tech-focused job searches of any European country. And where do you think most of that arriving talent will pick as their new home base? Especially when the cost of a car isn't necessary.



Cycling through Place des Pyramides

03

Berlin

Germany



The Brandenburg Gate

Tolerance, cultural ambition and coveted talent make Berlin a city you'll be hearing a lot more about over the rest of the decade and beyond.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 7 Lovability
- 11 Livability
- 11 Prosperity

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #3 Startups
- #4 Culture

POPULATION

Metro 4,980,000

Berlin is a city where remnants of a fragile history mingle with a present in which being whatever you want simply comes with residency. These days, 35 years after the fall of its eponymous wall and the Iron Curtain, the city is a haven, welcoming waves of Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion, just like it has been for decades—with mixed success—for those arriving from all over the world in search of a new life. It's a big reason why the city ranks #13 in Europe in our Foreign-Born Residents subcategory, and Berlin's #20 ranking for Educational Attainment will only climb with ambitious new arrivals and the ascent of those already here.

The result of Berlin's relative hospitality: raw, unabashed urbanity and self-expression as diverse and proud as its 12 sprawling kiez (neighbourhoods). That admittedly atrophied under pandemic restrictions, but as public health measures eased a couple of years

ago, the entire city returned, especially during its glorious summers, when residents gathered in the parks, in the beer gardens and, increasingly, in the street parties and parades.

And given Berlin's #4 ranking in our Culture subcategory (which includes festivals and concerts) and its #5 Nightlife ranking, the city was ready to party like few others.

A packed 2023 cultural and events calendar (featuring the full return of the Berlinale and the arrival of the Special Olympics World Games—the world's largest inclusive sports event) warmed things up for an even bigger 2024. Of course, summer means the annual Christopher Street Day (aka the massive Gay Pride Berlin celebration, famous throughout Europe and the world). Expect hundreds of thousands of revellers, activists and policymakers channelling the spirit of Schöneberg—an area that in the 1920s



Getting festive at the city's famous Berlin Pride

became the world's first gay village—city-wide. Welcoming them will be the Pink Pillow Collection, the world's only initiative of its kind among hotels (57 at last count) that transcend the "gay-friendly" marketese to contribute to social projects, prove well-versed in the LGBTQ+ scene and ensure a welcome and respected environment for guests and staff.

In June, EURO 2024 comes to Berlin's Olympiastadion as the city becomes the biggest venue among 10 German cities hosting the country's first major football tournament since the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

This is the home of Museum Island, too, and the city's #4 Museums ranking is well earned as Berlin quickly approaches 200, indicative of its obsession with cataloguing its own history and the history it imposed on so many places during its eight centuries as a city. Places like The Topography of Terror, documenting Nazi atrocities, and the Stasi Museum confront and localise global horrors, challenging visitors to never forget. A cascade of new openings and renovations are completed, underway

or scheduled to launch in 2024. Two major museums have moved into the new Humboldt Forum in the heart of the city: the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art. Other openings in recent years feature collections ranging from the world of the samurai to video games. Berlinische Galerie, a new permanent exhibit opened in 2022, explores the daily lives of prisoners under GDR state security oppression, including first-time access into actual working and living spaces. Its title says it all: Forced Cooperation: The Prisoner Work Crews of Hohenschönhausen. More recently, the Charité Museum of Medical History reopened last year after an extensive expansion and modernisation and today houses 10,000 pathological and anatomical specimens that span 300 years of medical history.

Berlin is also now home to the fourth global outpost of Fotografiska, a network of photography museums and culture hubs that exhibits creative titans like Leibovitz and Warhol while also making room for emerging local talent. Here, the space is a storied 1908 building heavily damaged during Second World War bombing and used as an artist squat, bar

and rave venue over the past 25 years, thereby being spared by the city's wrecking ball.

The ongoing cultural and creative evolution of Berlin's Tempelhof Airport is equally fascinating: this is Europe's largest historic monument, with the curve of the building stretching 1.2 kilometres. The massive, unfinished building is a window into the turbulent history of this enigmatic city, and the new open-air History Gallery and public access to Tempelhofer Tower will provide views over Tempelhofer Feld and the ongoing urban development in this little-known but vital district that dates back to the Knights Templar and the city's founding. And in 2026, the anticipated Museum of the 20th Century will launch as one of Europe's finest.

Matching the city's cultural wattage is its economic might that transcends its global bastions of industry like Deutsche Telekom, Delivery Hero and Deutsche Bahn, and regional HQs for Bombardier Transportation, Pfizer, Sony and Total (all helping the city rank #16 in our Global Fortune 500 subcategory).

The talent is also attracting massive domestic and foreign investment into the city and its suburbs. Last year, Volkswagen AG announced further increases in tech-related investments to keep pace with Tesla's nearby investment in 2022. U.S.-based semiconductors, software and services company Qualcomm just opened a new office in Berlin to be closer to the European auto market.

Stealthily, Berlin is Top 3 in Europe in our Startups subcategory, trailing only London and Paris. With its relative affordability, bounteous post-secondary options and resulting highly skilled workforce, venture funding has been pouring in: according to Berlin Startup Map, the city currently boasts approximately 4,400 startups.

The talent is also attracting massive domestic and foreign investment into the city and its suburbs. Last year, Volkswagen AG announced further increases in tech-related investments to keep pace with Tesla's nearby investment in 2022. U.S.-based semiconductors, software and services company Qualcomm just opened a new office in Berlin to be closer to the European auto market. London-based data centre provider Virtus has announced a €3-billion "mega-campus" just outside of town, and U.K. real-estate developer, investor and asset manager Verdion is exploring a €100-million logistics hub in a brownfield 30 minutes from the city centre.

No wonder Berlin ranks in the Top 5 in our Creative Class subcategory.



Fotografiska Photography Museum

04
Rome
Italy



The Bramante Staircase in the Vatican Museum

The Eternal City has always been coveted. These days, the bounty is an immersive step back in time.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 3 Lovability
- 4 Livability
- 59 Prosperity

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Restaurants (Tied)
- #2 Tripadvisor Reviews

POPULATION

Metro 4,304,000

Few cities serve up the ability to walk Western history like Roma. Heck, Palatine Hill alone invites you into two millennia's worth if you've got an hour. And that's just the stuff you can see. In the past year, construction projects have unearthed everything from a rare fourth-century golden glass depiction of Roma—the goddess personifying the city—to a life-sized marble statue of a Roman emperor dressed as Hercules. "The millennial history of our city never ceases to amaze and enchant the world," posted Roberto Gualtieri, mayor of Rome, after a recent find. The treasure trove is increasingly being shared with locals and visitors, like the Largo di Torre Argentina site of Julius Caesar's assassination, opened with the contribution of Italian jewellery brand Bulgari last June.

Mix in underrated parks and greenways (Rome ranks #8 in our Outdoors subcategory) and its thousands of portals back in time (Sights & Landmarks rank in the Top 3 in Europe) and it's easy to see how Rome remains an urban

treasure, drawing record post-pandemic tourists despite historic heat waves that exceeded 41 degrees Celsius last summer. Declarations of love for the city have multiplied with social media channels, of course, and Rome trails only London in our global Tripadvisor Reviews subcategory. The city is reopening fast, with new restaurants like Pulejo, Don Pasquale and Romanè, and Seen by Olivier, the spectacular rooftop restaurant at the new Anantara hotel. The property is one of several global hospitality brands that are sprinkled around the city like pecorino on a plate of cacio e pepe. The first Six Senses property to open in Italy (in a UNESCO-listed palazzo minutes from the Trevi and Pantheon) kicked off a busy 2023 for hotel openings, followed by the Bulgari Roma, with Chef Niko Romito—of three-Michelin-starred Reale in the country's Abruzzo region—running its two rooms in a monastery from the 1500s. This year's hotel pipeline includes the Thompson Rome, and properties from Four Seasons, Corinthia, Nobu, Rosewood and a few gilded others.

05
Madrid
Spain



Plaza de Ramales in central Madrid

Spain's kinetic capital has gone all in on a people-powered, planet-saving rebirth.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 4 Lovability
- 19 Prosperity
- 39 Livability

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Restaurants (Tied)
- #3 Google Search

POPULATION

Metro 7,005,000

Madrid's sustainability-driven investment in its bounteous urban and natural assets is a wonder to watch unfold in real time. It starts, not surprisingly, with reuse and the conviction that everything old can be new again. Take the new Santander Park, an instant citizen and visitor destination that used to be a golf course. A 75-kilometre urban forest network with nearly half-a-million new trees will connect the city's existing forest masses and reuse derelict sites between roads and buildings. Upon completion, this "green wall" is projected to help absorb 175,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually and mitigate the city's worsening urban heat. This investment in its outdoor realm will improve Madrid's #14 ranking in our Outdoors subcategory, especially combined with how safe the city has become. Madrid's electric bus network trails only that of Berlin in Europe and new EV charging stations (ranked #23) and bike lanes are everywhere.

But the biggest news is the recent full approval of Madrid Nuevo Norte, the largest current

urban regeneration project in Europe, in the city's underused northern rail district: more than 220 hectares dedicated to the Madrid of the future. The city is also going all in on its already formidable Culture-scape (ranked #3 in Europe), from newly opened local indie cinemas like Cines Embajadores to the mind-blowing unveiling of the Royal Collections Gallery, considered the country's most significant museum in decades. Located next to the Royal Palace of Madrid, the space was dug out from rock under Campo del Moro gardens to Armería square, and will be the centre of all Patrimonio Nacional's cultural activities and royal collections. It will also help the Spanish head of state restore, conserve and share the country's historical, cultural and natural heritage.

With all this investment, it's a good thing the city's Adolog Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport has earmarked €2.4 billion to become the EU's largest, although work isn't scheduled to begin until 2031.

06
Prague
Czechia



The Prague Dancing House

Bold reclamations focused on resident needs created a more accessible city while tourists weren't looking.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 7 Livability
- 8 Lovability
- 18 Prosperity

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Poverty Rate
- #2 Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 2,260,000

Pandemic lockdowns broke the overtourism wave that was cresting over Prague's beguiling Gothic streets, allowing the city to implement resident-first policies and maintain a sense of ownership. It's a massive job in any city, much less one that threads the needle as one of the world's rare urban centres that ranks in the Top 10 in both our overall Livability (#7) and Lovability (#8) indices. Still, over the past 18 months, city leaders made long-lasting decisions to ensure that Prague's #3-ranked Museums (ahead of places like Berlin, Rome and Madrid) and Attractions (which trail only London) remain accessible to the citizens who supported local when tourism didn't. Places like the Čapadlo embankment on the Vltava River have become open-air stages and galleries reminiscent of Paris. Náplavka, with its former ice-storage spaces ensconced in the river's retaining walls, was reborn as a vibrant urban market and series of pop-up bars. Prague's compact, fairy-tale walkability enchants in centuries-old cobbled streets and the (publicly accessible) hilltop Prague Castle, which has

emerged from lockdown alongside Salm Palace—home to National Gallery exhibition spaces—fully renovated. The Baroque Clam-Gallas Palace in Old Town is also newly reopened and eager to be admired.

The city is spotlighting its plentiful regional charms this year, too. The new Beer Spa lets visitors dip in a wood hot tub filled with hops, yeast and beer extracts (locals swear it's great for the skin and restoring energy, especially with the beer taps only an arm's-length away.) Meanwhile, 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of Franz Kafka's death and the writer's hometown is making sure the world remembers, from literary walking tours to exhibits across the city. Given Prague's literary pedigree, is it any wonder it tops Europe in our Creative Class subcategory? The city's four universities, relative affordability and #3-ranked nightlife have inspired young talent and billions in foreign investment to pour in—from real estate developers to long-established firms like Microsoft, Cisco and Oracle doubling down on a good thing.

07
Barcelona
Spain



The soon-to-be completed (for real!) Sagrada Família

The Catalan capital is as coveted as ever, but now it's welcoming the world on its own terms.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 5 Lovability
- 21 Livability
- 36 Prosperity

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Restaurants (Tied)
- #2 Nightlife

POPULATION

Metro 5,112,000

As if Barcelona, with its near-perfect year-round weather, striking architecture and kilometres of golden sandy beaches within city limits wasn't revered enough already, 2024 will make it a must-visit, across Europe and the world. The big news, of course, is that after almost a century and a half, Gaudí's famous church, the Sagrada Família, is almost finished. The towers of the evangelists John and Matthew lit up the city last Christmas season, leaving only the sixth and final 173-metre Jesus Christ tower to open in 2026. Despite having the EU's highest density of cars (6,000 per square kilometre) and replacing a pro-walking and biking mayor Ada Colau (the city's first woman to hold the role) with the car-championing Jaume Collboni last May, the city continues to unveil ambitious pedestrian projects. Barcelona just opened its €50-million Consell de Cent, 21 pedestrianised blocks that used to be a four-lane cross-town street, part of what is being called a "green axis" urban park in an area popular with both locals and visitors. Dotted with benches and community

squares, the pathway gained its inspiration from a local pilot project that, unsurprisingly, improved citizens' mental health. Given the city's Top 5 ranking in our Lovability index, the 12 million annual tourists who flocked here pre-pandemic, more than doubling Barcelona's population, are headed back. The city's implementation of some of Europe's strictest vacation rental rules will be tested as it aims to resupply a chronic shortage of resident housing. Barcelona is also no longer content with digital nomads, and is now aggressively securing massive foreign investment, ranging from Lufthansa Group, the largest airline group in Europe (which opened its first southern European digital hub last year) to U.S. real estate developer Panattoni (which will invest \$300 million to build the largest data centre in the region). The city's #7 Startups ranking will only improve as global innovation investment, like Intel's recent Barcelona Supercomputing Centre initiative as part of a €33-billion EU-wide semiconductor push, comes online.

08

Amsterdam

Netherlands



Resting the feet in this eminently walkable city

The internationally beloved city is taking back its streets, led by visionary Mayor Femke Halsema (literally visionary: she's also a filmmaker), the first non-interim female mayor in Amsterdam's history.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 6 Prosperity
- 10 Lovability
- 23 Livability

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #4 Labour Force Participation
- #5 Startups

POPULATION

Metro 2,892,000

Mayor Halsema's administration is showing a practical stewardship of a place (and citizens) once abandoned to the tourist euro by co-authoring a future of accountability among everyone who calls the magnetic Dutch capital home. Take a 2022 approach to a refugee accommodation crisis that led to hundreds of unhoused migrants, many fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, sleeping outside the city's overflowing resource centres: accommodate more than 1,000 on a moored cruise ship for six months, buying vital time to find other arrangements.

This care for others and willingness for locals to do the work is represented by the city's Top 10 ranking in our overall Prosperity index. The infamous nightlife (ranked #9 in Europe) that the city was known and often marketed for—despite the attendant human trafficking—was another opportunity to right long-time local complaints, with civic leaders going so far as to move the red-light district out of the famed De Wallen neighbourhood to a suburban

Erotic Centre while banning non-residents from cannabis cafés and ditching tours that glorify the city's baser side. Things escalated in 2023, when smoking pot in public was banned outright and the city launched a “stay away” campaign targetting party tourism (although the mayor herself admits it hasn't worked all that well). Restaurants and bars have been asked to close by 2 a.m. on weekends and new visitors are not allowed to enter the old city district after 1 a.m.

Stepping in for vice are tours and programmes focusing on the city's livability and Dutch history. And on getting tourists (who numbered 22 million in 2019) away from the city centre and out to the #6-ranked shopping and #7-ranked museums that pepper the city. This past summer, city council also banned cruise ships from the city centre as part of its clean-air efforts.

09
Istanbul
Türkiye



Beguiled by the centuries of Istanbul's skyline

Europe's largest city is coming for the crown.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 6 Lovability
- 8 Livability
- 78 Prosperity

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Restaurants (Tied)
- #3 Airport Connectivity

POPULATION

Metro 15,636,000

The ancient collision between Europe and Asia radiates in Türkiye's (and Europe's) largest city. It's why the city is among the most beguiling for its sense of place, inside and out. Its Top 10 Sights & Landmarks ranking, as well as its impressive #4 spot in our Outdoors subcategory, will improve as a result of the extensive renovations completed for the Turkish Republic's centennial in October 2023. The devastating February 2023 earthquakes that killed tens of thousands in the country's southeast and in Syria (and that flooded the capital with survivors) have sounded the alarms about Istanbul's own preparation for a potential destructive quake. The tragedy has cast a pall around new openings like Galataport, Istanbul's reinvigorated historic harbour. Extending a mile along the Bosphorus Strait near the city's long-coveted Karaköy district, the \$1.7-billion project boasts the world's first-ever underground cruise terminal. More recently, the luxury Peninsula Istanbul opened last spring, capping a blazing year for hotels that includes the seafront luxury

resort JW Marriott Marmara Sea and a dozen others. The city's #6-ranked museums also get a boost from the Galataport investment, with the Istanbul Modern, the city's first contemporary art museum (designed by Renzo Piano), returning to its Karaköy roots. Despite the city's lauded low cost of living (#6 in our Average Rent subcategory), the past year saw inflation-driven property costs skyrocket 77.6% in the third quarter compared to the previous year according to property consultant Knight Frank.

