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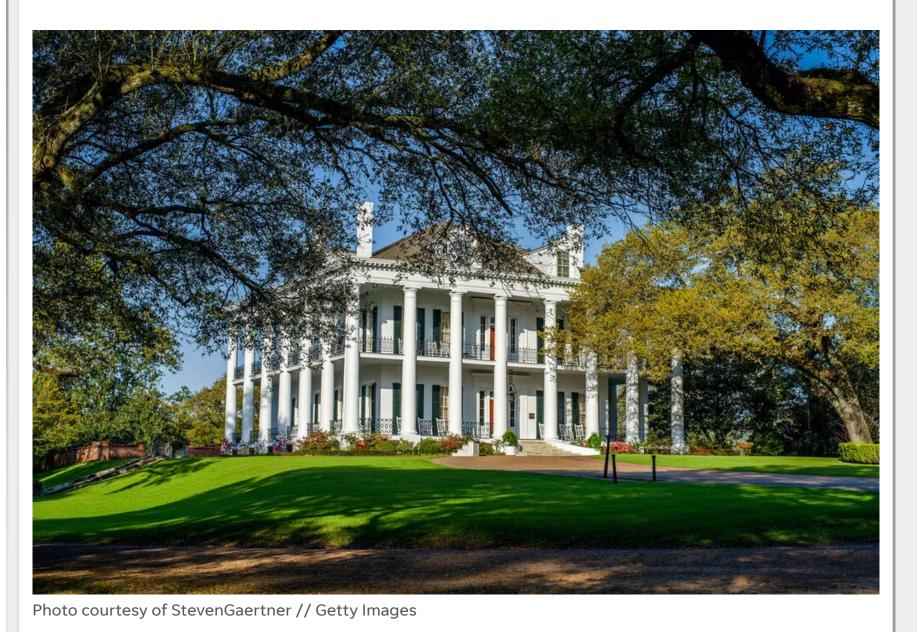
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# **10 best historic small towns in the** United States, according to readers By 10Best Editors



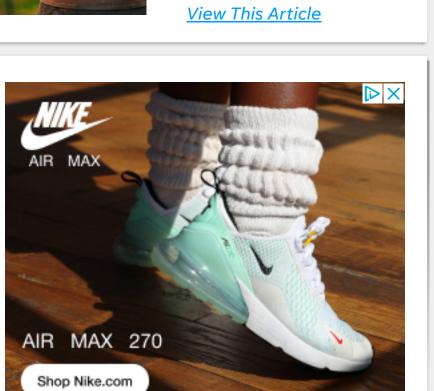
Photo courtesy of iStock / PapaBear

North America has a fascinating history and exploring the places which most affected it is much more fun than simply reading about it. The 10 best historic small towns, as voted by our readers, have small populations (fewer than 25,000 people) with big histories, making them fun and affordable ways to dive into our nation's past.



# No. 10: Natchez, Mississippi

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Since its settlement in 1716 by French colonists, Natchez has played an essential role in developing the Lower Mississippi River Valley. Once the capital of the Mississippi Territory, wealthy Southern planters and riverboat captains built their mansions here before the Civil War, many of which are well-preserved today. Visit the Natchez Museum of African American History and Culture to understand the experiences of Black people in the South. Also in Natchez is the infamous Forks of the Road, once the location of one of the largest slave markets in the United States.



# No. 9: Berkeley Springs, West Virginia

Less than a 2-hour drive from the DC/Baltimore area, Berkeley Springs is worlds away from big-city bustle. Visitors discovered the power of this mountain enclave's natural warm springs ages ago and have been coming ever since, seeking relaxation and rejuvenation. You can still spend time at centuries-old baths at Berkeley Springs State Park, but myriad modern options abound as well, along with lovely inns, dining venues, shopping options and cultural events.



### No. 8: Natchitoches, Louisiana

Welcome to "Nack-a-Tish," B&B capital of Louisiana and quaint setting for the ensemble-cast classic, "Steel Magnolias." Natchitoches is the oldest town in the state. Its historic district is loaded down with shopping, dining and other attractions while ample annual events – many incorporating Native American, Creole and Louisiana cultures – draw visitors by the busload. Some of the city's most popular center on music, including jazz and zydeco, others on regional staples like good 'ol Louisiana barbecue.



Photo courtesy of NMTD

### No. 7: Taos, New Mexico

The Taos Pueblo is believed to be one of the oldest continually active communities in North America and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The earliest residents of the area, the Tiwa tribe, have lived in Taos Valley for more than 1,000 years, and many of the town's unique adobe structures are several centuries old. Taos has attracted artists for over 100 years and now has more than 20 sites on the National Register of Historic Places.



# No. 6: Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

This small Pennsylvania town is best known historically for the turning point threeday battle fought there in the summer of 1863 between Confederate and Union forces during the American Civil War. Every year in July, volunteers reenact the battle with commentary narrated by battlefield guides from the Gettysburg National Military Park. Ghost tours and historical interpretations entertain and inform visitors. Additionally, the Eisenhower National Historic Site preserves the retreat farm of the former general and president, which was a peaceful meeting place for world leaders during the Cold War.



No. 5: De Smet, South Dakota Charles and Caroline Ingalls settled in De Smet in 1879. Their daughter Laura

recorded her childhood memories in her Little House books, the basis for the "Little House on the Prairie" TV series. Locals retell the story every summer in an open-air theater, and visitors can see buildings connected to the Ingalls family.



