



The Official Guide to Life in Oklahoma





Rodgers and Hammerstein may have gotten the waving wheat right, but if that's all you know about Oklahoma, you've only seen the first act.

the musical.

- + Backyards the size of a house.
- + 100-acre public parks.
- + For Sale signs that won't break the bank.
- + One of the NBA's most exciting franchises.
- + James Beard award-winning cuisine.
- + Some of the PGA's favorite pit stops.
- + Frank Lloyd Wright's only skyscraper.

- + Family friendly cities and small towns.
- + Oscar-worthy landscapes.
- + The nation's top public school teacher.
- + Hidden gem museums.
- + College football royalty.
- + America's most diverse terrain per mile.
- + More shoreline than the Atlantic Coast.

What can we say? Life's pretty large here in Oklahoma. **Come live the flyover life.** 



## Welcome to white picket living

#### \$198,398

average home value

#### \$1,398

average monthly rent

#### 21.5 minutes

average commute

#### 120+

Blue Ribbon schools

#### #1

cost of living in the U.S.\*

The lap of luxury lives where you never thought to look. Oklahoma boasts one of the U.S.'s most affordable costs of living, and wallet-pleasing home prices mean the American dream is still alive and well. When your dollar stretches that much further, you can afford to have your steak and eat it too — in a backyard the size of a house, no less.

Whether you put down roots in a small town, suburb or city, you'll find Oklahomans are still the kind of neighbors willing to share a cup of sugar. Communities are tight knit and friendly to families and young adults alike. Plus, less traffic and a focus on work-life balance leave room for block parties, Friday night lights and picnics in award-winning parks.

#### **FEATURED COMMUNITIES**

#### **Edmond**

Top ranked public schools in the state Population: 94,428

Average Home Value: \$336,621

#### Muskogee

Most affordable city in the U.S.\*\*
Population: 36,878
Avg Home Value: \$122,951

<sup>\*</sup>Council for Community & Economic Research \*\*According to Rocket Homes





MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

## Rebecka Peterson

Calculus Teacher, Union High School 2023 National Teacher of the Year

"It's just this gorgeous mosaic of so many different stories coming together that really make Oklahoma what it is."

#### WHERE DO YOU SPEND YOUR FREE TIME?

One of our favorite places to be together is the Gathering Place, which opened in 2018. It is just the greatest gift to the city of Tulsa. Some of our best memories, I would say, as a family are because of that place.

#### WHAT IS IT LIKE TEACHING IN OKLAHOMA?

I feel like I have the best job in the world because I get paid to do what my dad did for me, which is help students fall in love with the ubiquity of mathematics.

I get to teach in the culturally rich district of Tulsa at Union High School, where we have 62 languages represented. I get to teach kids like me who are maybe new to the country or first-generation Americans, and I feel just so very, very blessed.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF RAISING YOUR FAMILY IN OKLAHOMA?

One of the beautiful things about working in Oklahoma is that there's a real culture of family first here. I have never had to sacrifice being a mom for my job, and I think that that is a true gift. It honestly helps me grow in my profession just as much as being a wife and a mom.

Jonas [Rebecka's son], my husband Brett and I love to go watch football games and watch the big kids go do their thing. We love going to musicals together, but we also just love being out in nature.



Read the full Q&A with Rebecka

#### MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

## Conner Patton

Thoracic Transplant Pharmacist, INTEGRIS Health

## WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE PARTS OF LIVING IN OKLAHOMA?

By far my favorite thing about living in Oklahoma is being within driving distance of my family. We often get together on the weekends and go to local markets or restaurants. Because of the central location, it's also easy for us to road trip to Arkansas and Texas or go skiing in Colorado, which we do every year.

Living in Oklahoma City is also pretty affordable compared to cities of similar size. As a single person, it can be challenging to purchase property, but living in Oklahoma has allowed me to become a homeowner at a fairly young age. Career wise, there is always opportunity for growth.

### WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO YOU DO IN YOUR FREE TIME?

I like to check out farmers markets, resale markets, thrift shops and some of the many state parks and national preservation areas across the state. During cooler months, I try to get outside and camp. I love visiting Beavers Bend State Park in the fall months to camp and float the Mountain Fork River. Most recently, I went down to Robbers Cave State Park and had a five-star experience.



Read the full Q&A with Conner

"Oklahoma is growing in so many ways, and there's still plenty of space for you to call a piece yours."

### WHAT ARE SOME HIDDEN OKLAHOMA GEMS?

For a quintessential Oklahoma experience, get a chicken fried steak at Kendall's in Noble and a pie from Arbuckle Fried Pies down in Davis. I also love Sheesh Mahal in Oklahoma City and Ma Beasley's Daylight Donuts in my hometown of Tecumseh.

In terms of places, I recommend Liberty Theatre in Carnegie. It's the oldest movie theater still in operation in Oklahoma. Medicine Park or Red Rock Canyon Adventure Park are some of my favorite day trips, and if you're around in the summer, the Firelake FireFlight Balloon Festival in Shawnee is a can't miss.















#### **DAILY LIFE**







# Find your stomping grounds

#### Norman

 $Meteorology \ \& \ college \ football \ mecca$ 

Population: 128,026

Avg Home Value: \$244,695

#### **Broken Arrow**

Suburban gem with an outdoorsy side

Population: 113,540

Avg Home Value: \$268,006

#### Moore

Ranked one of America's top small cities\*

Population: 62,793

Avg Home Value: \$210,268

#### **Enid**

Small town charm with a big personality

Population: 51,308

Avg Home Value: \$117,603

#### Stillwater

Epicenter of the red dirt music scene

Population: 48,394

Avg Home Value: \$231,777

#### Owasso

Major league baseball breeding ground

Population: 38,240

*Avg Home Value: \$293,725* 

#### Bartlesville

Muse of oil barons & Frank Lloyd Wright

Population: 37,290

Avg Home Value: \$165,284

#### Yukon

Festival capital of Oklahoma

Population: 23,630

*Avg Home Value: \$255,679* 

#### Shawnee

Home of Oklahoma's largest playground

Population: 31,377

Avg Home Value: \$145,023

#### Bixby

The great Garden Spot of Oklahoma

Population: 28,609

Avg Home Value: \$309,034

#### **Jenks**

Antiquing capital of Oklahoma

Population: 25,949

Avg Home Value: \$324,608

#### **Ponca City**

Museums, mansions & miles of shoreline

Population: 24,424

Avg Home Value: \$119,067

#### **■ CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT**

## Your playground on the prairie

300+

museums

31+

Main Street districts

5-time

NW Division champions

12,265+

miles of highway

50+

craft breweries

Oklahoma works hard, but this flyover state knows how to play. New-York-Times-approved restaurants. Rowdy OKC Thunder games.
Nationally-renowned zoos. Vibrant shopping districts. College football tailgates. Prestigious museums. Route 66 oddities. Music, food and arts festivals. Jackpot-happy casinos. Nights at the ballet. Olympic softball tournaments. Sticky sweet fairs and bull-bucking rodeos. It's all hiding in the heart of the country.

After work and on the weekends, there's so much going on you'll have to budget that hard-earned free time. Time for a getaway?
Oklahoma is equidistant to New York City and Los Angeles and touches six states, making it a breeze to get out of dodge for a few days.

#### **FEATURED COMMUNITIES**

Oklahoma City

6th fastest growing U.S. city Population: 681,054 Avg Home Value: \$199,296

#### Tulsa

Arts & culture hub of Oklahoma Population: 413,066 Avg Home Value: \$196,555









## Jeff Chanchaleune

Owner & Head Chef, Ma Der Lao Kitchen | 2023 James Beard Award Finalist

"We get guests from all over the U.S. that tell us Oklahoma is actually way cooler than they thought and that they'll be back."

## YOU'VE RACKED UP PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS AND YOUR RESTAURANTS ARE ON PEOPLE'S BUCKET LISTS. YOU COULD GO ANYWHERE. WHY STAY IN OKLAHOMA?