But perhaps, given Istanbul's ascendant global importance, the cost of entry finally went up. The transportation infrastructure is certainly sparing no expense, with a web of high-speed rail networks planned out of the city by the end of the decade, and the Istanbul Grand Airport's plans to be the world's largest by 2028, its 10th year of operation.

10
Milan
Italy



Shopping the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Italy's oldest continuously operating shopping mall

A no-nonsense devotion to the finer things makes Italy's northern power a globally coveted culture and fashion vanguard.

PLACE POWER® SCORE

- 5 Livability
- 9 Lovability
- 74 Prosperity

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #4 Biking
- #5 EV Charging Stations

POPULATION

Metro 4,962,000

The birthplace of Armani, Versace and dozens of other megawatt icons is no longer content with being Europe's fashion and design centre. Or even Italy's financial heart. Milan is driven, as always, by its entrepreneurial hunger and is increasingly fuelled by wealthy newcomers lured to the famed good life by government tax breaks on foreign income earned abroad. The result is an influx of Brexit (and Russian) capital seeking a home, and the flurry of luxury real estate, hotels and social clubs that such capital inspires. The Ferragamo-owned Lungarno Collection unveiled the Portrait Milano in one of Europe's oldest seminaries, complete with a massive piazza. U.S. networking broker Core Club is opening in a nearby palazzo, its first outside of San Francisco and New York City. And there are two W properties on the scene: the 116-room W Milan that opened last year, housed within a 1950s building on Piazzetta Bossi near La Scala opera house, and this year's 166-room W Milan Duomo, located in a century-old bank building and designed by local firm Stefano

Boeri Architetti and international design house Yabu Pushelberg. This strategic proximity to other European capitals and alpine resorts pulling in the global elite also won the city the 2026 Olympic Winter Games and a rush of development that includes a long-awaited train link between Milan Bergamo Airport and the centro, with a new four-platform airport rail station. Its #6 ranking in our Airport Connectivity subcategory will only improve with terminal expansion. The city is welcoming a torrent of new flights from Asia, and, last June, Milan Bergamo received a record 50,242 passengers in one day. Hopefully Milan's #4 ranking in our Biking subcategory helps everyone get around.



11

Zürich

Switzerland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #2 Disposable Household Income
- #3 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 1,937,000

Zürich is exactly the kind of place you'd want to call home: efficient, clean, educated, safe and officially happy.

Switzerland's financial centre and largest metropolis is a magnet for foreigners who, along with multilingual Swiss nationals, enjoy one of the world's highest standards of living. The city ranks in the Top 3 in Europe in our overall Prosperity index, powered by an industrious citizenry that ranks #3 in both our Labour Force Participation and Global Fortune 500 subcategories, with major European players like Migros and UBS AG based here. The city's population is also the largest it's been since the halcyon days of the early 1960s and, in late 2023, a European Commission study named Zürich residents the continent's happiest, at 97%. Europe's second-highest disposable household income certainly helps, as does the ability to keep the good times going with a local talent pipeline from Insead Business School and ETH Zürich (aka the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology). All that talent is getting on corporate site selector radars, as evidenced by Microsoft's opening of a new technology centre at the Zürich Airport to "deliver immersive industry experiences and deep technical engagement focused on business outcomes to customers," according to the company. The airport, ranked #14, will only catch up with the city it serves after a multistage renovation is completed in 2026.



12

Vienna

Austria

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Biking
- #6 Culture

POPULATION

Metro 1,960,000

Are there any European cities as ascendant as the Austrian capital in 2024?

Vienna has long stepped boldly into the Herculean tasks facing the global cities that are serious about their role as urban beacons. Despite its globally coveted real estate, 60% of the city's population resides in subsidised apartments and 25% of homes are owned by the city. And it's boldly tackling the climate emergency, with 2022's declaration of carbon neutrality by 2040 besting the Paris Agreement by a decade. Already topping Europe in our Biking subcategory, the Austrian capital is adding dozens of bike paths annually to its 1,650-kilometre cycling network, including the unveiling of its "cycle highway" connecting downtown with the expansive green spaces of the 22nd district, home to Aspern Seestadt, one of Europe's largest urban development projects centred on transit, walking and biking. But the city is also playing as hard as it works, with massive cultural investments opening to eager residents and visitors alike—from the extensively renovated Wien Museum, a love letter to the city if there ever was one, to the brand-new House of Strauss museum, dedicated to "The Blue Danube" composer Johann Strauss. The city's Top 10 Museums ranking will only improve this decade. And the launch of Vienna's first food hall, Gleisgarten, and central Europe's first Rosewood Hotel will only add to the city's kinetic 2024.



13

Munich

Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #4 Global Fortune 500
- #5 GDP per Capita

POPULATION

Metro 3,017,000

Bavaria's party capital is also a business behemoth—and a magnetic hometown.

The global Oktoberfest HQ and Germany's third-largest city works as hard as it plays, becoming one of Europe's hottest destinations for talent seeking this elusive balance. The pandemic only highlighted the productivity of understated Bavarian innovation, especially in the public realm when the "temporary" initiatives—from outdoor seating to a reimagined concrete factory—became permanent. But this is Germany after all and there's productivity to think about. Munich boasts a #4 ranking for Global Fortune 500 companies in Europe (made up primarily of automakers, media and manufacturing, but quickly being joined by biotech and IT giants), which drive a Top 5 GDP per Capita ranking. Expect more commerce once the #9-ranked airport unveils its €500-million reno by the time you read this. Not surprisingly, the Technical University of Munich, which brands itself "the Entrepreneurial University," impressively, supplied much of the local talent pipeline. With all that citizen-focused infrastructure and entrepreneurship, Munich ranks #12 in our overall Prosperity index, including #4 for Global Fortune 500 headquarters. This year, Apple will invest an additional billion dollars as part of its Silicon Design Center expansion in the city. Also just opened is the Rosewood Munich, a must-stay for work or pleasure.



14

Dublin

Ireland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 GDP per Capita
- #7 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 544,000

The storied capital is made for flâneurs and entrepreneurs. Just like it always has been.

Relatively safe, gregarious and increasingly wealthy, the Celtic Tiger has never been fiercer, topping the continent in our GDP per Capita subcategory and reaching #7 for the Global Fortune 500 firms that call it home. The magnetism is obvious in places like the Docklands area, called Silicon Docks, home to big tech and digital players including Alphabet, Meta, Amazon, Apple and Airbnb. They come for some of the world's lowest corporate taxes and stay for homegrown economic development initiatives like Ireland's Local Enterprise Office's mentoring, training and financial grants. No wonder a dozen or so hotels opened in the past year—from luxury property The Leinster in Merrion Square near the Natural History Museum and National Gallery to international boutique forays like NYX Dublin south of downtown. Several internationally renowned universities (Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and Dublin City University) help the city attract startups looking for a smaller, relatively affordable capital. It helps that it offers intrepid employees a bounty after work, which Dublin's beer-forward nightlife (ranked #12) provides, along with a Top 10 Culture ranking. New locally reverent initiatives like the Museum of Literature Ireland maintain the city's ancient pride of place for both locals and newcomers.



15

Lisbon

Portugal

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #5 Outdoors
- #5 EV Charging Stations

POPULATION

Metro 3,013,000

One of Europe's hottest capitals is breaking records for visitors and new residents alike.

You're not imagining it: all of your friends are going to Lisbon. Portugal's capital rode the wave of the country's record 30 million visitors and €25 billion in revenue in 2023, including nearly 800,000 passing through Lisbon Cruise Port alone. But it's only partially for the 2,799 annual hours of sunshine—the most of any European capital. There's also the famed public transit, walkability and the hundreds of kilometres of new bike paths meandering through the city's Top 5-ranked Outdoors. Newcomers continue to pour in, goaded by various "best lists" for both digital nomads and international retirees that sing Lisbon's praises. Of course this has sent rents and house prices soaring. The government is tinkering with new remote work visas (the latest requires a monthly salary of \$2,750) while ending overly generous foreign residencies. Temporary bans on Airbnb licences are attempting to keep the city accessible for residents whose minimum wage is well under €700 per month. Still, new allures like the city's most recent Michelin-starred, Japanese-influenced Kabuki and Kanazawa keep global travellers flowing in (the city ranks #9 in Europe for Restaurants), as do exciting new hotels like the Mateus, in collaboration with the famed rosé vintner.



16

Stockholm

Sweden

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Labour Force Participation
- #1 Creative Class

POPULATION

Metro 2,308,000

Ambitious tech and transit investment activate an enterprising and educated citizenry.

No other Scandinavian city serves up a sensory feast like Stockholm. The Swedish capital boasts mind-bending geography (the city centre was built on 14 islands) and salt- and fresh-water outdoor swimming areas amid bounteous public green space (second only to Oxford). Then there's Stockholm's history of innovation, from the 1700s architecture and daring modern design of Gamla Stan to the infusion of tradition into its buzzy New Nordic cuisine. Throw in a multicultural population (reflected in its Top 10 ranking in Foreign-Born Residents) and an epic summer season with near-constant daylight and you've got a place that is equally welcoming and restlessly ambitious. Stockholm built the world's largest open-fibre network in the 1990s, followed a decade or so later by the launch of global hits like Skype, Spotify and Minecraft—earning the city the moniker of "The Unicorn Factory." More billion-dollar startups have launched here than in any place outside of Silicon Valley. A wander through the recently gentrified Södermalm neighbourhood, the birthplace of many tech giants, reveals why the city tops Europe in both our Labour Force Participation and Creative Class subcategories. And why it ranks in the Top 5 in our overall Prosperity ranking.



17
Hamburg
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #4 Green Space
- #13 Culture

POPULATION

Metro 3,422,000

Germany's second city is as creative as it is ethical.

Hamburg is both Europe's second-largest shipping port and a serious contender for "Venice of the North," with a stunning lake and a latticework of canals. Emblematic of this is the €638-million Elbphilharmonie, a spectacular concert hall that combines 19th-century marine trade warehouses with the crystalline architecture and acoustics of the future. Hamburg's commitment to the arts powers it to #13 in Europe in our Culture subcategory. Its nightlife (made famous by the nascent Beatles in the early 1960s) hasn't lost a beat, ranking #17. Hamburg comes by its opulence and sophistication honestly, with a workforce that ranks #14 for both GDP per Capita and Foreign-Born Residents. And this being Germany, inclusion is the price of doing business, evident in the city's signature redevelopment project, HafenCity, set to open in 2026. In Europe's biggest inner-city urban development—which, over more than a decade, is transforming 250 hectares of tumbledown docks along the port area into a buzzing shopping and residential area—a third of housing is subsidised while another third is rental. Ambitious city-building continues in the burbs, too, with an innovative car-free neighbourhood being built a 15-minute train ride from the centre.



18
Brussels
Belgium

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #2 Foreign-Born Residents
- #7 Airport Connectivity

POPULATION

Metro 3,331,000

Belgium's capital and the de facto home of the European Union increasingly welcomes the world.

Understated Brussels boasts breathtaking architecture (especially for Art Nouveau aficionados). Consider Grand Place—surely among the most beautiful squares in the world. The city has invested in public spaces, like the Tour & Taxis Food Market under the glass roofs of the former Gare Maritime, and the Grand Hospice, a repurposed neoclassical complex with beautiful colonnades and an interior park. Despite being the EU's administrative centre, one of the city's most famous landmarks is Manneken Pis, a statue of a naked boy peeing into a fountain—a symbol of locals' contempt for authority. The wit emanates from a vibrant, educated, international citizenry (Brussels trails only Luxembourg in our Foreign-Born Residents subcategory). Get local in the Congolese Matonge quarter's flea markets and street art. Or at the Working From_ co-working space in the Hoxton Hotel. The city is a gathering spot for conferences and summits of all kinds, facilitated by the torrid expansion of global flights that will improve its #7 Airport Connectivity ranking. The Brussels Midi station is also the hub for a country with some of the world's densest rail networks, and that is quickly expanding inter-city and overnight connections all over the continent.



19
Warsaw
Poland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #2 GDP per Capita
- #4 Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 3,190,000

Poland's capital city is an ascendant economic and entrepreneurial hotbed that has captured investor imaginations.

Warsaw is turning on the afterburners it spent a generation fine-tuning. Trailing only Dublin for GDP per Capita and boasting Europe's fourth-highest educated citizenry (to say nothing of finally securing a pro-EU national government a few months back) Warsaw is buzzing like few times in its history: from the rebuild of the 17th-century Saski Palace destroyed by the Nazis to a new cultural complex for both the Museum of Modern Art and the TR Warszawa Theatre set to open this year to the christening of a once-derelect 19th-century Habermus & Schiele Brewery as a local craft beer temple now known as Browary Warszawskie. Infrastructure buildout is equally kinetic. The new 310-metre Foster + Partners-designed Varso Tower is the EU's tallest building and is home to global firms hoping to tap into the smart, affordable talent. The same architecture firm is also designing the CPK Airport—a "transport interchange which brings together air, rail and road"—that is set to open in 2028 about 40 kilometres southwest of Warsaw. Plans are for it to link into the massive Rail Baltica high-speed railway connecting Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to Poland and the rest of Europe.



20

Budapest

Hungary

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #2 Poverty Rate
- #5 Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 3,003,000

The Old World beguiles in the Hungarian capital.

Budapest is synonymous with digital nomads and bold companies looking for old European vibrancy on a budget (and the first-mover advantage that comes with it). The city, split by the expansive bend of the Danube River, keeps delivering. On the west bank is medieval Buda, hilly and full of history, and on the east is Pest, modern and bohemian, with its recently revamped City Park. Last year marked 150 years of their unification, featuring epic celebrations around the newly renovated iconic Széchenyi Chain Bridge, a symbol of togetherness for a city that ranks #2 for keeping residents out of poverty. The city's underrated attractions already rank in the Top 5 in Europe and the #11 Museums ranking will only keep ascending with the new opening of the Museum of Ethnography, as will the city's #12 Culture ranking with the new House of Music Hungary and the Hungarian State Opera. All that buzz is drawing big hotel investment, from the new Matild Palace—the city's first Luxury Collection hotel—opening inside a UNESCO landmark in 2022, joining newcomers Párisi Udvar Hotel, W Budapest and the Dorothea Hotel (whose rooftop is a sweet dinner spot before hitting Europe's 11th-best nightlife).



21

Frankfurt

Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #4 Airport Connectivity
- #5 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 2,679,000

Frankfurt is quickly growing into Europe's business capital.

Given its enviable location in the geographic heart of Europe (and its #4-ranked airport, soon to be able to serve 100 million passengers annually) combined with its swift courtship of post-Brexit finance firms looking for stability, is it any wonder Frankfurt is today known as "Mainhattan"? More than 200 banks call the city home, including 160 international firms, the European Central Bank and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, Germany's largest. As a result, the city ranks in the Top 5 in our Global Fortune 500 subcategory and its citizenry's GDP per Capita ranking is in the Top 10 in Europe. Then there's the ongoing buildout of the infrastructure required to house all that foreign direct investment, which today means the city boasts 14 of Germany's 15 tallest buildings. Another eight skyscrapers, some well over 200 metres tall, are currently being built. This year's focus is on FOUR Frankfurt, a live-work neighbourhood of four towers in the financial district. Besides banking, the startup ecosystem is also ascendant (ranking #44 in our Startups subcategory), with insurance, cybersecurity and fintech inspired by the success of insurance platform unicorn Clark, which hit a valuation of US\$1 billion in 2021.



22

Helsinki

Finland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #6 Poverty Rate
- #8 Startups

POPULATION

Metro 1,552,000

Irreverence and saunas are the thing in Northern Europe's emerging hot spot.

The capital of the world's happiest country for the sixth year in a row (according to the 2023 World Happiness Report) must be doing something right. And no, it's just not Finland's new NATO membership. For starters, Helsinki doubled down on emergency outdoor placemaking measures during COVID and has kept the massive, purpose-built outdoor seating areas and other similar communal infrastructure projects largely intact, while city leaders continue to generously fund citizen community improvement projects. It's the kind of sensible urban cohesion you'd expect from a city that boasts the sixth-lowest poverty rate in Europe, as well as its 11th-highest rate of labour force participation. The city's natural bounty continues to expand with new trails, parks and an urban ferry system throughout a grid that ranks #15 in our Green Space subcategory. Curious visitors are filling new hotels in repurposed spaces like GLO Hotel's restored 1920s bank location near the port and the Best Western Premier Hotel Katajanokka's converted former prison. The just-opened Hotel Maria (housed in four historic city buildings) aspires to be the city's "first true five-star destination," according to founder, developer and former three-time Finnish Olympic gold medalist Samppa Lajunen.