# No. 4: Carlisle, Pennsylvania

This community was founded in 1751 in south-central Pennsylvania and today is one of the state's most treasured historic towns. Carlisle played a significant role in the American Revolutionary War, with the Carlisle Barracks, the second-oldest Army post serving as a supply headquarters for American soldiers.

Many people of historical fame have walked the town's streets, including George Washington, "Molly Pitcher," the heroine of the Battle of Monmouth, and many others. Carlisle is also home to Dickinson College, which in 1783 became the first college founded in the newly formed United States of America.



### No. 3: San Elizario, Texas

The roots of this small Texas community go back hundreds of years, beginning with a Spanish settlement and military base. San Elizario chose to maintain its historic integrity rather than move forward as the railroad became a more prominent means of transportation in the late 1800s.

Today, the community features historically significant buildings with the adobe construction and architectural features recognized in the Territorial and Pueblo Revival styles. The Casa Garcia, formerly a residence in the mid-19th-century, now serves as a museum and highlights exhibits on the town's history through its many governmental periods.



## No. 2: Abilene, Kansas

Abilene is the hometown of Dwight D. Eisenhower, a five-star General and 34th President of the United States, and that's just the start of this town's historical appeal. Besides the Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum & Boyhood home, visitors can ride the state's only operational steam locomotive, tour the historic Seelye Mansion, take a spin on the oldest known Parker Carousel and step back into the Wild West in Old Abilene Town.



Photo courtesy of cmart7327 // Getty Images

## No. 1: Wickford, Rhode Island

Europeans first settled this Rhode Island community around 1637, and today it features one of the northeastern United States' most significant collections of 18thcentury dwellings, most of which are on their original foundations.

The Old Narragansett Church was established in downtown Wickford in 1707 and today stands as the oldest Episcopal church building in the northeastern United States. One of the area's most visited historical locations is Smith's Castle, built in 1678 by the son of one of Wickford's earliest European settlers.

#### THE EXPERTS

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#### **ALLISON TIBALDI**

Allison Tibaldi is a travel and food writer based in New York City. She has lived in Rome, Tuscany, Melbourne Australia, Toronto and Los Angeles. She studied early childhood development in graduate school and firmly believes that travel is the best education. She writes for numerous publications including CNN, Travel Channel, HGTV, am New York,

Emirates Open Skies, Family Traveller and Travel Weekly.

10Best.com provides users with original, unbiased and experiential travel coverage of top

attractions, things to see and do, and restaurants for top destinations in the U.S. and

#### **DEBORAH FALLOWS**



Deborah Fallows is a writer and a linguist. She is the co-author with her husband, James Fallows, of the national best-selling book, Our Towns: A 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America, published in May, 2018. Our Towns, the HBO documentary based on the book was released in April, 2021. They recently launched the Our Towns Civic Foundation to support renewal efforts of communities across America. Deb has written extensively on language, culture, travel, and China for *The Atlantic*, *National Geographic*, *Slate*, *The New* York Times and The Washington Monthly. Her previous book, Dreaming in Chinese: Mandarin Lessons in Life, Love, and Language, is based on her 3-year experience living and working in China.

#### **DYNIE SANDERSON**



Dynie is the creator of NapaFoodGalTravels and has been a food, wine and travel journalist and digital influencer living and indulging in life in the Napa Valley and around the world for over 25 years. She was founder, publisher and editor of GuestWest Magazine, Napa Valley's first luxury lifestyle magazine; Food and Flavor Editor for Napa Valley Life Magazine and contributor to a variety of food and wine publications. Always seeking out the next wine region or food and wine festival to experience around the US and around the world to add to "Dynie's Delicious Destinations." Follow NapaFoodGal on Twitter,

#### **MARLA CIMINI**



Marla is an award-winning writer with a passion for travel, music, surfing and culinary adventures! An avid globetrotter and professional storyteller, she has covered topics that include wild Tahitian getaways; Sicilian wine trails, delectable Hawaiian food trends and luxury beachfront resorts. Her articles have appeared in numerous publications worldwide, including USA Today. Marla lives in New Jersey (Philadelphia area) and is a frequent visitor to Hawaii and Southern California, and often covers those destinations. Her travel website is: www.marlacimini.com

#### **SHEREL PURCELL**



Sherel Purcell is a travel writer who specializes in golf, Montreal and Quebec, contemporary art, cycling and food and wine. Her articles appear on USA Today's 10Best, About.com, Aol, Matador, Vacay, Travel+Escape and other large sites as well as print magazines including Dreamscapes (The Globe and Mail) and Frommer's Budget Travel. Her travel photos have appeared in the video, "A New York Minute" on the Smithsonian website and Brand USA. She has received an editorial award from Parenting Publications of America and a nomination from "See America".

#### **CATHERINE SMITH**



Catherine Smith, Readers' Choice Awards Production Manager and Social Media Director for USA TODAY 10Best, has a special interest in unique culinary experiences and off-thebeaten-path adventures. Catherine is the founder of Her Bags Were Packed where

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The Classic Cars That Sean The Truth About Donald Trump's Youngest Son Is **No Secret Anymore** 







Ivanka Has Worn Sketchy **Outfits, Here Are The Most** Inappropriate



Kutcher Is Just Plain Sad

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