

According to AARP Magazine, the city of Tucson, Arizona, is the best place for seniors to settle for “simpler retirement living”. Also on the list, in order of AARP’s rating after Tucson are Greenville, SC, Montpelier VT, Logan UT, Ames IO, Northampton MA, Lexington/Fayette KY, Oxford MS and Walla Walla WA. Its #8 is an obscure listing naming just Texas Hill Country, wherever that may be.

Apparently the AARP people who compiled the list never bothered to investigate the more familiar retiree destinations of Miami, San Diego, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Palm Springs, Palm Beach and Orlando. Or maybe it was because they believe housing and other cost-of-living expenses in those places have already escalated out of sight.



The AARP article also lists Tucson’s population to be 541,000. Actually, as of 2012, it was 850,000 and growing. There has been an almost 50% growth to the city’s population in the past 20 years, primarily for three reasons.

There’s major U.S. Air Force base, Davis-Monthan. Second, Tucson is the location of the state’s largest education facility, the University of Arizona, which is always growing in student population. And third, supporting AARP’s contentions, Tucson has become one of the nation’s most popular retirement areas.

As for the economic reasons to live in Tucson, AARP is correct if you compare housing costs. In other popular retirement areas, such as San Diego, Los Angeles and Orlando, the typical one-bedroom apartment rents for \$1,200 a month. In Tucson, it is \$700.

More divergent is the price of buying homes. In those popular cities, typical modest, three-bedroom homes cost \$750,000. In Tucson, the average price is \$350,000.

Prices for food and other staples are about the same in Tucson as they are anywhere else. However, Tucson's year-round desert warm climate makes clothing costs much cheaper, without the need for change of seasons purchases for heavier items.

If there are negative aspects to living in Arizona desert Tucson, they are the lack of rainfall and the searing hot months of July and August. No need for a lawn mower. There are few grass lawns in the city, and most home yard plants are cacti and other hardy desert plants.

The temperature frequently rises to 100 degrees and above in the summer, but it is a very dry heat. Hiking in 85 degree Tucson weather is as comfortable as being out in 70 degree heat in humid Miami, often more so. During summer months, most hikers and joggers hit the desert trails around Tucson at 6 am sun-up, and get back into air-conditioned homes by 9 am.

Former Mayor Bob Walkup called himself "mayor of paradise," and bragged "I believe Tucson has the highest quality of life of any city in the country,". That may be somewhat of an exaggeration, but Tucson's growth as a retirement destination proves that he wasn't be too far off the mark. www.visittucson.org