I've traveled every chance I could, and I noticed one thing every major city had in common was a very delicious, diverse food scene. I wanted that for Oklahoma City, and I wanted to be a part of that journey. I've lived and worked in Portland and Chicago, but Oklahoma has always been home.

### WHAT ARE SOME MUST-TRY OKLAHOMA RESTAURANTS?

Sedalia's Oyster & Seafood, VII Asian Bistro, Chow's, Szechuan Story, Cafe Kacao and Sheesh Mahal are just a few of my favorites, and have a fivestar experience.



#### WHAT OPPORTUNITIES HAS LIVING IN OKLAHOMA GIVEN YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?

The lower cost of living is amazing. It's allowed us to own a home, have a family and travel often.

Professionally, living here has given me stability to create new businesses that help grow the city.

## WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO YOU DO WITH YOUR FAMILY?

Living in Oklahoma as a dad has been great. We usually kick the soccer ball outside in the yard, chalk the sidewalk and play hideand-seek. I'll probably start taking the kids to places like Mount Scott, Turner Falls and Scissortail Park in downtown. If I ever have free time, I also like to try new restaurants. We live a really simple life. It's either restaurant, home, family gatherings or travel.







## Oklahoma's finest festivals

#### DEADCENTER FILM FESTIVAL

Each June, over 20,000 filmmakers and cinephiles flock to Oklahoma City to catch the most exciting indie flicks of the year. Named one of the "20 Coolest Film Festivals in the World" by MovieMaker Magazine, deadCENTER is an Academy Award-Qualifying Festival for animated and live action short films, and past attendees have rubbed shoulders with stars like Matthew McConaughey, Judd Apatow and Lily Gladstone.

#### SUNNY DAYZ MURAL FESTIVAL

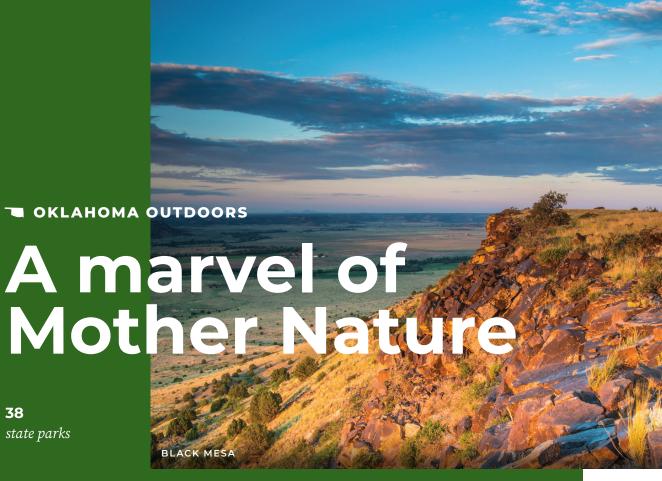
Oklahoma has become a street art leader over the past decade, thanks in part to this one-of-a-kind festival. Each year, Sunny Dayz douses a different city with murals from more than 30 female artists. While the paint is drying in Ponca City this June, live music, food trucks, local vendors and workshops will keep the good vibes rolling all weekend long.

#### NORMAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Three days of live music and art take over Main Street of this college town every April. Boasting over 60 local and national bands, the festival is 100% free to attend and has featured names like The Flaming Lips and Shakey Graves. The festival features a lineup of acts across rock, indie, folk, blues, hip-hop and more. In between stages, be sure to chow down at local food trucks or get a bird's eye view of the festival on the ferris wheel.







55,646

miles of shoreline

4

mountain ranges

160+

miles of urban trails

1.4 millon

acres of fish & wildlife habitat

Oklahoma's endless blue skies have long gripped the hearts of Hollywood Westerns, but the state has more sides to show off. Whether you're looking for rugged mountains and rivers ripe for fly fishing, or lush city parks and urban nature sanctuaries, it's the living large in Oklahoma.

Twelve distinct ecoregions — ranging from cypress swamps and hardwood forests to tallgrass prairies — make Oklahoma the most diverse state per mile in the United States. Hiking trails, state parks, campgrounds and wildlife management areas dot the state like diamonds, and pedestrian and bike paths wind through cities and small towns alike. Those cotton candy sunsets? Just the cherry on top.