23

Oslo

Norway

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #3 Poverty Rate
- #11 Foreign-Born Residents

POPULATION

Metro 1,279,000

A compact dynamo's secret formula is enchanting global talent.

No longer overshadowed by Stockholm and Copenhagen, Oslo is proving itself a worthy destination all its own. Its #30 Museums ranking will improve with the recent opening of Munch, a waterfront museum dedicated to the Expressionist painter of "The Scream". It, along with new districts like Sørenga, comprise the recently unveiled eastern waterfront that makes the entire harbour walkable via a 10-kilometre trail network. Newer still is the downtown National Museum, which replaced several cultural buildings, including the National Gallery. It houses classical and contemporary art and architecture studies and is today the largest art exhibition space in Scandinavia. Above the city, Rose Castle unveiled a permanent installation of paintings and sculptures that tells the story of Oslo's resilience during the Second World War. No wonder its citizens rank #15 in our Labour Force Participation subcategory, supported by 50-plus startup hubs helping make Oslo one of Europe's fastest-growing cities (ranking #11 for Foreign-Born Residents). The dozen floating saunas downtown are equally magnetic. Much-needed housing is aggressively being built in places like Fjord City on industrial port lands. As more talent discovers the drivers of Oslo's Top 10 overall Prosperity ranking, its pull will only strengthen.



24

Geneva

Switzerland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #3 Disposable Household Income
- #3 Foreign-Born Residents

POPULATION

Metro 609,000

The city of peace has a deep resonance in Europe today.

A globally vital city in a snow globe? Geneva comes close. With just 600,000 residents yet home to the European seat of the United Nations, the international headquarters of the Red Cross and more than 200 international organisations, the city does well by doing good, ranking #8 in Europe for GDP per Capita, #3 in our Foreign-Born Residents subcategory and #4 for the disposable income they bring home. The commitment to urban tranquillity was made official in 1949 when the Geneva Conventions, which focus on the welfare and protection of prisoners of war, wounded participants and innocents caught up in conflict, were signed here. The city was settled millennia ago and became a Roman outpost cherished for the sparkling waters of its eponymous lake with the confluence of the mighty river Rhône, along with the thermal pools with views of the soaring Alps and the Jura Mountains. Not the outdoors type? Get into inner space at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), housing the 27-kilometre Large Hadron Collider particle accelerator just outside of town. The newly opened Renzo Piano-designed CERN Science Gateway is a family-friendly introduction to the future of quantum physics.



25

Oxford

United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Green Space
- #1 EV Charging Stations

POPULATION

Metro 545,000

Less than an hour from London by rail, Europe's top university town is the best of many worlds.

With a legacy spanning nine centuries as a place of learning, Oxford's eponymous university—imprinted on the city itself to the point of being indiscernible from it—offers 350 graduate courses, affiliated societies and hundreds of education-focused organisations and businesses. Students of all kinds continue to pour into the compact city (the second smallest in our Top 25 this year, next to Dublin), and first-timers become instantly smitten by the jagged cobblestones, the 500-year-old pubs and the Gothic and neoclassical buildings and spires above, all standing sentry to the enlightenment here. The city's 40,000 students help Oxford rank #9 for Educational Attainment, and the city's ancient commitment to accessibility, along with a newer one to equity, ranks it #7 for Poverty Rate. Those residents who stay in town after graduation enjoy the ninth-highest disposable income in Europe. In addition to the usual magnetism of this curated, stewarded urban treasure on the banks of the Thames (called "Isis" locally), new post-pandemic investments are buzzing, from the Randolph Hotel's reno by new owners Graduate Hotels to East Oxford's new restaurant wave. Ancient urbanism aside, the city tops our Green Space subcategory, validated further by its centuries of inspiring luminaries the likes of JRR Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers and Philip Pullman.



26
Naples
Italy

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Outdoors
- #4 Sights & Landmarks

POPULATION

Metro 3,299,000

Italy's third-largest city is a 3,000-year-old treasure trove of urbanity, with the experiences to match.

Even by European second-city status, Naples has been overlooked and underestimated—both by international visitors and by Italy's power centres. Three millennia of urbanism make it one of Europe's oldest—with the accompanying layers of beauty, conflict and lore (grazie, Elena Ferrante). Naples tops Europe in our Parks & Recreation subcategory, buoyed by the city's historic waterfront, nearby beaches and parks ranging from master-planned parcels to secret public gardens. Napoli also ranks #4 for Sights & Landmarks—its centuries-old Naples Cathedral rivals any other in the sensual feast that is Italy, and new archaeological discoveries near Pompeii will only add to global bucket lists. Like in Rome and Istanbul, strolling here reveals forgotten history on every block. Despite the city's lawless reputation, tourism has doubled over the past decade, and crime has dropped dramatically (being now more confined to the "victim knew the suspect" variety). New international investments (like the W Naples inside a historic bank building on the kinetic Piazza del Municipio) are finally reaching one of the continent's most beguiling cities. A new high-speed rail link to Rome's Fiumicino airport is increasingly delivering curious first-timers to la città that's now in the Top 10 in our Nightlife, Museums and Restaurants subcategories.



27
Manchester
United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #3 Google Trends
- #12 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 3,348,000

A creative rebirth buzzes in England's worker bee city.

You'll be hearing a lot more about Manchester this decade as the historic engine of English industry shifts into cultural and creative output that eclipses anything else going on in the U.K., or even in Europe. The UNESCO City of Literature has never been short on storytelling talent, given that its residents include director Danny Boyle and artists like Oasis, Morrissey and, most recently and notably, Harry Styles, who is an investor and champion of Co-op Live, the U.K.'s largest new music arena, set to open in mid-2024 with 23,500 seats. A series of festivals and conferences this year—from Beyond the Music to the Worldwide Music Expo—keep Manchester's music investment going all year. Not forgotten are the city's smaller concert venues that have launched legends in previous decades, renovated and reopening to join the party this year, ensuring that the city's #24 ranking in our Culture subcategory will ascend quickly. Another recently opened arts behemoth is Factory International, the U.K.'s priciest cultural project since Tate Modern. The city's #16-ranked airport should be fully renovated next year, with passenger levels last year well above 2019, including dozens of new international connections to places like China and the Middle East.



28
Copenhagen
Denmark

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #3 Creative Class
- #4 Poverty Rate

POPULATION

Metro 1,929,000

One of Europe's most buzzed-about capitals gets real.

Copenhagen's compact, park-filled urban grid, connected by serpentine bike lanes that end at clean, city-sanctioned urban swimming spots (and public hot tubs!), earned the world's locked-down attention during the pandemic. That same attention returned last year, by way of a UNESCO Capital of Architecture designation. Events are going on until 2026, at formal venues like the Danish Architecture Center, but also at places like the waterfront Opera Park, an urban green space designed for climate resilience. The old Carlsberg brewery, newly reimagined as a community venue, anchors the city's newest destination district. But nothing compares to the building of Lynetteholm, a 275-hectare artificial island off the city's coast, housing 35,000 people while hoping to protect the harbour from rising water and storms. Copenhagen's commitment to sustainability is nothing new: it has long invested in its cycling infrastructure (for which it ranks #34), attempting to make 50% of all work and school commutes on bicycles by next year, as well as helping Denmark reach overall carbon neutrality by 2050. Transit buildout is everywhere, connecting more affordable districts on the city's outskirts, most notably the much-needed Sydhavn connector opening any month now. An international transit link to Malmö, Sweden, is also planned.



29
Edinburgh
United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #2 Educational Attainment
- #6 GDP per Capita

POPULATION

Metro 894,000

A long-overlooked European capital shines bright and welcomes the world once more.

The Scottish capital has long enchanted creative souls with its UNESCO World Heritage-designated Gothic architecture, moody weather and the legacy of the literary masters who've flocked here for both. But a growing appreciation of the city's arts programming (long powered by the storied University of Edinburgh and the second-most educated citizenry in Europe) has inspired hotel investment to accommodate tourists and talent. The renovated Scottish National Gallery project reopened last year to showcase the Scottish collection right in the heart of the city, while the upstart Hidden Doors Festival takes over unused spaces for art shows for a second year. The city's world-famous Edinburgh Festival Fringe will be bigger than ever in 2024, complete with a cruise-ship-turned-floating-hotel called the FringeShip. On the heels of last year's opening of the luxury Gleneagles Townhouse on St Andrew Square in the former Bank of Scotland came the announcement of a 2026 Dalata property a few doors away. These days the buzz is all around the massive redevelopment of St James Quarter, anchored by the 244-room W Edinburgh. The city works hard, too, obvious by its #6 ranking for GDP per Capita and locally inspired ventures like the Port of Leith Distillery, the U.K.'s first vertical distiller.



30
Bern
Switzerland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Disposable Household Income
- #3 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 733,000

The understated Swiss capital (yes, it's Bern, not Zürich) is a walkable, historic wonder with a rare blend of prosperity and hospitality.

Secluded on the banks of the emerald Aare River, Switzerland's capital city is too often overlooked (see its #124 ranking in our overall Lovability category—the lowest-ranked capital by far, with some social media and search metrics well out of the Top 100). We're all sleeping on Bern. This UNESCO World Heritage Old City is peppered with historic architecture, like the Zytglogge medieval clock tower, the Parliament Building and hundreds of magical (and Instagrammable) nooks to grab coffee, raclette or craft beer (Bern boasts the highest density of microbreweries in Switzerland). Tasting and shopping often takes place in 12th-century vaulted cellars built to store grains and wines. If you only have time for one, make it Café Marta, especially at apéro hour for local beverages and baked goods. Here you'll find locals with the highest disposable income in Europe. Given that residents also rank #12 for Labour Force Participation, their apéro is well earned. The city also ranks in the Top 3 in Europe for Green Space, with verdant tree cover that always reminds visitors and residents alike that the city is Switzerland's gateway to the natural majesty of the Alps.



31
Lausanne
Switzerland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #3 Disposable Household Income
- #3 Foreign-Born Residents

POPULATION

Metro 583,000

A stunning sense of place and strategic prosperity serve up the good life on the banks of Lake Geneva.

Nestled between Lake Geneva and vineyards that climb up to snowy Alps, Switzerland's fourth-largest city on some days looks like a CGI setting in a Lord of the Rings film. The local vibe is distinctly working to live, with efficient commerce carried out in the largely car-free medieval city centre powered by the focused, vital companies that call Lausanne home, as diverse as the International Olympic Committee (since 1914), Logitech and Nespresso. The result is a #3 ranking for both Foreign-Born Residents and Disposable Household Income (with the 11th-highest GDP per Capita ranking). The pipeline of global talent that pours into the city also gives Lausanne a high-end campus feel, courtesy of places like the International Institute for Management Development, a leading business school, as well as the multitude of graduate studies offered by the University of Lausanne. The city's nascent culture scene is also on the rise with the recent opening of Plateforme 10, an arts district launched in 2020 that's been buzzing with new galleries like Photo Elysée, shops and museums, including the new home of the city's international art museum and the recently opened Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts (mudac).



32
Luxembourg City
Luxembourg

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Foreign-Born Residents
- #8 Google Search

POPULATION

Metro 639,000

Folded into cliffs and rivers, with a moneyed, international citizenry, this may be Europe's best-kept secret.

Luxembourg may be tiny in relation to larger neighbours Belgium, France and Germany, yet its capital city over-performs in the talent that calls it home. A city that boasts the highest share of foreign-born residents of any European city maintains its coveted hometown status by paying Europe's seventh-highest disposable income. More than 170 nationalities live here, making Luxembourg a true economic, social and cultural melting pot—fitting, given the destruction it endured during the Second World War. Where does the city's wealth originate? The efficient bank sector (finance comprises 25% of local GDP) for one, as well as being the Secretariat of the European Parliament and headquarters of the European Court of Justice. The capital of the only Grand Duchy in the world—you might run into the duke in your wanderings—remains one of the continent's best-kept secrets (given its #92 Lovability ranking among the Top 100 in Europe) despite being an urban UNESCO World Heritage site that's rarely overrun by visitors. But the world is noticing and the city has vowed to invest €500 million in affordable rental housing to keep its talent pipeline stocked.



33
Basel
Switzerland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #5 Disposable Household Income
- #7 Global 500 Companies

POPULATION

Metro 572,000

The home of the planet's most famous art fair is also a prosperous economic powerhouse activated by an increasingly global citizenry.

Switzerland's third-largest city is enchanting long-time citizens, new talent and curious visitors like never before. Its appeal may be due to its relative obscurity, tucked on the banks of the Rhine River in the country's north (its northern city limits are minutes from the French and German borders). The natural boundary of the Jura Mountains has also left the city to evolve over the centuries with moderate influence from Bern. From the #15-ranked bike infrastructure on the continent to centuries' worth of daring architecture, few cities with this few people leave you as breathless as Basel. Locals certainly savour their city's special blend, and, given Basel's #5 ranking for Disposable Household Income, as well as #8 for Foreign-Born Residents, they're spreading the word to fellow high-performers. The talent is scooped up not only by the deep culture sector, but also by "Europe's BioValley," the tri-nation life sciences cluster stretching from Basel into France and Germany. Even before Moderna chose the city as its coronavirus vaccine HQ during the pandemic's first year or medicinal psychedelic firm MindMed opened its R&D centre, Basel was home to pharmaceuticals giant Novartis, which recently unveiled a publicly accessible "campus of knowledge and innovation."



34
Birmingham
United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #5 EV Charging Stations
- #6 Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 3,098,000

England's historic industrial heart beats anew with robust infrastructure that fosters a cultural economy.

Birmingham (or "Brum"), the largest city in the West Midlands and second largest in England, has resumed its skyward trajectory of the Golden Decade before COVID hit. The 2010s saw a massive influx of Global Fortune 500 regional offices chasing one of Europe's youngest workforces (today, about 40% are under 25) and their coveted skills in finance and professional services, among a multitude of others honed at the city's eponymous university. Urban investment followed, from the opening of Europe's largest library to plans (coming to life this decade) for a high-speed rail network called HS2, where a trip to London can be made in 36 minutes. This, of course, makes Birmingham's airport (ranked #109) a suddenly convenient option to access the country's capital, and there's fittingly an ongoing €350-million investment plan to increase the airport's capacity to 18 million passengers by 2033. The number of jobs being created is staggering, especially in the booming life sciences and green technology clusters as both the government and private local companies like Land Rover and Jaguar rush toward renewables. Given all the big news in town, it's no wonder that Birmingham will be the new headquarters of national tourism agency VisitBritain/VisitEngland as of April 2024.



35
The Ruhr
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #4 EV Charging Stations
- #5 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 5,069,000

How did Germany's industrial wasteland become a verdant land of opportunity? Welcome to the Ruhr.

Western Germany's far-flung former coal-mining and industrial western metropolis is, at 53 towns and cities (Dortmund, Essen and Oberhausen being the best known), the country's largest metro by population. At its industrial peak in the post-war 1960s, the area growled with 150 coal mines extracting the fuel to power blast furnaces and steel mills as the continent rebuilt itself. When the coal industry was mothballed in 2018, the Ruhr was already building its next chapter, namely with a cultural legacy as the 2010 European Capital of Culture (the first industrial zone, as opposed to city, to earn that distinction). The area spent the next decade working with what it had, transforming thousands of factories and industrial buildings into hundreds of museums, theatres, galleries and festival spaces, earning a #10 ranking in our Attractions subcategory. Even more remarkable is how a centuries-old extraction zone today ranks in the Top 5 in Europe for Green Space. The Ruhr is also leveraging its 22 universities and colleges and some of the cheapest real estate in Western Europe to draw parallels to Berlin of the early 2000s. Given the housing crises and war for talent happening around the continent, they may just have hit the motherload.



36
Glasgow
United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #2 Educational Attainment
- #23 Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 1,831,000

Creative celebration and a pursuit of affordable opportunity keep Glasgow real, even as its reputation soars.

Glasgow powers to its European ranking on the strength of its education, including Europe's second-best educated citizenry (trailing only London) and its eponymous university founded in 1451, the fourth oldest in the English-speaking world. It counts economist Adam Smith and U.S. founding father James Wilson as alumni. People not already here are certainly noticing. Tech startups hungry for cheap space and talent are drawn to the city's working-class authenticity over pricier European capitals, driving up a #29 ranking for Global Fortune 500 companies and a #30 spot in our Creative Class subcategory. The city's airport will improve on its #56 ranking, too, with international flights being added in 2024. Emirates, for example, has seen forward bookings between Dubai and Glasgow up by 51% year-on-year. No wonder new hotels are planned for the rest of the decade, with the new Virgin Hotels Glasgow already welcoming guests. But it's not like Glasgow has gone corporate. This is the home of Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet and the National Theatre of Scotland, and the city is still buzzing from its 2020 designation as the U.K.'s top cultural and creative centre by the European Commission. Its #28 ranking in our Culture subcategory will rise in the coming years.



