

BOW TEST: 10 BEST NEW COMPOUNDS

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WON THE TEST! P.37

MAY 2011

OUTDOOR LIFE

AMERICA'S TOP

2000

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HOW WE RANK TOWNS

For our fourth-annual ranking, we highlighted towns that give you the best chance of finding a good-paying job and allow you to live comfortably within your means. With that in mind, we double-weighted three of our socio-economic categories this year to reward towns with low unemployment rates, high household income and a low cost of living.

WHERE WE GET OUR STATS

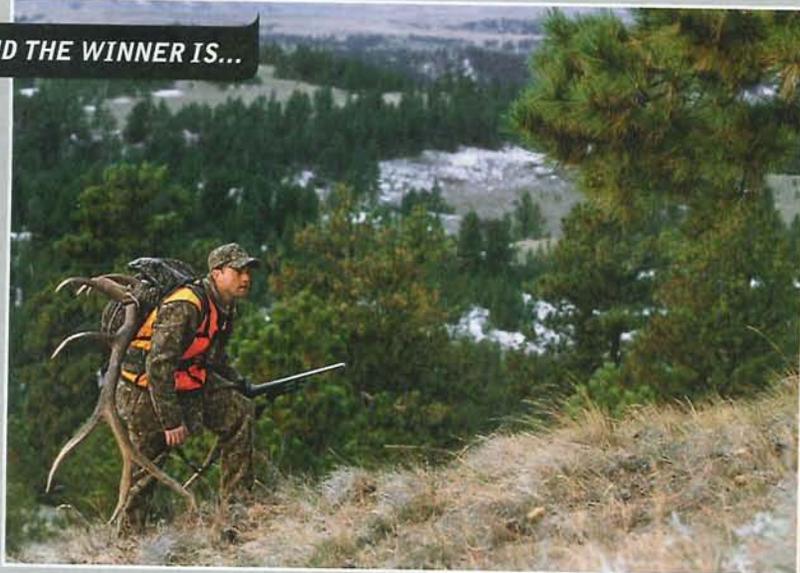
The website city-data.com has proven to be invaluable since we began this program. This is where we get the data for the bulk of our socio-economic categories: Population, Population Growth Since 2000, Median Household Income, Median Home Value, Cost of Living, Population Density,

Unemployment Rate and Mean Commute Time. (Note: All data from city-data.com is from 2009, the most recent available. The national average Cost of Living Index rating is 100.) Our School Grade numbers are from great-schools.org. Our Amenities scores are based upon access to services such as hospitals, cultural outlets and institutes of higher education. Combined, these categories measure each town's Quality of Life score, which makes up 40 percent of the overall ranking.

THE OUTDOOR LIFE

The other 60 percent is based upon the Outdoors score, which reflects each town's performance in the following categories: Gun Friendliness, Fishable Species, Hunttable Species, Proximity to Public Land and Waters and Trophy Potential.

AND THE WINNER IS...



1 BEND, OR

Surrounded by millions of acres of Forest Service land, grassland and wetlands, and hundreds of miles of fishable rivers and streams—and with nearly 300 sun-filled days a year to enjoy this embarrassment of sporting riches—Bend, Oregon, tops this year's list of the best towns for sportsmen.

All of that public hunting and fishing acreage surrounds a vibrant and growing city. Bend is by no means quaint, with roughly 80,000 people currently calling it home; that the population has grown nearly 50 percent in the past decade is a great indicator of a thriving community. At

the same time, the median household income in Bend has risen 30 percent since 2000, to \$53,177, and the cost of living here is right at the national average, if not a hair below.

In this unique landscape, where the Cascade Mountains meet the high desert, upland hunters chase quail, pheasants and chukar across a variety of terrain. Big-game hunters never run out of opportunities for elk, mule deer, antelope and black bears in the

Deschutes, Willamette and Ochoco national forests. If it's waterfowl that gets you out of bed in the morning, you'll appreciate great gunning for all the species that course the Pacific Flyway each fall.

Coldwater anglers really have it good in Bend as well, with legendary waterways like the Deschutes, Crooked and Metolius rivers, and smaller streams like Fall River, holding healthy populations of big reddsided rainbow and bull trout. Big waters, like Wickiup Reservoir and Paulina Lake, are home to enormous brown trout and plentiful kokanee salmon. A short drive to the Lower Deschutes will get you into salmon and steelhead, and a 3½-hour jaunt will put you in coastal towns like Newport, where you can enjoy all of the Pacific Northwest's saltwater fishing.

If your roll cast is rusty, head to the local Orvis store in the Old Mill district, where an 18-hole fly-casting course lets you practice your skills in a variety of settings similar to those you'll find on the waters around Bend.

If thinking about the abundant hunting and fishing opportunities in and around Bend is making you thirsty, you'll be glad to know that downtown is home to eight craft beer breweries, linked by what is known as the "Bend Ale Trail."

VITAL STATS Population/growth since 2000: 76,621/47.3% // Median household income: \$53,177 // Median home value: \$287,000 // Cost of Living Index: 99.9 // Mean commute time: 15.4 minutes // Unemployment rate: 4.3%

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