#### **FEATURED COMMUNITIES**

#### Lawton

Gateway to the Wichita Mountains Population: 90,381 Avg Home Value: \$121,175

#### Ardmore

The Mother Road's favorite lake town Population: 24,725

Avg Home Value: \$139,672

#### MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

## Jason Burks

Owner, Retrospec Films & Climb Tulsa

"Most of the states everyone loves that are covered in pine trees and mountains only have that. They don't have the deserts and deciduous forests and diversity that Oklahoma has."

## AS AN AVID OUTDOORSMAN, WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE PLACES TO EXPLORE?

I love rock climbing in the Wichita Mountains and camping in Robbers Cave State Park. I enjoy going to the lake and driving boats around Grand Lake and Tenkiller Lake. Recently, I did some paragliding along the Talimena National Scenic Byway, which was a blast. I'm also big into mountain biking, camping, climbing, hiking, off-roading in the jeep, dirt biking. All of that stuff.

### WHAT'S THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION ABOUT OKLAHOMA?

People have massive misconceptions. They think Oklahoma is boring and a bunch of plains. Oklahoma is massively different. You go to the south and you have the Ouachita Mountains and evergreens. You go out west to the Wichita Mountains, and it's like you're in a desert. There are cactus, cliffs, sand dunes and places to rock climb everywhere. In the northeast, there are caves and rivers and huge lakes to do lake sports in. Way out in the panhandle, it feels like you're in New Mexico and there are mesas and road runners and all of this insane diversity.



Read the full Q&A with Jason

## WHAT ARE SOME HIDDEN OKLAHOMA GEMS PEOPLE NEED TO CHECK OUT?

Medicine Park. It's so quaint and cute, and when you drive over to that space and see Mount Scott, you'll be like "What!" It blows your mind a little bit.





# Think outside the plains

#### BEAVERS BEND STATE PARK

Jaw-dropping beauty and endless activities make this marvel of Mother Nature a favorite for Oklahomans and our Texas neighbors too. Hiking, kayaking, horseback riding and year-round trout fishing just scratch the surface of ways to play in this 1,300-acre park. Outdoorsy campers love the pines and rivers, and indoorsy glampers love the thousands of luxury cabin rentals that surround the park.

#### CHICKASAW NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

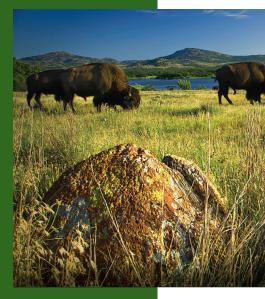
During the summer, nothing hits like the crisp, cool waters of Oklahoma's only national recreation area. Nestled in the Arbuckle Mountain foothills, springs, streams and creeks wind through the woods — including the Little Niagara swimming hole, an Oklahoma rite of passage. The area's main attraction is Lake of the Arbuckles, which the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has rated best in the state for bass fishing.

#### WICHITA MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE REFUGE

Ancient granite mountains, tallgrass prairies and free-roaming bison make these 60,000 protected acres the shining gem of southwest Oklahoma. Oklahomans flock to the rugged landscape to hike, rappel, mountain bike, fish, camp and catch a glimpse of prairie dogs and Mountain Boomer lizards. No trip's complete without a stop in Medicine Park, the nearby cobblestone resort town.



















#### JOB PROSPECTS

## Wide open room to grow

#### 29,000+

jobs available

#### 3rd

lowest cost of doing business in the U.S.

#### 6th

fastest growing real GDP

#### 2

nationally recognized research universities

#### 60

Oklahoma CareerTech center campuses

We're more than roughnecks and ranchhands. When you're ready to make things official, take your pick from mom and pop shops and national giants like Boeing, Amazon or Macy's too. High-flying tech gigs, awardwinning films and blue collar careers are hiring all across the state, and Oklahoma's central location and low prices make it ideal for remote workers to save a few bucks with a bit more breathing room.