37
Stuttgart
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #5 EV Charging Stations
- #11 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 2,531,000

German efficiency and hospitality combine in a company town with a fun side.

Stuttgart is a hardworking economic engine that performs across multiple metrics with aplomb. Its residents are as international as they are ambitious, ranking #20 for foreign-born citizenry while cranking out Europe's 15th-highest GDP per capita. The city's high score in our overall Prosperity category (#31) is shared among the growing talent base (ranking #14 for Disposable Household Income). The economic rev was sideswiped by the pandemic, when Stuttgart's optimised meetings and conventions business fell silent. The convention centre has since reopened and doubled down on sustainability, with more than half its area committed to green space and the solar panels on its roof generating surplus electricity for local households. Also buzzing are the streets around the convention centre, as the business travel that fuelled Stuttgart's party mile for decades—a hub of bars, cafés, clubs and intimate drinking dens—has roared back. Given the pent-up demand, this was one place in Germany where the post-pandemic return to business was swiftest. It's not surprising: Stuttgart ranks an impressive #11 for Global Fortune 500 companies based here, and is an economic hub boasting the European headquarters of Porsche, Bosch and IBM.



38

Florence

Italy

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #3 EV Charging Stations
- #5 Shopping

POPULATION

Metro 794,000

A city as a museum? Florence is as close as you'll find.

If you've never been—or if it's been a few years since your last visit—it's time to go, presto. The Renaissance beauty ranks equally well in our Lovability and Livability categories (#17) thanks to #13 Museums and #23 Sights & Landmarks rankings. Housing masterpieces like Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" and "Allegory of Spring", Michelangelo's "David" and Giotto's "Ognissanti Madonna", to name just a few, is, admittedly, an unfair advantage. Of course, in the birthplace of global fashion brands like Roberto Cavalli, Salvatore Ferragamo and all the "ccis" (Pucci, Gucci, Capucci and Ricci), Florence ranks #5 for Shopping and is going luxe on hospitality this year with the new Collegio alla Querce, Auberge Resorts Collection, housed in 16th-century buildings that served as chapels, theatres and schools. The 35-metre pool is only outdone by the dedicated local wine programme for guests. Speaking of accommodation, Florence's historic UNESCO World Heritage centro has more beds listed on Airbnb than residents, with all the implications you'd imagine. As such, city leaders have banned new Airbnb listings in the city, a law that will be tested when the Tour de France comes to the city in late June.



39

Düsseldorf

Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #15 Airport Connectivity
- #17 EV Charging Stations

POPULATION

Metro 1,465,000

A home for culture and prosperity.

Düsseldorf has the special blend that makes an efficient, prosperous city do right by residents and (business) travellers alike. Global Fortune 500 companies in town (ranking #29 in Europe) have for decades pulled in international talent that helps the city rank #23 in our Foreign-Born Residents subcategory. The understated multiculturalism (including Germany's largest Japanese community, in the Immermannstrasse area) attracts even more regional offices that provide the North-Rhine Westphalia state capital with Europe's 27th-highest disposable household income. The small but mighty cultural scene (ranked #61 but poised for big things) supports more than 100 galleries, and Joseph Beuys, the sculptor and performance artist, remains a local icon almost 40 years after his death. The Kunstsammlung North Rhine-Westphalia museum is home to important classical and contemporary European art collections, performances and screenings. The architecture at MedienHafen—a waterfront development juxtaposing old with new—boasts buildings and hotels by Frank Gehry, David Chipperfield, Jo Coenen, Steven Holl and Claude Vasconi alongside restored historic warehouses that maintain the industrial port character of the Rhine. And in 2028, the Japanese starchitect-designed Tadao Ando Campus & Tower in the city's north will house a hotel, museum, offices, food hall and (this being Germany) a local brewery.



40

Bratislava

Slovakia

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #7 Biking
- #9 Poverty Rate

POPULATION

Metro 670,000

Slovakia's overlooked capital city is reclaiming its rich history from Soviet-era monotony.

Located close to the geographic centre of Europe, the Slovakian capital competes with Vienna, Prague, Kraków and Budapest for both tourism and investment. In fact, no two national capitals are geographically closer than Vienna and Bratislava. An increasing number of foreigners venturing off the beaten path discover a compact, cobblestone-lined Hapsburg heart, crowned by St Martin's Cathedral and the revitalised but no less historic Kapitul'ska Street. It's worth taking in the urban evolution by bike along the city's bike paths (ranking #7 in Europe), away from the beautiful chaos of fairy-tale spires and Soviet-era monstrosities—like the 95-metre-high UFO Tower, a perch over the Danube River since 1972. (But do grab a drink in its penthouse bar.) Outside Bratislava's centre, the intrepid can view the future of its skyline: the first towers of the Zaha Hadid Architects-designed Sky Park development that, upon buildout, will feature new residences, an office block and even a heating plant. It's a welcome addition to an industrious citizenry that ranks #16 in our Labour Force Participation subcategory, in a local economy that ties for the ninth-lowest poverty rate in Europe.



41
Nice
France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #2 Google Search
- #21 Creative Class

POPULATION

Metro 615,000

The Côte d'Azur's urban heart is not taking time off.

In many ways, France's fifth-largest city paved the way for the modern European holiday destination. Quite literally: in the 1800s, visionary city leaders convinced vacationing English aristocracy to pay to pave the five kilometres of beachfront, known today as Promenade des Anglais. These days, the stunning urban heart of the Côte d'Azur is as coveted by travellers—who make it the second-most searched city in Europe—as it was by artists like Matisse and Picasso. While it didn't get the 2028 European Capital of Culture honours it had hoped for (the title went to fellow French metro Bourges), its dozens of museums and galleries—many housed in the city's bounty of Belle Époque architecture—are buzzing. Hospitality development is also in full swing, led by last year's opening of the Daniel Libeskind-designed (among others) Gare Thiers-Est, a massive jagged crystal next to the train station, inspired by the mineral forms of azurite found in the region, with high-end shops, a 120-room Hilton hotel, offices and epic public spaces. Old Town gets the luxurious Hotel du Couvent this year, while Anantara Hotels & Resorts opened recently in a 175-year-old icon, joining post-pandemic openings and renos of historic grand dames.



42
Kraków
Poland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 Biking
- #9 Poverty Rate

POPULATION

Metro 1,423,000

Poland's second city (and historic soul) is a walkable trip back in time with an eye on an exciting future.

Few cities in Eastern Europe boast more historical significance than Kraków. Largely spared from Second World War bombing, the city features ancient urban gems ranging from the Wawel Royal Castle perched on a hill in all its Gothic-meets-Renaissance glory to the Cloth Hall, that, built in the 1200s, could vie for Europe's oldest shopping centre. It's why the city is increasingly a destination for Europeans looking for new urban holidays, with its #13 ranking in Attractions and #20 in Museums, bolstered by this year's opening of a new home for the Museum of Contemporary Art overlooking the Vistula River. Like in Warsaw, foreign investment is everywhere. Ryanair recently announced a €750-million expansion of its Kraków operations while Google continues to invest. In 2023, Volvo Cars opened an entirely new tech hub to drive electrification, noting the need to beat competitors to Kraków's untapped talent pool. The investment will create an estimated 500 to 600 local jobs. Office and residential investment is also pouring in, with global real estate developer Panattoni, Finland's YIT and Hungarian developer Echo Investment all building this decade. A recent local government push to expand bike infrastructure powers Kraków to an impressive #9 in Europe.



43
Cologne
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #16 Google Trends
- #23 Poverty Rate

POPULATION

Metro 2,216,000

Cologne is open for business and pleasure.

Despite aesthetic riches like the twin-spired Cologne Cathedral that rises above the historic buildings of the city's Old Town, or the cultural bounty of places like the Museum Ludwig with its 20th-century art, perception of Cologne lags behind its virtues. The city ranks bafflingly low in our Sights & Landmarks (#36), Culture (#34) and Museums (#61) subcategories. That last one hurts, given the range of museums in town, from Middle Ages riches at the Schnütgen, classics at the Wallraf-Richartz and the Picassos and more modern marvels at the Museum Ludwig. The city even has its own beer, Kölsch. Its global ascent is inevitable, especially with both Germans and international visitors rediscovering the city—like the more than 1.2 million who attended the city's 2023 Pride festivities. Cologne is also a regional business powerhouse and destination, fuelled by its #28-ranked GDP per Capita and subsequent 27th-highest ranking for Disposable Household Income in Europe. Home to Lufthansa, traditionally the second-largest airline in Europe, and the European division of the Ford Motor Company, the city is increasingly investing in its aerospace industry ecosystem and leveraging the German Aerospace Centre and HQ for the European Astronaut Centre that calls the city home.



44

Gothenburg

Sweden

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #6 Labour Force Participation
- #7 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 1,022,000

A 400-year-old powerhouse on Sweden's west coast has smartened up for a sustainable future.

Sweden's second city has wrapped up its three-year 400th birthday party and is getting back to work as the country's research and development engine. Gothenburg residents ranked #19 in our Educational Attainment subcategory, and their skills have long pulled in foreign direct investment to the point where, today, 20% of the workforce is employed by a foreign-owned company. Recently, the investment has come largely from Volvo Cars. While the company has manufactured cars here since 1927, it is today owned by China's Geely, which is investing billions locally to turn Volvo into a fully electric car company by 2030. Geely is so ubiquitous that it's driving the city's high-profile hotel boom, having built the Clarion Hotel the Pier next to their Uni3 innovation centre. Another rising corporate force is pharmaceutical and biotech company AstraZeneca—which opened one of its three global R&D hubs here, further showcasing the local talent that ranks #6 in Europe for Labour Force Participation. Aside from the massive city building that took place for the city's 400th anniversary celebrations—like the expansion of Jubileumsparken (Centenary Park) and renovated Gothenburg Maritime Museum and Aquarium—the city is anticipating a €100-billion property and infrastructure investment over the next decade.



45

Bristol

United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #15 Poverty Rate
- #18 GDP per Capita

POPULATION

Metro 956,000

Welcome to the Bristol decade. Please try to keep up.

Much like Manchester, Bristol is going all in on creative industry and capital over the next few years, nowhere more so than with the planned 2026 opening of YTL Arena at Brabazon Hangars on the city's former Filton Airfield. The 10.5-hectare facility's middle hangar is so massive that it could swallow London's O2 arena. A convention centre is planned for the east hangar, while the west will serve as a food hall, work spaces and leisure facilities. Carbon neutrality, of course, is a given in the U.K.'s first official Cycling City and the 2015 European Green Capital. Bristol's #36 Culture ranking will also improve as the town that gave the world artists like Massive Attack, Portishead and Banksy reopens the Bristol Beacon music venue, following a five-year, £48-million transformation. The city is also leveraging its residents' #18-ranked GDP per Capita in Europe to further own nuclear and renewables in the U.K., first with the opening of the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station an hour south of the city, then with the country's largest electric battery production facilities opening soon just outside of town. Bristol's #40-ranked airport is a hive of activity as it builds to accommodate the inflow.



46

Valencia

Spain

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #12 Outdoors
- #13 Restaurants

POPULATION

Metro 1,768,000

Enigmatic customs and historically paramount places make this city an undiscovered gem.

All (continental) eyes will be on Spain's third-largest city this year as it basks in its 2024 European Green Capital limelight. The honour is well-earned, as the city expands its 200 kilometres of bike paths (the city currently ranks #64 for Biking) and almost 500 hectares of carbon-absorbing urban gardens like Jardines del Real/Viveros. Its new Parque Central unveiled 10 hectares of green space and tree canopy on top of a reused rail yard in 2022. Outside of the centro, the city's 15 kilometres of pristine European Blue Flag-status beaches are lapped by some of the cleanest water in the country. Given all the natural bounty, the city's #12 ranking in our Outdoors subcategory will surprise no one. Amazingly, the city further proved its sustainability bona fides last year when it became the first in the world to verify its carbon emissions from tourist activity. Look it up—it's a big deal. Valencia's already impressive #15-ranked Sights & Landmarks are poised to climb even higher with the city's new CaixaForum history museum being joined by the just-opened Hortensia Herrero Art Centre in the renovated Valeriola Palace, home of Spanish billionaire Hortensia Herrero's private art collection with works by Andreas Gursky and Anish Kapoor.



47

Liverpool

United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #7 Sights & Landmarks
- #15 Nightlife

POPULATION

Metro 1,534,000

The city that helped win wars and give peace a chance is poised to tell its story again.

Liverpool's place as an integral urban centre in world history is difficult to comprehend without visiting it yourself. Fortunately, the city documents it all masterfully—and honestly: from its role in Britain's trans-Atlantic slave trade at the International Slavery Museum to the heroic contribution to both world wars with countless Liverpoolians enlisting (plus its own strategic location) at the Western Approaches Museum, housed in a subterranean bunker. But it was in its post-war decline that Liverpool made history again when four local teenagers jammed together. Today, The Beatles Story is the world's largest permanent exhibit devoted to the band. Almost as revered is Liverpool FC, the U.K.'s most storied club, and Anfield stadium, their home since 1892. Given these layers of history, the city's #7 ranking for Sights & Landmarks isn't surprising. Expect the city's star to ascend as the new Waterfront Transformation Project reimagines the historic area as part of a 10-year master plan featuring a pyramidal pavilion for contemplation by architect Asif Khan and artist Theaster Gates. The nearby Baltic Triangle neighbourhood is a buzzy culinary destination where two-year-old restaurant Manifest is already Michelin Guide-approved. Hotel openings are also ramping up in 2024.



48

Leeds

United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #24 Nightlife
- #29 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 2,619,000

After a year of celebration, Leeds is back to building for the long term.

Leeds spent last year celebrating its Leeds 2023 year of culture with concerts, a literary festival and storytelling. The celebration builds on a legacy of cultural programming (ranked #38 and sure to improve), powered by a storied nightlife (#24) supported by six (six!) local universities and a proud '90s past of bringing acid house dance music to the world. The ongoing Back to Basics weekly club night, launched in 1991, claims to be Europe's longest-running, while new spots helping shape the city include the Viaduct Showbar, an LGBTQIA+ hot spot. The city also revels outdoors, and Roundhay Park, with its 285 hectares of lakes, forests, playgrounds and cafés (and the occasional Rolling Stones, Madonna or U2 show) is one of Europe's largest urban green spaces. Given the reverence Leeds has for its tree cover, it's no wonder it ranks in the Top 10 in our Green Space subcategory. The city's skilled workforce and student population were also the catalyst for the region's designation as England's third Investment Zone a few months back, aiming to create more than 2,500 new jobs by the end of the decade and potentially unlocking £220 million in investment.



49

Southampton

United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #7 Poverty Rate
- #8 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 688,000

An overlooked port city on England's south coast (yes, the Titanic departed from here) bubbles with potential.

Less than an hour's train ride from London, Southampton is leveraging its rich heritage as a maritime gateway to optimise plentiful opportunity. Residents are well versed in the city's attributes as a hometown that takes care of its own. With more than 50 city parks and urban forests (powering the city's #8 spot in our Green Space subcategory) and within 30 minutes of the New Forest National Park, the outdoors are never far. And neither are spectacular beaches further afield, with the bucolic Isle of Wight a short ferry ride away. Long called the U.K.'s "gateway to the world," the city is drawing investment with its port potential, with proposals ranging from the Maritime Gateway (to funnel visitors from Southampton Central Station to the waterfront) to the billions of pounds proposed to better link the island to increase tourism (which already thrives here, given the city's cruise ship traffic). In light of this ambition, it's easy to see how Southampton ranks #29 in our overall Prosperity index, including #9 for Disposable Household Income and #7 for Poverty Rate. Its two universities and economic resilience mean Southampton boasts Europe's ninth-most educated residents.



50
Athens
Greece

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #11 Outdoors
- #11 Restaurants

POPULATION

Metro 3,154,000

As the 2,500-year-old cradle of Western civilization, Athens understands resilience.

