

Ottawa, Guelph and Victoria Are Among Canada’s Most Livable Cities

Canada’s largest cities often top international “best of” lists. Vancouver was called the most livable city in the world by the Economist magazine, while Toronto was ranked the world’s 15th best place to live by AskMen.com, and Montreal’s “City Brand” was Ranked 13th. But Canada’s smaller cities should not be overlooked, according to new livability rankings from the Martin Prosperity Institute. Ottawa, Guelph, and Victoria compete with bigger cities in terms of livability, and have joined larger centers among the country’s most livable places.

The new rankings are the first of their kind because they grade a city’s livability at each life stage: Young Singles, Mid-Career Professionals, Families, Empty Nesters and Retirees. The meaning of “livable” changes as one grows older, and the MPI rankings weight according to life stage preference. While a young person might feel comfortable in a region with vibrant nightlife, a retiree would be more interested in the number of available golf courses or restaurants. The rankings are based on more than thirty (weighted) variables in five categories including: the share of a city’s population at each life stage, the city’s economic strength, education and safety, and local amenities. The MPI compiled separate rankings for the best city values (where cost of living was more important), the best cities for Gays and Lesbians, and the best values for Gays and Lesbians.

The Nation’s *Livability Capital*

With a population of 1,130,000, Ottawa is Canada’s fourth largest city but is still a medium-sized city – roughly half the size of Montreal. In spite of this size difference, Ottawa fares better on average than the big three and the best of the 145 Canadian cities, ranking first in three of our life stage categories.

Most Livable Canadian Cities, by Life Stage (excluding territories)

Ranking	Singles	Mid-Career Professionals	Families	Empty Nesters	Retirees
1 st	Calgary	Ottawa-Gatineau	Ottawa-Gatineau	Toronto	Ottawa-Gatineau
2 nd	Ottawa-Gatineau	Calgary	Toronto	Ottawa-Gatineau	Toronto
3 rd	Victoria	Edmonton	Calgary	Calgary	Calgary
4 th	Edmonton	Guelph	Fredericton	Victoria	Victoria
5 th	Guelph	Victoria	Guelph	Canmore	Montreal

Places much smaller than Ottawa also fare very well:

- Guelph ranks in the top five for: Singles, Professionals and Families.
- Victoria is the best value for singles and Empty Nesters and in the top five overall for: Singles, Professionals, Empty Nesters and Retirees.
- Fredericton ranks in the top five for families- based on overall score and on value.
- Canmore ranks fifth overall for empty nesters.

Most of the smaller places that score highly seem to benefit by proximity and connectedness to larger centers. For instance, Ottawa and Guelph connected to the 5th largest mega region in North America: “Tor-Buff-Loo-Mon-Tawa” while Victoria is a commuting distance from Vancouver. For their part Canada’s largest cities also score highly in the life stage rankings, although they seem to appeal to specific life stage categories.

- Calgary is the best city in Canada for Singles, and scores in the top five on all five overall life stage rankings.
- Toronto is the best city for Empty Nesters
- Montreal is among the top five best values in each size category.
- Vancouver is a top gay and lesbian value for four out of five size categories.

Lists of the top ranked cities in every category can be found in the recently published Canadian Edition of *Who’s Your City*, by Richard Florida, the MPI’s Academic Director. And those who would like to customize their rankings can use the MPI’s Place Finder at <http://placefinder.rotman.utoronto.ca>. The place finder allows users to generate their own rankings for all of North America, based on their individual regional and lifestyle preferences.

The Martin Prosperity Institute (martinprosperity.org) at the [University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management](http://www.utoronto.ca/rotman) is the world’s leading think-tank on the role of sub-national factors – location, place and city-regions – in global economic prosperity. Led by Director [Richard Florida](http://www.utoronto.ca/florida), we take an integrated view of prosperity, looking beyond economic measures to include the importance of quality of place and the development of people’s creative potential.