For those who would rather be their own boss, Oklahoma's growing economy is the green light to doing business with less red tape. Fewer taxes, limited regulation and lower operating costs mean you're free to run things your way. When you're ready to level up your education, nationally recognized universities and one of the nation's leading technical education systems are just around the corner.

#### **TOP INDUSTRIES**

- + Aerospace & Defense
- + Agribusiness
- + Automotive
- + Bioscience
- + Film & Music
- + Hospitality & Tourism
- + Information & Financial Services
- + Manufacturing
- + Renewable Energy
- + Traditional Energy
- + Transportation & Logistics

#### **FEATURED COMMUNITIES**

#### Midwest City

Home of Tinker Air Force Base Population: 58,409 Avg Home Value: \$159,725

#### Duncan

Manufacturing hub with Western roots Population: 22,692 Avg Home Value: \$113,206







## Eric Hinton

General Manager of OKC Operations, Pratt & Whitnev

"Integrating into the Oklahoma community has happened effortlessly, which I think is a testament to the friendly vibe that sets this place apart."

## YOU'VE LIVED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. HOW HAS LIFE IN OKLAHOMA COMPARED?

I'm originally from Chicago. Since then, I've lived in eight different states. Personally, I like that Oklahoma has all four seasons. I think it's all about your perspective. I still know folks back in Chicago that would tell you there's not much to do or see there. You just need to put yourself out there to see what it has to offer.

### WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT WORKING IN OKLAHOMA'S AEROSPACE INDUSTRY?

My team is responsible for delivering combat-ready propulsion systems for military aircraft. We partner with Tinker Air Force Base to maintain, overhaul and repair military engines for the F-35, C-17, F-22, F-15, F-16, B-52 and E-3 AWACS.

It's truly unlike anywhere else I've lived. Watching the way the community and state has rallied around this industry is fascinating. I think when we look back at Oklahoma's aerospace industry in just five to ten years, the growth will be astounding.

#### HOW IS RAISING A FAMILY IN OKLAHOMA?

Raising our son here, we appreciate the good values and solid character of people. Koah [Eric's son] keeps us on our toes. It's important to me and my wife that he be exposed to different cultures and people, so right now he attends a bilingual daycare where he is learning both English and Spanish. He's in tae kwon do, and he recently completed swimming lessons too. In our free time, we like to spend time at home making pizzas in our backyard or venturing downtown to Scissortail Park on a nice day.



Read the full Q&A with Eric





## Susan Morir Principal,

"We've got big-league entertainment and amenities with super friendly people and almost no traffic. What more could you want?"

#### PEOPLE DON'T THINK OF OKLAHOMA AS A TECH HUB. WHAT'S THE REALITY?

Oklahoma's tech community has grown tremendously over the last decade. We've had some big startup success stories with Tailwind and Consumer Affairs, and we've opened top-of-the-line entrepreneurial spaces for techies and creatives like The Verge in Oklahoma City and 36 Degrees North in Tulsa. The amount of venture capital in the state has increased ten times in the last five years, and the growth we're experiencing now is just the beginning.

#### WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO YOU DO IN YOUR FREE TIME?

Live music, pub trivia at local breweries, walking the dogs at Scissortail Park or on one of the local trails. My husband, Zach, and I are big OKC Thunder fans and love to catch a game or a watch party. We also love the Beavers Bend State Park area in Southeast Oklahoma. The Ouachita National Forest is one of the oldest and largest national forests, and the hiking is gorgeous. It's a perfect weekend getaway to escape from the city and get out in nature.

#### WHAT COULD AN OKLAHOMA NEWCOMER EXPECT?

I think newcomers would be surprised at how many resources are available and how easy it is to get plugged in and meet people. The community here is very open, welcoming and collaborative, and we have a plethora of resources to support entrepreneurs across all stages, including university programs, incubators, accelerators, educational programming, coding bootcamps and more.

Another thing I love about living in Oklahoma is that you're never more than one or two degrees of separation from the people who can help you make it happen. For example, if you have a great idea but need buy-in from the mayor's office or something similar, chances are you can get in front of them. Oklahoma's a great place for career-oriented people for that reason.