The ancient capital is busy making up for lost time with ambitious city-building spanning new metro lines connecting soulful destination neighbourhoods like Exarcheia (whose central square is locally considered the heart of this great city) to reopening grand buildings as cultural hubs. Right in the city centre, the ancient Municipal Market of Kypseli today hosts community parties, concerts and workshops, and the old National Opera building is now the Olympia Municipal Musical Theatre Maria Callas. Returning visitors are equally busy catching up, strolling the refreshed Grand Promenade, a four-kilometre tree-lined and car-free walkway at the foot of the Acropolis that connects the city's major archaeological sites (earning a #20 ranking for Sights & Landmarks). The Athens Olympic Museum in the northern Athenian suburb of Marousi is the nation's newest, highlighting the history of the Olympic Games. Athens' #18 ranking for Museums will improve soon enough. Another new (well, technically renovated) cultural destination is the National Gallery, reopened in 2021 after an eight-year reno that doubled its size and let in ample natural light to showcase the European art. Dozens of new hotels include the One&Only Aesthesis on a private oceanfront estate and the sensual feast that is the Brown Acropol.



51
Lyon
France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #15 Google Search
- #23 Restaurants

POPULATION

Metro 2,281,000

Future-focused and daring, France's second city is an ancient river metro with big plans.

A Roman city founded more than two millennia ago, Lyon is to be savoured nose to tail, past to future, literally and figuratively. If the city's middling Attractions (#40) and Museums (#58) rankings rise with the plentiful planned investment, that's just icing on the gâteau. Locals are buzzing about the new OL Vallée development with its massive gym and pool, five indoor football pitches, a 32-lane bowling alley, escape rooms and the City Surf Park. More new investment is pouring into La Confluence, a 150-hectare urban redevelopment that not only brings together Lyon's two fabled rivers—the Rhône and the Saône—but also gives new life to a tract of prime but neglected industrial real estate. The jewel in the new development's crown is the Musée des Confluences, an architectural enigma glittering at the very point where the rivers meet, with an outstretched park disappearing into the flows. You'll also hear much more about Lyon's biking infrastructure (which will improve on its #29 ranking). Already boasting 1,200 kilometres of bike lanes (a third of which are protected from cars), the new Lyon Routes will provide 250 kilometres of bike-only roads to connect the city's suburbs to its heart.



52
Marseille
France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #16 Global Fortune 500
- #21 Creative Class

POPULATION

Metro 1,873,000

The oldest city in France—and a port since 600 BCE—sparkles with 300 days of sunshine annually and plenty of global delights.

The designation as Europe's Capital of Culture a decade ago had Marseille modernise its seedy port city reputation (for the most part). A swath of new waterfront buildings demonstrates the commitment across city leadership in France's third-largest city. To that end, Marseille just announced its most ambitious investment plan since the 1940s, committing almost €2 billion across reconstruction, acquisition and modernisation of schools, public services and the housing crisis. Until then, don't miss the fruits of earlier investment in Vieux Port, designed by Norman Foster, who turned a site that's been here for 26 centuries into a mesmerising pedestrian-only zone with a vibrant sense of place. The showstopper is at Quai des Belges, where a dramatic blade of reflective stainless steel creates a dreamy canopy and shade. Nearby is the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations with its fishnet-inspired design, linked by a pedestrian bridge to the 17th-century Fort Saint-Jean. Another new ode to the old is the just-opened Cosquer Méditerranée, housing a full-scale replica of the nearby Grotte Cosquer cave, decorated with prehistoric artwork before it flooded. The city's commitment will only grow the #16 ranking for Global Fortune 500 companies in town and the #21-ranked creative class they employ.



53

Bilbao

Spain

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #5 Educational Attainment
- #11 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 1,049,000

Smart, safe and economically vibrant, Bilbao is redesigning the European good life.

Bilbao, in the heart of Basque Country in northern Spain, last year celebrated 25 years since the 1997 opening of the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Frank Gehry-designed, titanium-clad museum that made the city, and its architect, global icons. Proudly one of Europe's smaller urban centres, Bilbao revels under the cover of its own relative obscurity and isolation, creating its own magnetism. Sure, the Guggenheim's destination architecture still draws hundreds of thousands annually, but as one of Europe's most welcoming cities (ranked #13 in our Green Space and #23 in our Average Rent subcategories), Bilbao is building an accessible, resilient hometown that's not afraid to take risks. Consider the daring new waves of architecture, like Santiago Calatrava's Zubizuri Bridge and Bilbao Airport, and Zaha Hadid's redevelopment of the old port area. Design-forward Bilbao is also emerging as a stealthy, affordable business headquarters, with the 11th-most Global Fortune 500 companies in town, including multinational utility company Iberdrola and financial giant BBVA. The world is watching this urban dynamo, especially as it hosted the launch of the Tour de France cycling race this past summer in balmy splendour while the rest of Southern Europe sweltered.



54

Tallinn

Estonia

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #7 Startups
- #18 Labour Force Participation

POPULATION

Metro 610,000

One of Europe's smallest capitals stands tall.

With its medieval spires and conical, red-tiled roofs sprouting from the city's verdant tree canopy, Tallinn's Old Town is enjoying three decades as a UNESCO World Heritage site. An impressive #22 ranking for its diverse museums is earned by Kumu Art Museum, which houses three centuries of Estonian art. It's a vital look into the region's geopolitically fraught history, seen in pieces illustrating a pastoral Baltic homeland, Imperial Czarist fleets, Soviet propaganda, protest posters and, finally, independent Estonian voices. The PoCo Art Museum is the city's newest, packed with contemporary art from Andy Warhol to Banksy. But this town works hard too, so experience the future of this entrepreneurial city by strolling 30 minutes north to the newly redeveloped old shipyard of Port Noblessner to see what the local ministry of entrepreneurship and IT claims is the highest density of startups in the world, even calling it "Europe's Silicon Valley." (The city ranks #13 in our Startups subcategory.) The district is also home to Estonia's first Michelin two-star restaurant, 180° by Matthias Diether. The city is riding its 2023 European Green Capital title, too, with its carbon-neutral public transport and investment in Europe's #22-ranked bike infrastructure.



55

Dresden

Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #6 Biking
- #17 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 965,000

Few European cities evoke the horrors of war like this vital German city.

Known as "Florence on the Elbe" (after the river that flows through it) until February 13, 1945, this Baroque masterpiece (and its robust manufacturing infrastructure) was bombed by 800 British planes dropping 2,700 tonnes of explosives over two days, reducing the city to rubble and killing more than 25,000, including refugees and Allied prisoners of war. Today, Dresden is reaping the work of its meticulous rebuild in the decades following the war, with its historic centre finally opening this year after extensive restoration. The inspiring natural beauty of the city (validated by its #17 ranking for Green Space) is also being celebrated with tributes to Romantic painter and renowned Dresden resident Caspar David Friedrich, born 250 years ago, with several of the city's #50-ranked museums holding exhibitions. That ranking will rise with the upcoming opening of the Archiv der Avantgarden-Egidio Marzona, where more than a million pieces of 20th-century art will be housed. Economic development is also big news in 2024, with the recent announcement that U.S.-based semiconductor contract manufacturer GlobalFoundries plans to invest at least €1 billion in a new production facility in the city.



56
Vilnius
Lithuania

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 GDP Per Capita
- #18 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 708,000

Distilled urbanism on the Baltic edge.

Lithuania's tiny capital (it has just over 700,000 people) is focusing on its small but mighty attributes. Take its 2022 city branding campaign, titled "Nobody Knows Where Vilnius Is." It was irreverent, self-effacing and endearingly on-brand for a city still considered a secret European capital, with its UNESCO-protected walkable centre replete with Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance layers that are never too crowded. The city definitely got noticed for its 700th anniversary last year, with an all-year party featuring summer music festivals, citizen-led placemaking projects, an art biennial and more. This year is all about the city's ninth-highest GDP per Capita and Top 20 Startup rankings: the €100-billion Tech Zity campus will span 55,000 square metres and house 5,000 digital workers, eclipsing Paris's Station F, today Europe's largest startup campus. Housed in the New Town district in new and renovated warehouses, the area will feature housing, restaurants, bars and classrooms, further boosting the local tech industry that launched global unicorns like cybersecurity firm Nord and used clothing retailer Vinted. In 2025, the hits will keep coming when Vilnius becomes the European Commission's European Green Capital. Now, if residents could only stop looking over their shoulder at Russian aggression in the region.



57
Venice
Italy

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 Shopping
- #13 Facebook Check-ins

POPULATION

Metro 552,000

Safe, profound and willing to reveal its secrets to those who take the time to look for them.

Few cities are as beloved as Venice, reflected in its Top 20 ranking in our overall Lovability index, where it ranks #13 among European cities for Facebook Check-ins and #16 for Tripadvisor Reviews. The city coaxes stories from visitors eager to experience the #14-ranked sights woven into the city's fabric, along with the global ideas that started here, from banking (by the city's Jewish merchants at their benches, or banci) to quarantines (the 40-day isolation required by incoming ships during plagues). But a central city that's just 7.6 square kilometres hosted almost 13 million tourists in 2019 and is expected to exceed that in coming years. As such, on the heels of banning cruise ships and megaphones wielded by belligerent guides, Venice now requires day-trippers to register before visiting, with those 15 and older paying €5 per day via an online platform on most spring and summer weekends. Those staying in the city are exempt. Investment in La Serenissima continues to pour in, namely with the Nolinski Venezia, Venice's newest luxury hotel whose common spaces—from its 4,000-book Library Bar to its rooftop jacuzzi—almost rival the beguiling nooks of the city outside its gilded doors.



58
Bonn
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #10 Green Space
- #11 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 790,000

A former capital keeps its advantages.

Bonn may have a relatively small population today, but its importance to Europe and the world can't be understated (if only because Ludwig van Beethoven was born here in 1770 and his three-storey stucco house draws tens of thousands annually). The capital of West Germany from 1949 to 1990, it was among the world's most important decision centres. It was also the seat of government of the reunited Germany from 1990 to 1999. Two millennia prior, it was deemed a strategic imperial outpost by the expanding Roman army and was constructed as such, in effect becoming one of Germany's oldest cities. Today, the German federal government maintains a substantial presence here and a third of national ministerial jobs are still located in the city, as well as 20 United Nations institutions, the most in the country. Old capitals don't relinquish their advantage easily and, besides being a government town, Bonn remains the headquarters for publicly listed Deutsche Telekom and Deutsche Post, giving the city a #11 ranking in our Global Fortune 500 subcategory. The local talent pipeline is served well by the University of Bonn and new arrivals (the city ranks #23 for Foreign-Born Residents).



59
The Hague
Netherlands

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 Labour Force Participation
- #16 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 1,122,000

The political capital of the Netherlands delivers on livability for citizens while keeping humanity accountable.

The third-largest city in the Netherlands feels a world apart from the country's capital, considering its global purpose. Home of the Dutch royal family, the Peace Palace and the International Criminal Court, where the UN International Court of Justice rules on international law, The Hague keeps an impeccable order. Its #9 ranking in Labour Force Participation is powered by the fact that 26% of local jobs are provided by the Dutch government or international institutions. It's also a private-sector dynamo, ranking #16 for Global Fortune 500 companies like Royal Dutch Shell, Aegon, NIBC Bank and regional offices ranging from Saudi Aramco to T-Mobile. It's packed with 13th-century architecture, like the Binnenhof complex, where you'll find the Dutch government offices right in the heart of the city. Its large fountain and pond is an urban haven for ducks and swans that add to the overall storybook vibe. The city ranks #42 for its outdoor spaces, with spots like Westduinpark featuring dense forests and high dunes that drop into a stunning sandy beach. Art museums are everywhere, as are attractions for all ages (ranked #53), ranging from the Madurodam Miniature Town to the Children's Book Museum in The Hague Library and the LEGOLAND Discovery Centre.



60
Hanover
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #11 Global Fortune 500
- #22 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 1,289,000

While many cities claim to work hard, play hard, Hanover walks (and bikes) the talk.

The industrious city on the banks of the Leine River is home to a diverse ecosystem of companies (and given the local business community's obsession with collaboration and coordination, it feels particularly symbiotic). Companies here range from Sennheiser to Volkswagen (which just started building the hot new ID.Buzz electrified van in town) to financial services provider Swiss Life. The economic firepower has Hanover finishing an impressive #11 in our Global Fortune 500 subcategory and #22 for GDP per Capita. All that business in town is pulling in 500 conferences per year (pandemic aside), with most taking place in the Hannover Messe fairground convention centre. The city's 50,000 students have plenty of options after graduation and many stay for the #38-ranked disposable household income. But Hanover has also long invested in its livability, claiming that 50% of the city is dedicated to green spaces (for which it ranks #22). Its impressive #27 ranking in our Biking subcategory validates the city's commitment to living sustainably, along with its recent launch of "no car days" efforts. The arts also matter here, as a recent UNESCO City of Music honour—and seemingly daily theatre, opera and arts programming—would indicate.



61
Aachen
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #19 Average Rent
- #19 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 594,000

A historically key European centre keeps doing right by citizens local and global.

Germany's westernmost city is closer to Brussels and Amsterdam than to Berlin, and it occupies a key role in European history, first as a Roman thermal bath complex, then as the medieval imperial residence of Emperor Charlemagne, long credited as a unifier of Europe. (The city's International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen is the oldest and best-known prize awarded for work done in the service of European unification, most recently given to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people.) The city also crowned dozens of Holy Roman Emperors as kings of the Germans until the 1500s. The walkable historic centre is a joy to explore (the city ranks #19 in our Biking subcategory), especially its spectacular Aachener Dom, constructed more than 1,200 years ago and one of the first 12 buildings to appear on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites. Today, it's the site of epic Christmas markets. Schools like the Aachen University of Applied Sciences, the largest and most prestigious technical university in Germany, help the city rank #27 for the disposable income citizens bring home, while the city's #19 ranking in our Average Rent subcategory means they have more of it to spend.



62
Utrecht
Netherlands

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #2 Labour Force Participation
- #6 Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 890,000

A laid-back university hub nurtures economic opportunity for its residents.

Utrecht is a distinct hometown and destination all its own, despite being only a 25-minute train ride from Amsterdam. Home to an astounding 29 universities and colleges attended by 70,000 students from 125 countries—of which the biggest is Utrecht University, founded in 1636 and nurturing Europe's sixth-most educated citizenry today. Education and research makes up most of the local economy, and with global talent pouring in to study here, Utrecht trails only Stockholm in our Labour Force Participation subcategory. It also ranks #10 for Creative Class. The city's medieval urban grid bursts with Dutch history that can only be possible in a place that for centuries was the cultural and religious heart of the nation. Given its magnetism—combined with that easy access to coveted Amsterdam—the city's leaders are in the midst of the largest new development in the Netherlands, with 30,000 houses and office and industrial space being built in nearby Leidsche Rijn. The full buildout, including a new hospital, schools, retail, places of worship and public transit to the city centre, may be ready for 2025 if everything goes right. Sustainability is the directive, and an underground roadway is the engineering point of pride for project builders.



63
Nuremberg
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #11 Disposable Household Income
- #23 Poverty Rate

POPULATION

Metro 1,182,000

Historic and entrepreneurial, Nuremberg is a Bavarian tiger on the rise.

Few cities embody their country like Nuremberg does Germany. The northern Bavarian city is sprinkled with medieval architecture, ancient fortifications and stone towers—most notably in its Altstadt (Old Town). Amid the red-tiled buildings rises Kaiserburg Castle. A short stroll away is Frauenkirche, a Gothic cathedral dating back to the 14th century. More currently, Nuremberg is known for its rich beers, energetic nightlife and enticing gingerbread bakeries. It also gained infamy during the Second World War as the site of the first Nazi rallies and atrocities... and, ultimately, the Nuremberg trials that brought to justice those who set the stage for them. Adding to its complex tapestry is a business climate that ranks among the strongest in Europe. The city and its environs are home to iconic German companies like Adidas, Puma, Diehl, Faber-Castell and Playmobil. The firepower drives the city to a #24 ranking for Labour Force Participation, and a resulting #11 for Disposable Household Income. Given all the enterprise nearby, the fact that Nuremberg sits at #41 in all of Europe in our overall Prosperity Index shouldn't come as a surprise.



64
Rotterdam
Netherlands

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 Labour Force Participation
- #11 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 1,891,000

Out of the shadow of Amsterdam and The Hague, Rotterdam demonstrates the secret power of second cities.

The urban post-war rebuild wasn't exactly equal in the Netherlands. Take Rotterdam: rebuilt from ruins to provide Europe with its largest port. Today, it still does. Fittingly, the city was also saddled with the continent's largest red-light district. Today, you can start there, in the once-dingy Katendrecht neighbourhood, to witness Rotterdam's current ascent. It's now the city's culinary heart, with its Deliplein Square, an outdoor dining room ringed by restaurants and a waterfront warehouse packed with stalls, breweries and workshops. Rotterdam is also Europe's design and architecture lab. Places like nearby Wilhelminakade, the steamship embarkation point for U.S.-bound Dutch émigrés, is today home to towers designed by Álvaro Siza, Norman Foster and local starchitect Rem Koolhaas. There's even an all-timber floating office building moored nearby, along with Hofbogenpark, Rotterdam's own High Line. On the other side of town, in the M4H district, a new floating farm blends urban food security with community amenities. What rising sea levels? Sustainable architecture elsewhere includes the air-filtering Smog Free Tower and the Windwheel (you'll have to see it to believe it, in 2025). With that kind of office space, no wonder the city's workers rank in the Top 10 for Labour Force Participation.



65

Porto

Portugal

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #13 Outdoors
- #13 Google Search

POPULATION

Metro 1,291,000

Everyone wants a piece of Portugal's king of the north.

Portugal's kinetic second city is first on the minds of voracious global real estate investors and site selectors either priced out of Lisbon or tired of its crowds. That's not to say that Porto isn't equally coveted, with its colourful old town hugging the banks of the Douro and crowned by Gustave Eiffel's wrought-iron bridge just unfinished enough to remind you that this was the industrial heart of the nation for centuries. New direct flights from all over Europe are pouring in and tourists often outnumber locals in central Baixa. Current visitor numbers, like real estate prices, have already pushed past 2019 levels, especially among the U.S. buyers and visitors who have been emboldened by the value of a strong dollar against the euro. They come for the #13-ranked parks in Europe (including beaches reachable by subway), and new ways to experience the city, from the reopened Mercado do Bolhão, Porto's historic central market, to a new fourth metro line to the massive World of Wine development on the Gaia side of the river, which houses seven museums and 10 restaurants. Economic development office InvestPorto, meanwhile, is accelerating the city's green transition with expansive investor support and direct connection to the city's talent pool.



66

Riga

Latvia

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #20 Attractions
- #24 GDP per Capita

POPULATION

Metro 921,000

Latvia's capital is just warming up.

A walkable medieval old town resembling an epic gingerbread village (especially in winter), with a UNESCO World Heritage designation and the largest collection of Art Nouveau buildings in Europe? All the while home to half of its country's residents? Welcome to Riga, where the centuries of galleries, concert halls and arts venues help the Latvian capital rank in the Top 20 in our Attractions subcategory. That this cultural bounty costs half of what it does in most continental capitals only adds to the allure. Fortunately, the affordability extends to the emergent Baltic cuisine, ranging from Ukrainian comfort food at the newly reopened Āgenskalns market on the Daugava River's left bank to the €10 Baltic seafood tartare, ceviches and carpaccios at new restaurant Tails. While casual travellers are still sleeping on Riga's special blend, investors like Abu Dhabi-based Eagle Hills are planning to pour €3 billion into the city's Andrejsala neighbourhood and its Riga Free Port by 2040. Given the city's #24 ranking for GDP per Capita, the talent justifies the investment. As do the growing high-speed rail links like the just-opened four-hour daily to Vilnius, and the larger Rail Baltica network by 2030.



67

Freiburg

Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #14 Disposable Household Income
- #18 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 589,000

A dynamic university town in Germany's Black Forest dances to its own beat.

Freiburg's proximity to France certainly gives the outdoor gateway its distinct joie de vivre. Or perhaps it's the region's 2,000 hours of annual sunshine, making it Germany's warmest city and the home of some of the country's best viticulture. Given its youthful exuberance and climate, residents access the storybook urban grid and nearby hiking by Europe's 18th-best biking infrastructure. Schlossberg serves up city views (and the 116-metre spire of the city's Gothic cathedral and central square Münsterplatz) for those who hike up the hill. A funicular also accommodates the less intrepid. The University of Freiburg, founded in 1457, is omnipresent in the city's rich cultural scene, from local talks and conferences to a small but mighty nightlife and music scene. Freiburg works hard, too, ranking #27 for Labour Force Participation with a multicultural population that ranks #20 in our Foreign-Born Residents subcategory and its citizenry enjoying the 14th-highest disposable income on the continent. The city may be small, but its rail connections are growing, most recently with a weekly direct route to fellow wine region Bordeaux to build on the French interest in nearby Europa-Park, the Freiburg region's ever-expanding theme park that's now coaxing visitors with a roller-coaster named "Voltron."



68
Toulouse
France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #7 Creative Class
- #21 Average Rent

POPULATION

Metro 1,454,000

An ancient city keeps climbing.

The heart of France's aeronautics and space industry is a rare hometown that's both a globally recognised innovator and a 2,000-year-old urban treasure trove committed to its citizens—current and future. The Airbus Group, Airbus Defence & Space, Thales Alenia Space and dozens of other aeronautics firms alone employ almost 100,000. The sectors have long attracted complementary investment, and today Toulouse is among the European leaders in intelligent transport, from autonomous vehicles (both driving and flying) to feasible hyperloop implementation. France's longest cable car just opened here, spanning the tree-lined Garonne River. But the Pink City (named for the distinct rose hue of its many buildings) is also an emerging cultural hotbed, with a torrent of recent and upcoming investments—like its conversion of the Saint-Michel prison into an auditorium for the Orchestre National Capitole in its efforts to become France's City of Dance. Locals are buzzing about Les Halles de la Cartoucherie, a 13,500-square-metre former munitions factory that opened a few months ago with a food hall, co-working space and sports and cultural centre. With high-speed rail bringing Paris within three hours by 2030, expect a lot more buzz about France's fourth-largest metro.



69
Leipzig
Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #18 Green Space
- #20 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 956,000

Arts and commerce forge
a German urban gem.

Calling Leipzig a "secondary" German city is an understatement. There may be fewer than a million people living here, but this industrial centre so heavily damaged by Allied bombing at the end of the Second World War has emerged as an exciting urban renewal story in a country full of them. Yes, there are the typical German economic attributes: an enviable convention centre; booming regional offices for Porsche, BMW, Amazon and others; a cargo airport that's one of DHL's global hubs; and impressive resident disposable household income (#38). But there are also growing global bona fides about the city's arts and culture. *The New York Times* even called it "Germany's new cultural hot spot" and "better than the capital" a few years back. A lot of the buzz is around Spinnerei, a 19th-century cotton mill adapted into a community hive, housing 13 galleries and hundreds of artists' studios. The centre also features indie cinema, a restaurant and a beer garden. The cultural lineage of Leipzig is well earned: Wagner was born here, while Mahler and Bach all lived and worked in the city. Also naturally endowed, Leipzig ranks #18 in Europe for Green Space and #20 in our Biking subcategory.



70
Malmö
Sweden

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #8 Creative Class
- #17 Labour Force Participation

POPULATION

Metro 669,000

Sweden's third-largest city
revels in the hustle of its citizens
and its outdoor playground.

Most know Malmö by the Øresund Bridge that leads away from it, immortalised in the TV drama "The Bridge". Ironically, that same link causes Malmö's relative obscurity—the city is located a 25-minute drive from international darling Copenhagen and usually cedes global attention to Stockholm. (Although the connection has been a boon for accessing the nearby Danish market.) Despite its #110 spot in our overall Lovability index, Malmö is riding the demand for smaller but connected and ambitious hometowns. Especially ones with the historic and plentiful warehouse and industrial real estate boasted by this once-thriving shipping industry hub that crumbled with the oil crisis 50 years ago. That includes places like the Kockums or the Västra Hamnen shipyards, today home to hundreds of companies employing thousands on an industrial waterfront that just oozes authenticity. The 2000 opening of Malmö University in the central business district yields a #18 ranking for Educational Attainment and #17 spot for Labour Force Participation. Playtime is never far away, courtesy of the dozens of parks cherished by locals—like downtown's massive King's Park, and Ribersborg, a coastal stroll with swimmable beaches and even a bathhouse en route. In May, however, most residents will be indoors, watching Malmö host the Eurovision Song Contest.



71
Sheffield
United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #22 Green Space
- #29 Global Fortune 500

POPULATION

Metro 1,189,000

From a steel city to the Outdoor City, few European urban centres have experienced a rebirth like this.

Looking at Sheffield today, it's difficult to understand why George Orwell called it the "ugliest town in the world." Mind you, that was in 1936, back when "in whichever direction you look you see the same landscape of monstrous chimneys pouring forth smoke." More than 80 years later (in 2021), the U.K.'s fifth-largest city was named the greenest in the country by a University of Southampton study. An incredible 61% of the city is designated as green space and more than a third is within the boundary of the Peak District National Park. The city's #22 ranking in our Green Space subcategory abides. Amidst all those trees (the most per capita in Europe, according to proud local boosters), 80 stands are classed as ancient woodlands. Sheffield's Top 50 ranking in our Parks & Recreation subcategory will definitely improve as word of its commitment grows. Local government has also been expanding walking and biking routes in an effort to limit car use, an investment in the more than 60,000 students who call the city home (half of whom attend the University of Sheffield—and its #33-ranked Nightlife locales).



72
Nottingham
United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #29 Global Fortune 500
- #30 EV Charging Stations

POPULATION

Metro 919,000

The birthplace of the Robin Hood legend has emerged as one of the U.K.'s small cities to watch.

As recently as 15 years ago, this central England city battled crime, talent flight and typically English savage branding as home to "men in tights and men in fights." Even its hilltop Nottingham Castle wasted away among parking lots and cut-rate motels. Today, thanks to visionary local leadership, the castle, fresh from a three-year, £30-million renovation (helped by the government's Culture Recovery Fund) would make Kevin Costner proud. The local grounds now host medieval reenactments, and adventure parks with rope bridges and slides are once again pulling in families from all over the country. The same can be said about the city. It's home to the Nottingham Conference Centre, one of the busiest in Europe, hosting hundreds of corporate and commercial events annually. The Global Fortune 500 companies and their subsidiaries in town include Boots pharmacy and See Tickets, helping the city rank #29. The 51-kilometre tram line just adds to the rediscovered walkability and newly redesigned public spaces—from the massive, all-season market square to Hockley, a district of reclaimed lace mills and warehouses that today buzzes with restaurants, bars, offices and gallery spaces. Rest assured that some of the city's wild side still lives on in its #32-ranked nightlife.



73
Antwerp
Belgium

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #23 Disposable Household Income
- #23 Shopping

POPULATION

Metro 1,151,000

Ancient affluence meets modern crisis in Belgium's storied river city.

Antwerp has conducted business on the River Scheldt since the Middle Ages, and has the centuries-old Diamond District (and the title of Europe's second-largest port) to prove it. No wonder the city today ranks #23 in both our Shopping and Disposable Household Income subcategories. Its cultural wealth is also shared freely, with dozens of museums of all sizes (the MoMu fashion museum is the newest). The big news is the recently renovated Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, with its 11-year, €100-million expansion adding 6,500 square metres. But the city truly shines through its quaint cobblestone townhouse lanes, secret courtyards and alleys that all lead to the soaring Gothic beauty of the Cathedral of Our Lady. The newest placemaking gem opening soon is the seven-hectare Zuidpark and its 30,000 plants. But not all is rosy for this gilded city, currently in the grips of a violent war between drug cartels trying to control its port. In January customs officials said they seized 116 tonnes of cocaine here in 2023, a record for the second year in a row, and three times the amount seized in the entirety of the U.S. during the same year.



74

Bucharest

Romania

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #7 GDP per Capita
- #16 Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 2,479,000

You're going to be hearing big things about 'Little Paris'.

More than three decades after it left the Iron Curtain, Romania's capital is finally getting the attention it's sought since the '90s. Culturally endowed, historically vital and gastronomically mind-blowing: no wonder the city was just named tops in Europe for digital nomads based on a study by Panache Cruises, driven by its tech infrastructure and affordability. (Apparently, one can live like a count for less than €1,400 per month, all in. Meanwhile, the city ranks #20 in our Average Rent subcategory.) The #16 Attractions ranking demonstrates that the Old World beckons here, despite Soviet-backed dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu's zealous bulldozing of centuries-old architecture. Must-sees include the Arcul de Triumf, and, of course, the ornate beer halls that rival those of Vienna. Foreign investment is picking up, inspired by locally born software and robotics company UiPath, which went public with a \$1.3-billion software IPO on the NYSE in 2021, one of the largest in U.S. history. Local culinary talent is also returning, following chefs like Alex Petricean (formerly of Copenhagen's Noma) and London's Radu Ionescu. No wonder that work ethic among the citizenry ranks Bucharest at #7 for GDP per Capita and #28 for Startups. A new luxury Mondrian hotel is also coming to town.



75

Ankara

Türkiye

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #3 Average Rent
- #5 Instagram Hashtags

POPULATION

Metro 5,310,000

The Turkish capital is stepping out of the shadows.

Ankara may date back to 5000 BCE, but it only celebrated a century as Türkiye's capital last year. The Central Anatolia metropolis has more Roman archeology and Ottoman architecture than most European capitals, yet its relative obscurity and the odd travel advisory make parts of the city a time capsule, like the central warren of narrow alleys, fragrant with spices and fresh produce and electrified by commerce and haggling, whether for a traditional rug or wireless headphones. The city has traditionally been affordable as a result (ranking #3 in our Average Rent subcategory), but led the planet in the third quarter of 2023 year-over-year price appreciation, according to property consultants Knight Frank. Driven largely by inflation, home prices more than doubled. Local cultural and hospitality buzz matches the ascendant real estate, with new exhibits at Museum of Anatolian Civilizations (claimed by many to be Türkiye's most important museum in a nation full of them), the spectacular new glass pyramid housing the national orchestra called CSO Main Hall and a dozen new hotels. High-speed rail plans are everywhere, to the coastal metropolis of İzmir by 2027 (when the current 14-hour trip will be cut to 3.5), as well as an Istanbul connection after that.



76

Seville

Spain

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #15 Culture
- #20 Google Trends

POPULATION

Metro 1,556,000

Seville's millennia along the Guadalquivir River, an ancient highway between Cadiz and Cordoba, has threaded city building into its DNA.

Spain's fourth-largest city is as complex and multilayered as the most ornate fan wielded by local flamenco dancers. The Andalusian capital revels in its warm, sunny climate and #26-ranked parks, and is proudly walkable, narrow and winding, perfect for exploring by foot or bike. Moorish and Baroque architecture radiates in panoramas out from its spectacular cathedral and the Giralda bell tower. Not content with masterpieces of the past, city builders are always looking to visually delight locals and visitors, resulting in a #24 ranking for Sights & Landmarks. Take the 10-year-old Metropol Parasol that rises over the medieval Plaza de la Encarnación. Six massive sculpted sunshades ascend 28 metres up and shade those below from the relentless Andalusian sun. Speaking of heat, the new proMETEO project made Seville the world's first city to name heatwaves in the same way we do hurricanes in a bid to raise public awareness of their impact on health and to encourage people to protect themselves. The nights are just as hot, evidenced by Seville's #23 ranking in our Nightlife subcategory and #15 place for Culture. Its Top 20 spot for Google Trends means new hotels are opening fast, including the anticipated Thompson Seville in 2026.



77
Bournemouth
United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #15 Poverty Rate
- #22 Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 532,000

From beach town to hometown on the U.K.'s south coast.

This coastal resort town is a pocket-sized shot of California two hours by train from London. A rare microclimate means more sunshine, warmer weather and (for the surfers and swimmers who play on its eponymous beach, often lauded as one of Europe's best) warmer seas. The area's golden beaches, it should be noted, are Blue Flag-certified. With its seafront promenade, Ferris wheel and piers, the city has embraced its unique beach-town vibe for decades, readily drawing families with one-of-a-kind, Instagrammable attractions—like the only pier-to-shore zipline on the planet. Aside from its robust hospitality industry, Bournemouth is also a financial industry hub, recently boosted by newly arrived tech firms and remote workers who prefer a morning surf to a tube commute. The result is a Top 25 finish in our Disposable Household Income subcategory and a #15 ranking for Poverty Rate. Two local universities favoured by international students help the town rank #22 for Educational Attainment. This year brings big changes to the city's skyline with the 29-storey Oxford Garden rental tower (and its 487 homes) starting construction, along with The Laureate, a three-tower residential landmark block housing 247 apartments, also in the city's Lansdowne area.



78
Bordeaux
France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

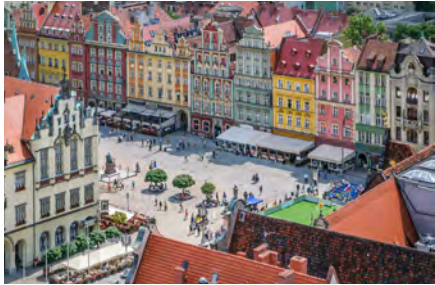
- #18 Attractions
- #28 Google Search

POPULATION

Metro 1,364,000

A pandemic exodus from Paris went (partially) to Bordeaux. Today, the reignited city is poised for its own Années folles.

Two hours southwest of Paris by train, Bordeaux was always a tempting weekend escape for Parisians and international tourists pining for fresher air, local cuisine and the largest concentration of wineries in a nation synonymous with viniculture. Wide golden beaches (with surfing!) are an hour's drive away. But as the pandemic suffocated big-city density, younger urbanites sought out more room and cheaper housing permanently. Many landed at this UNESCO World Heritage city with a tenth of the capital's population despite many similarities, from the gastronomy (the city ranks #44 in our Restaurants subcategory) to the stunning 18th- and 19th-century architecture, kinetic nightlife and Seine-like promenade. All those new arrivals spent the past few years exploring the historic streets, home to some of Europe's #47-ranked biking infrastructure, and staking their claims. The result is an economic and cultural renaissance, with hundreds of new businesses and new hotels like the recently opened Hôtel FirstName, a fun conversion of a tired 1970s building, and the luxurious five-room Château Fleur d'Aya in an 18th-century stunner. The city's impressive #18 ranking for Attractions got another boost two years ago with the opening of the Bassins des Lumières, a colossal digital art space housed in the city's former submarine base.



79
Wrocław
Poland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 Poverty Rate
- #24 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 890,000

A Polish power is hard to pronounce but easy to love.

Founded in the 10th century, Wrocław is the fourth-largest city in Poland and among its most beautiful. A turbulent history has forged a city stacked with diverse, colourful pan-European architecture and an open door to new residents, especially if they want to hang a shingle and get down to business. The city has always been an economic pocket power, boasting one of Europe's largest market squares and easy access to the Odra River and its tributaries (spanned by 100-plus bridges), earning it the nickname "The Venice of Poland." It's also the third-largest academic centre in the country, with more than 130,000 students at 28 institutes, including the University of Wrocław with its medicine, economics, science, tech and music schools. Wrocław's impressive #9 ranking in our Poverty Rate subcategory prioritises equity, especially as wealth grows from foreign investment, whether from the dozens of multinationals that have set up shop here—from IBM to the Volvo Group—or the digital nomads and solopreneurs who attend innovation events like the city's Wolves Summit every year. A strategic location also supports a warehouse and logistics boom, led by Panattoni Development's recent purchase of 35 hectares to build 160,000 square metres of space called the Wrocław Campus.



80

Palma

Spain

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 Foreign-Born Residents
- #20 Airport Connectivity

POPULATION

Metro 709,000

A historic centre is coveted by investors seeking their place in the sun.

It's a tale as old as privileged 21st-century mobility: locals flee the cramped quarters of a historic city for more convenient outskirts only to have the abandoned patina and authenticity gobbled up by global culture vultures able to work from anywhere (if needing to work at all). Palma, capital of the Spanish island of Mallorca (aka Majorca), enchants visitors to its centre with a stunning tangle of sandstone architecture packed right around the colossal Santa Maria cathedral, a Gothic masterpiece from the 1200s. After two decades of global fascination (and real estate investment) by the cognoscenti, the Balearic capital is no longer associated with cheap all-inclusive beach holidays, and is increasingly lauded as a smaller, mellower Barcelona. No wonder the city ranks in the Top 10 in Europe for Foreign-Born Residents. It also ranks #22 in our Outdoors category and entices international palates with its #32-ranked restaurants. Hotel investment is on a tear since travel resumed post-pandemic, with 30 hotels in the historic centre alone (and more on the way). The city's seafront promenade is getting upgraded, and the Club de Mar marina is being reimaged as one of the most modern in the Mediterranean, with the largest wharf in Spain.



81

Poznań

Poland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 Poverty Rate
- #24 Average Rent

POPULATION

Metro 996,000

Poland's business heart wants Europe's affection.

Poland's fifth-largest city is a business and scientific hub favoured by the country's university students and, therefore, long targeted by multinationals like Roche, Amazon and Unilever. The city is also a hub for international events, conferences, fairs and exhibitions, and has invested heavily in its Poznań Congress Center, capable of hosting conferences and events for up to 20,000 people. Given its pursuit of investment, both permanent and temporary, Poznań consistently enjoys some of Europe's lowest unemployment. A growing global influence, seen in direct flights to Dubai three times a week, will ensure the plentiful local talent remains busy. A few minutes from the high-rises and dealmakers is the city's historical centre with its quilt of town squares and city parks. Later this year (or maybe early next), the city is aiming to reopen the Old Market Square, first built in 1241. When it does, Poland's third-largest town square (the Poles love their town squares) will be a more accessible heart, enhanced with the revival of Jana Baptisty Quadro as a cultural passageway with a retractable roof, public spaces and a mobile stage. It's inevitable that Poznań will be inviting even more people (and direct flights) to town.



82

Gdańsk

Poland

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #9 Poverty Rate
- #23 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 1,171,000

A defiant Polish city savours sacrifice through art and commerce.

Resilience, thy name is Gdańsk. The Baltic history is visible in its architecture, more reminiscent of Amsterdam or Stockholm than Kraków. But it's also in the DNA of residents, bent but not broken by over a century of seismic change. The earliest shots of the Second World War were fired here by the Nazi battleship Schleswig-Holstein. And, 40 years later, Gdańsk became the birthplace of the Solidarność (Solidarity) movement that expedited the fall of the Iron Curtain after years of subverting the Soviets. Today, the city revels in doing right by those who fought for its freedom by drawing industries like finance, engineering and manufacturing. Gdańsk is also a nascent creative dynamo, with old shipbuilding warehouses reclaimed as music venues, studios and pop-up bars. Outside of town, dozens of huge Communist-era apartment blocks are livened up by 60 murals, including images of Chopin and Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa. The city's #23 ranking for Biking will get a boost next year when Gdańsk brings the Velo-city world cycling summit to Poland for the first time. The city is also grateful for its buoyancy, reflected in the EU's 2023 Quality of Life in European Cities report, where Gdańsk topped many categories.



83

Murcia

Spain

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Average Rent
- #34 Foreign-Born Residents

POPULATION

Metro 646,000

Golf, sun, sea and local fare on a budget.

Europe's newest golf destination is also its most affordable (ranking #1 in our Average Rent subcategory), drawing an increasing number of expats and digital nomads seeking its 300 sunny days on a budget. Murcia boasts sub-€500 studios and, according to property portal Kyero.com, €259,000 properties on average, with almost 30% sold to foreign buyers last year (explaining the region's #34 ranking in our Foreign-Born Residents subcategory). But this hidden gem, sprawling up from the southeast Mediterranean coast into the warm hills and valleys whose fertile soils have long made it the vegetable garden of Europe, is not some tacky fly-in resort town. Its ancient urban heart is a strollable museum featuring the sensory feast that is the Moorish masterpiece of Real Casino and the massive Santa María Cathedral. New restaurants, obsessed with the locavorism afforded by produce grown a bike ride away, are popping up, showcasing flavours that are complemented by the area's intense Jumilla reds. The Mar Menor lagoon in the seaside community of the same name was even granted personhood status a couple of years back, codifying its rights to "exist as an ecosystem and to evolve naturally." A new high-speed train from Madrid makes the trip in 2.5 hours.



84

Belfast

United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #41 Green Space
- #43 Tripadvisor Reviews

POPULATION

Metro 787,000

Few European capitals are growing with the voraciousness of Northern Ireland's storied capital.

Belfast is making up for lost time, intent on leveraging the architectural bounty sprinkled throughout its Georgian streetscapes to draw investment and new talent searching for an affordable, connected and supportive hometown willing to do the work. And Belfast has always gotten it done, all the way back to when it was the shipbuilding capital of the world, at the turn of the last century, drawing makers and craftspeople who crowned the city "Linenopolis" as it crafted linen for Europe. The *Titanic* was built here, and today the Titanic Quarter is one of Europe's largest urban waterfront regeneration projects, with 20,000 people already living, working and visiting daily. Many more are visiting now that the Titanic Belfast museum has expanded. Nowhere else on the planet will sate your obsession (whether historical or Hollywood) like here. Dockside converted warehouses hum with Deloitte and PwC, along with homegrown firms like FinTrU and Options Technology, each eager to tap into Belfast's extensive 20-something talent in a global skills crisis, while local leaders build affordable housing to keep them here. As does the music and stealth cultural bounty, which will be on full display all year as the city celebrates its Year of Culture in 2024.



85

Aarhus

Denmark

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #4 Poverty Rate
- #25 Instagram Hashtags

POPULATION

Metro 846,000

Denmark's second city does it by design.

It has centuries-old storybook streets and a buzzing student population (mostly from Aarhus University, the largest in Scandinavia), but Aarhus hits different among second cities. Maybe it's the afterglow of a blistering decade and its 2017 European Capital of Culture honours and commitment to considered urbanism already underway. Or perhaps it goes back further, to 1941, when Aarhus City Hall unveiled its iconic modernist clock tower as a beacon to democracy while under Nazi occupation. The 2004 expansion of the ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, today one of the largest in northern Europe, was followed by similarly daring architecture in the city's underused industrial Isbjerget quarter. A decade after its first residential project—modelled on a cluster of floating icebergs—caught the design world's attention, it still draws design lovers, indicative of the city's #25 Instagram Hashtags ranking. This year, you'll see people posting the newly restored, 112-year-old Ole Rømer Observatory. Aarhus is also a walkable feast (especially in the old city), featuring four Michelin-starred restaurants that also boast the guide's green stars for sustainability. (Try the local lobster at Substans.) Sated locals rank #29 for Labour Force Participation, and the city's focus on equity means it ties for fourth in Europe in our Poverty Rate subcategory.



86
Nantes
France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #25 Google Search
- #29 Average Rent

POPULATION

Metro 1,011,000

A revived port city plays the long game.

The historic capital of Brittany (France's sixth-largest city today)—and one of Europe's leading ports in the 1700s—was an industrial engine until shipbuilding, hit hard by the 1970s oil crisis, ground to a halt. The manufacturing and shipping centre—Île de Nantes in the middle of the Loire River—was left a derelict wasteland in the heart of a proud but wounded city. All that changed in 2007 when centuries of warehouse and factory stock was repurposed as the city's cultural hub. Spots like Les Machines de l'Île, a collection of interactive art exhibits featuring giant walking machines inspired by local son Jules Verne's novels and plays, delight new visitors. The city was also designated as a European Green Capital in 2013, further helping habitat rehabilitation, food security and sustainable transportation (Nantes ranks #30 for Biking). Of course a city this historically and nationally vital has cultural bounty to spare, none more impressive than the Musée d'Arts, established by Napoleon in 1801 and fully renovated a few years ago. Its collection of the masters rivals anything in Paris. (Except without the capital's crowds.) A growing food scene is driving tourism locally, and Ryanair is adding new flights from the U.K. in 2024.



87
Graz
Austria

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #1 Biking
- #18 Disposable Household Income

POPULATION

Metro 605,000

Austria's lush second city is smart, prosperous... and communist?

Green, clean and historic, Graz was, given its urban perfection, a fitting recipient of both the European Capital of Culture title for 2003 and the UNESCO City of Design in 2011. Mid-rise, red-roofed white city blocks snake out from the medieval tangle of Baroque and Renaissance buildings rising and falling with the verdant undulations of the topography. Trees and forests share the urban grid, rising up to Graz's Schlossberg, once the site of a strategic medieval fortress, and sliced by the Mur River below. The walkable city is dissected by Europe's best biking infrastructure (according to our rankings). The rare blend of aesthetics, relative isolation and warm, sunny microclimate (Graz is one of Austria's winemaking clusters) has long pulled in mavericks. The city boasts eight universities and much of the population is made up of current and former students who revel in its impressive #14 Livability ranking. Many settle here, launching more than 1,400 companies annually according to local boosters, contributing to the city's #18 Disposable Household Income ranking. In 2021, the city also elected Elke Kahr of the Communist Party of Austria as mayor, who seems to be a rising tourist attraction all her own if international media is a metric.



88
Turin
Italy

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #16 Global Fortune 500
- #20 Restaurants

POPULATION

Metro 1,722,000

Italian excellence and influence simmers slowly at the foot of the Alps.

Italy's fourth-largest city and capital of Piedmont is a sensory feast for those who know. Perhaps it's because Milan, just a 45-minute train ride away, sates most tourist itineraries. Torino couldn't care less, confident in a homegrown wealth and elegance that serves up a Top 20 ranking for its restaurants, many stocked by Porta Palazzo, Europe's largest open-air market with its 800 stalls. That the city was the first capital of a unified Italy from 1861 to 1865 further validates its profound importance to the nation. Turin is also a stunner, with Baroque architecture meticulously rebuilt after heavy Allied bombing during the Second World War—the streetscapes are reminiscent of the grandest in Paris, but with the Italian Alps as a backdrop. An incredible 163 piazze make exploring the city by foot a portal into its cultural textures, especially the #26-ranked museums that document the dynamism of a city like in few other places. The Museo Nazionale dell'Automobile honours a reputation as "Italy's Detroit," while the National Cinema Museum reminds the world that the first blockbuster was made here, and inspired Hollywood. International eyes will be on the city this summer, when it hosts the third stage of the Tour de France.



89
Portsmouth
United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #8 Disposable Household Income
- #9 Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 542,000

A strategic and historic military port city finds a new kind of victory.

Over its 850-year history as one of the oldest ports in Britain, Portsmouth has been everything from the world's first dry dock in 1496 to the world's most fortified city in the early 1800s—all the way to the embarkation point for the D-Day landings. There is no better place to celebrate this year's 80th anniversary of D-Day than at the city's spectacular D-Day Story Museum, which hosts programming starting in May. Today, Portsmouth's economy revolves around its operation as a major naval base, employing 10% of local employees. Given that Portsmouth is also the U.K.'s second port after Dover, all that skilled talent in town ranks #9 in Europe in our Educational Attainment subcategory, as well as enjoying the continent's eighth-best Disposable Household Income. A two-hour train to London is increasingly attracting remote workers and startups, pushing Portsmouth's Creative Class ranking to #11, fuelled by IBM's U.K. headquarters and its vendors. Tourism is booming in 2024, too, with the new £11.25-million cruise ship passenger terminal that can handle ships of up to 300 metres in length, provide shore power and accommodate what local estimates say will be 155,000 passengers this year, a new record.



90
Ghent
Belgium

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #23 Disposable Household Income
- #32 Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 668,000

Belgium's second city can't wait to tell the world its centuries-old stories.

Ghent may be the second-largest city in Belgium today, but in the Middle Ages of northern Europe, it played second fiddle only to Paris. The temples to Ghent's past prosperity are everywhere in the old city (and are protected as UNESCO sites). The Museum of Fine Arts is Belgium's oldest museum (and turns 227 this year). Do not miss the newly restored Ghent Altarpiece, aka the Mystic Lamb painting, in St Bavo's Cathedral. An augmented-reality experience will explain everything. In addition to its priceless history, Ghent is fearlessly living in the moment with citizens from 160 nationalities calling the city home (ranking it #36 for Creative Class), along with approximately 85,000 university students arriving each autumn to study at the city's two universities and four university colleges, with Ghent University contributing to a #32 ranking in our Educational Attainment subcategory. The local accountability to the future has established programmes like energy-efficient city lighting, canal cleanup tours, low-emission zones, no-meat days and more equitable home-sharing platforms. The city is also building a new village to house Ukrainian refugees comfortably, ensuring its #23-ranked disposable income is put to good use.



91
Zaragoza
Spain

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #4 Average Rent
- #37 Foreign-Born Residents

POPULATION

Metro 777,000

Spain's fifth-largest city boasts big-time history, ambition and a swelling pipeline of investment.

After centuries of Roman, Moorish and Catholic rule, this city holds its secrets in the Casco Viejo and its two spectacular cathedrals: Basilica del Pilar and the Catedral del Salvador. The massive plaza that connects them is a pedestrian wonder, drawing 300,000 people every October to mark the appearance of the Virgin Mary in the very spot almost 2,000 years ago. The entrenched reverence for Zaragoza is quickly understood by new talent flocking here (ranking #37 for Foreign-Born Residents) for not only Europe's fourth-cheapest monthly rent but also for the myriad economic opportunities kicked off by Expo 2008. The city's maritime port is expanding on the Ebro River that flows through it (Spain's most voluminous and a vital transport corridor to both Barcelona and Bilbao). Zaragoza is also home to Spain's air force and space force, their nearby airfields a NASA landing option. And the city is turning heads with its €280-million build of a treatment plant that will make it the first in the world to eliminate 100% of its waste, a key part of the city's goal to be one of the 100 Climate Neutral Cities by 2030.



92

Strasbourg

France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #28 Biking
- #36 Average Rent

POPULATION

Metro 853,000

A medieval jewel near the French-German border is one of Europe’s best-preserved centres of history.

Tucked on the French side of the Rhine River, Strasbourg was only “strategically” bombed during the Second World War. As such, its medieval and Renaissance history was mostly spared and its Grande Île historic heart became the first urban centre in France to be recognised in its entirety by UNESCO. The city’s gothic Notre Dame de Strasbourg cathedral was built just 94 years after the Paris icon and is a portal into the history of this underappreciated city, especially in light of the Rhine panorama from its 142-metre spire. Strasbourg has also worked diligently for its “French Cycling Capital” bona fides (ranking #28 in our Biking subcategory), with more than 600 kilometres of bike paths and almost 20% of citizens biking to work across the 21 bridges and footbridges that connect Grande Île to the rest of the city. As the formal seat of the European Parliament, Strasbourg has long put citizens first, indicated by its relative affordability (#36 for Average Rent) and its #47 ranking for Poverty Rate, as well as ingenious public services like the new Solidarity Concierge, a one-stop post office, laundry, tool and small household appliance rental, and shoe repair venue.



93

Newcastle

United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #31 Sights & Landmarks
- #38 Nightlife

POPULATION

Metro 1,175,000

Those sounds you hear coming from northeast England are the gasps from people who haven’t visited in a while.

One of England’s fastest-growing tech regions was setting the stage, long before the pandemic, as a destination for nascent companies ranging from data sciences and subsea technology to advanced manufacturing, as well as convincing iconic brands like Siemens, Procter and Gamble, Barclays and dozens of others to base their U.K. operations here. With a location just 2.5 hours from London by train and an airport that connects to 85 destinations, the Newcastle-as-HQ pitch is working, with more than 50,000 registered businesses, according to local numbers, and the city’s buildings either being reused or replaced entirely. The landmark development to watch is the Newcastle Helix, a 10-hectare central city quarter situated where the former Scottish and Newcastle Brewery once stood. Developed in partnership with the University of Newcastle, the site will be a “testbed for innovative technologies and solutions tackling some of the most pressing challenges facing cities around the world.” Appropriately, it will feature plenty of affordable housing to rent or purchase. The city’s special blend of history-meets-youthful-energy is captured by Newcastle’s #31 and #38 rankings for our Sights & Landmarks and Nightlife subcategories, respectively.



94

Leicester

United Kingdom

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #43 Labour Force Participation
- #46 Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 897,000

History and creativity keep things interesting in the U.K.’s East Midlands.

It’s been an eventful decade for Leicester. The archeological discovery of Richard III’s remains in 2012 and his reinterment at Leicester Cathedral in 2015 was a global event, as was the capture of the Premier League title by Leicester City in 2016. Development has returned post-pandemic, with new construction planned to ensure the city, boasting two universities, remains a competitive potential hometown for graduates. Amazingly, all that digging has unearthed even more treasures below the city streets, most recently a Roman place of worship that will join the city’s popular King Richard III Visitor Centre as a future museum. Leicester is often cited as the most excavated city in Britain, with 15% of the historic city centre dug up to expose its medieval, Anglo-Saxon and now even Roman history. Above ground, the buzz is back at Leicester’s Cultural Quarter, home to theatres, galleries and studios for more than 30 years since the conversion of the city’s textile and shoe manufacturing district. Business is booming at the city’s two-year-old Space Park, developed by the University of Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership as a cluster for innovative research, enterprise and education in space and Earth observation.



95

Sofia

Bulgaria

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #10 Average Rent
- #11 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 1,548,000

Sofia is the city you recommend to that friend who's been “everywhere.”

Often overlooked and infrequently lauded, Bulgaria's capital is ready for takeoff as an affordable, talent-rich metropolis hungry for a seat at the European table with the confidence that comes from being a crossroads of commerce for millennia. A hometown for the Ottomans, Romans and (least inspiring, architecturally) the communists over its incredible 7,000-year history, Sofia today is (along with Istanbul) the most affordable European capital in our ranking (#10 for Average Rent). Her attractions (ranking an impressive #21) span the epochs, from Roman baths to Orthodox churches to quirky communist time capsules like the Red Flat, an interactive apartment that never fails to depress. The city's treasures are increasingly walkable, and residents now report travelling by foot 30% more than in 2019, according to the new European Commission's Quality of Life in European Cities survey. Impressively, Sofia ranks #11 for its biking infrastructure. Beyond the grid, the city ranks #28 in our Parks & Recreation subcategory and Europe's cheapest skiing at Vitosha Mountain is 30 minutes away. New pro-EU mayor and tech millionaire Vassil Terziev sees the city's talent superpower (#23 in our GDP per Capita subcategory) and has personally invested in more than 100 startups in the country.



96

Montpellier

France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #17 Creative Class
- #31 Average Rent

POPULATION

Metro 802,000

France's fastest-growing city looks like a sure bet.

The French call it la surdouée (the gifted one). The term of endearment has had particular resonance over the past 20 years, as Montpellier became the country's fastest-growing city by population, with almost half of residents today aged 34 or younger. Most come for the University of Montpellier, founded in the 1100s, which makes it not only one of the oldest in the world, but also the planet's oldest medical school still in operation. Several other universities and dozens of other schools mean that 70,000 students call the city home and provide ample talent for a rising economy. Montpellier's impressive #17 ranking in our Creative Class subcategory backs this up. The U of M's centuries of medical expertise have nurtured a growing life sciences ecosystem, joining existing tech and IT regional operations for IBM, Ubisoft and Dell, with dozens more firms arriving every year. The magnetism is obvious: a great climate, sun, affordability (ranking #31 in our Average Rent subcategory) and Mediterranean beaches a 20-minute bus ride away. The medieval walkable grid is enhanced with 150 kilometres of bike paths throughout the city, and even more leading to the sea—all contributing to a #57 ranking in our Biking subcategory.



97

Málaga

Spain

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #21 Airport Connectivity
- #28 Restaurants

POPULATION

Metro 878,000

Urban inspiration in the sun and sea.

Málaga is the urban gateway to the sun-drenched Costa del Sol in Spain's southwest, within close proximity to 16 spectacular beaches that help the city rank #30 in our Outdoors subcategory. But while the busy port city buzzes with hedonistic vacationers who pour into the oceanfront high-rise hotels, this is also one of Spain's most culturally significant cities—and not only because the modern skyline is dwarfed by two massive hilltop citadels (the Alcazaba and the ruins of the Moorish Gibralfaro) or because of the soaring Renaissance cathedral. Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the death of native son Pablo Picasso, and the city is reclaiming the famous artist and sharing his local inspiration with the world throughout this year. Dozens of tours (from the church where he was baptised to the ring where he watched the bullfights), exhibits and workshops are still running, none more comprehensive than by the Picasso Museum Málaga (itself celebrating its 20th last year). The anniversary is a good reminder of the city's 40 museums (ranked #49), including the cube-shaped waterfront Centre Pompidou Málaga, opened in 2015, and the Contemporary Art Centre of Málaga in the city's kinetic Soho district.



98

Bremen

Germany

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #23 Poverty Rate
- #36 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 1,047,000

A first-timer to the Top 100 utilizes its North Sea advantage.

Germany's 11th-largest city is Europe's fourth-largest port (at least when combined with Bremerhaven on the North Sea, 40 kilometres away) and ranks in our Top 100 for the first time. A massive investment planned for 2026, when the container port will be expanded and upgraded to handle increasingly larger container ships right on the North Sea, will ensure Bremen's ranking will only improve. Especially when it starts taking market share from Hamburg. Even before hundreds of millions of euros are spent locally, Bremen's trade and shipping commerce already provides the city with enviable economic prosperity, like the #23-ranked Poverty Rate and #38-ranked Disposable Household Income. The city has always been a gilded urban gem, founded 1,300 years ago, with the UNESCO World Heritage listing that comes with such history. In fact, this year is the 20th anniversary of the Town Hall and the Roland building receiving their designation. Both place the city's Market Square among the most spectacular in Europe, if only because it also boasts multiple odes to the Brothers Grimm "Town Musicians of Bremen" classic. Once you feast your senses in Bremen's heart, explore further afield on one of the ever-expanding bike paths in a city that ranks #36 for Biking.



99

Bologna

Italy

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #32 Tripadvisor Reviews
- #35 Museums

POPULATION

Metro 786,000

Youthful exuberance and incredible cuisine fuel Italy's academic and cultural dynamo.

Timeless Bologna, home of the oldest continuously operating university in the world, is a well-balanced meal of a city, founded more than 2,000 years ago (with its streets today comprising a massive, textured open-air urban museum), yet kinetic, happy and optimistic, powered by thousands of international students. It also serves up some of the best *actual* meals in Europe as the nationally recognised culinary capital of this culinary country. Bolognese kitchens of centuries past invented parmesan, mortadella, parma ham, ragù, lasagne and balsamic vinegar. No wonder Italians love referring to it as La Grassa (the fat one). More visitors and residents are casting their eye on the city, especially after it topped the national *Il Sole 24 Ore* newspaper's 2023 annual quality of life survey. Bologna is also a cultural feast, with an epic 2024 lineup that includes hosting the second stage of the Tour de France, the Grand Prix of Emilia Romagna and the opening of the inaugural Italian Basketball Museum at the 5,000-seat PalaDozza (sure to improve the #35 Museums ranking). The city is also celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Guglielmo Marconi, the father of wireless and one of Bologna's most illustrious citizens.



100

Toulon

France

PLACE POWER® HIGHLIGHTS

- #13 Average Rent
- #21 Creative Class

POPULATION

Metro 573,000

Where the French Riviera rolls up its sleeves.

You may have not heard much about the smallest French city to make it into our Top 100 this year, but in-the-know French residents (and investors) sure have. Toulon, after all, is only France's 13th-largest city, but it is the sunniest, tucked between Marseille and St. Tropez and recognised as an idyllic hometown millennia ago, first by the Greeks, then by Roman sailors who built the old town (and its iconic 50 freshwater fountains), much of which still remains, at least after it was reconstructed following the Second World War. Serving for centuries as a strategic French naval port, today it's the country's largest, endowing the place with a working-class humility despite all the natural attributes of the French Riviera. Consider how this historic seafront gem boasts the 13th-lowest rents in Europe, or how it ranks #21 in our Creative Class subcategory for its option to mix idyllic urban living with the ability to either work remotely or at one of the growing startups, largely clustered in the Chaluget district that features a multimedia library in a stunning former chapel; art, design and business schools (with their own startup incubator); and residential buildings to keep all that talent close.

Ranking cities' Place Power[®] Score, by category

Rank	City	Country	<div><div></div> Livability</div>	<div><div></div> Lovability</div>	<div><div></div> Prosperity</div>	Population
1	London	United Kingdom	1	1	1	12,435,000
2	Paris	France	2	2	2	13,115,000
3	Berlin	Germany	11	7	11	4,980,000
4	Rome	Italy	4	3	59	4,304,000
5	Madrid	Spain	39	4	19	7,005,000
6	Prague	Czechia	7	8	18	2,260,000
7	Barcelona	Spain	21	5	36	5,112,000
8	Amsterdam	Netherlands	23	10	6	2,892,000
9	Istanbul	Türkiye	8	6	78	15,636,000
10	Milan	Italy	5	9	74	4,962,000
11	Zürich	Switzerland	18	43	3	1,937,000
12	Vienna	Austria	12	13	33	1,960,000
13	Munich	Germany	15	25	12	3,017,000
14	Dublin	Ireland	86	18	4	544,000
15	Lisbon	Portugal	9	12	48	3,013,000
16	Stockholm	Sweden	44	34	5	2,308,000
17	Hamburg	Germany	20	22	20	3,422,000
18	Brussels	Belgium	70	21	7	3,331,000
19	Warsaw	Poland	31	23	21	3,190,000
20	Budapest	Hungary	29	14	51	3,003,000
21	Frankfurt	Germany	48	35	13	2,679,000
22	Helsinki	Finland	22	49	15	1,552,000
23	Oslo	Norway	37	55	10	1,279,000
24	Geneva	Switzerland	32	61	9	609,000
25	Oxford	United Kingdom	6	90	23	545,000
26	Naples	Italy	3	11	122	3,299,000
27	Manchester	United Kingdom	56	16	37	3,348,000
28	Copenhagen	Denmark	73	32	14	1,929,000
29	Edinburgh	Scotland	68	24	22	894,000
30	Bern	Switzerland	10	124	25	733,000
31	Lausanne	Switzerland	24	109	17	583,000
32	Luxembourg City	Luxembourg	64	92	8	639,000
33	Basel	Switzerland	34	101	16	572,000
34	Birmingham	United Kingdom	19	19	93	3,098,000
35	The Ruhr	Germany	13	39	58	5,069,000

Rank	City	Country	● Livability	● Lovability	● Prosperity	Population
36	Glasgow	United Kingdom	55	36	35	1,831,000
37	Stuttgart	Germany	45	62	31	2,531,000
38	Florence	Italy	17	17	111	794,000
39	Düsseldorf	Germany	33	64	34	1,465,000
40	Bratislava	Slovakia	25	72	38	670,000
41	Nice	France	51	30	56	615,000
42	Kraków	Poland	27	29	89	1,423,000
43	Cologne	Germany	52	44	40	2,216,000
44	Gothenburg	Sweden	47	100	30	1,022,000
45	Bristol	United Kingdom	85	52	27	956,000
46	Valencia	Spain	43	27	86	1,768,000
47	Liverpool	United Kingdom	50	37	55	1,534,000
48	Leeds	United Kingdom	36	47	61	2,619,000
49	Southampton	United Kingdom	63	104	29	688,000
50	Athens	Greece	118	15	69	3,154,000
51	Lyon	France	92	40	43	2,281,000
52	Marseille	France	77	46	44	1,873,000
53	Bilbao	Spain	41	81	57	1,049,000
54	Tallinn	Estonia	53	59	60	610,000
55	Dresden	Germany	16	88	96	965,000
56	Vilnius	Lithuania	57	70	54	708,000
57	Venice	Italy	65	20	107	552,000
58	Bonn	Germany	42	112	50	790,000
59	The Hague	Netherlands	107	73	32	1,122,000
60	Hanover	Germany	40	99	63	1,289,000
61	Aachen	Germany	30	122	66	594,000
62	Utrecht	Netherlands	114	97	24	890,000
63	Nuremberg	Germany	76	85	41	1,182,000
64	Rotterdam	Netherlands	124	63	26	1,891,000
65	Porto	Portugal	62	33	105	1,291,000
66	Riga	Latvia	75	58	64	921,000
67	Freiburg	Germany	58	121	47	589,000
68	Toulouse	France	104	51	53	1,454,000
69	Leipzig	Germany	35	96	92	956,000
70	Malmö	Sweden	121	110	28	669,000

Rank	City	Country	● Livability	● Lovability	● Prosperity	Population
71	Sheffield	United Kingdom	60	69	80	1,189,000
72	Nottingham	United Kingdom	78	71	65	919,000
73	Antwerp	Belgium	91	65	62	1,151,000
74	Bucharest	Romania	69	38	103	2,479,000
75	Ankara	Türkiye	81	26	109	5,310,000
76	Seville	Spain	93	28	106	1,556,000
77	Bournemouth	United Kingdom	96	103	42	532,000
78	Bordeaux	France	109	42	72	1,364,000
79	Wrocław	Poland	66	75	81	890,000
80	Palma	Spain	119	57	46	709,000
81	Poznań	Poland	46	84	98	996,000
82	Gdańsk	Poland	67	82	88	1,171,000
83	Murcia	Spain	26	105	108	646,000
84	Belfast	United Kingdom	94	86	68	787,000
85	Aarhus	Denmark	102	107	45	846,000
86	Nantes	France	90	77	75	1,011,000
87	Graz	Austria	14	117	118	605,000
88	Turin	Italy	83	31	115	1,722,000
89	Portsmouth	United Kingdom	111	94	49	542,000
90	Ghent	Belgium	95	91	67	668,000
91	Zaragoza	Spain	71	93	90	777,000
92	Strasbourg	France	82	79	91	853,000
93	Newcastle	United Kingdom	99	68	79	1,175,000
94	Leicester	United Kingdom	115	95	52	897,000
95	Sofia	Bulgaria	49	54	117	1,548,000
96	Montpellier	France	108	74	73	802,000
97	Málaga	Spain	106	45	99	878,000
98	Bremen	Germany	88	98	83	1,047,000
99	Bologna	Italy	97	50	102	786,000
100	Toulon	France	72	119	87	573,000

Want to empower your city or region to be more livable, lovable and prosperous for citizens, investors and talent? Contact Resonance and let's empower your place together at info@resonanceco.com.

Let's empower
your place together.

New York

175 Varick St., 4th Floor
New York, NY 10014
P +1 646 467 4501

Vancouver

306-1040 Hamilton St.
Vancouver, BC V6B 2R9
P +1 604 681 0804

Austin

201 W. 5th St., 11th Floor
Austin, TX 78701
P +1 713 584 8896

Montréal

3500 St Jacques St.
Montréal, QC H4C 1H2
P +1 438 888 0161

Singapore

46 Kim Yam Rd., #01-05/06/07
Singapore 239351
P +65 8116 7444

resonanceco.com
info@resonanceco.com
@resonanceco

resonance