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The 100 European Cities
Shaping Tomorrow

2026

Europe's Best Cities



Empowering Places



Resonance creates transformative strategies, brands and campaigns that empower destinations, cities and communities to realize their full potential.

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Welcome to the 2026 Europe's Best Cities Report

At a time when global competition is intensifying and alliances are being redefined, Europe possesses a unique advantage: its cities. They are becoming the primary arenas where economic strength, political agency and cultural influence are asserted. From investment attraction and talent competition to the projection of soft power, cities now carry a disproportionate share of Europe's global relevance, and are central to the continent's competitive future.



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As global consultants in place branding, destination strategy and marketing, Resonance works with cities and regions to define their competitive identity and activate strategies that attract and retain investment, talent and visitors. Our 2026 Europe's Best Cities report and ranking reflects that mission. Our rankings measure both perception and performance – the signals most closely correlated with prime-age population growth, visitor expenditure and business formation.

In 2026, those signals tell a more complex and consequential story. European cities have never been more desirable: nearly half of global destination preference now points to Europe, up from 41% last year. Yet our research also reveals a growing disconnect. The correlation between how cities perform and how they are perceived is just 0.54. Some cities outperform their reputations; others benefit from global affection that exceeds their underlying infrastructure and systems.

This gap is no longer academic, it is strategic. Closing it requires cities to invest simultaneously in hardware and narrative; in both the lived experience on the ground and the story told to the world.

That imperative is sharpened by a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape. As transatlantic relationships grow less predictable, European leaders are asserting greater autonomy, reshoring supply chains, accelerating shared investment and strengthening intra-European collaboration. From energy and defence infrastructure in Poland to renewed regional connectivity from Dublin to Dubrovnik, Europe's cities are becoming the primary engines of continental resilience. Notably, this momentum is being reinforced from within: Europeans

themselves are now the strongest drivers of the continent's record tourism growth.

The cities leading our 2026 rankings are turning disruption into a forcing function for progress. London sustains its global primacy through relentless reinvention, including generational investments like Canary Wharf 3.0. Paris has translated ambition into everyday life through the 15-minute city and the Grand Paris Express, reshaping mobility and access at metropolitan scale. Berlin is transforming Tegel Airport into Berlin TXL, a living laboratory for climate-positive urbanism and one of the world's largest timber-construction districts. And beyond our Top 3, this report documents 100 cities actively redefining what it means to live, work, visit and invest in Europe today.

Our methodology continues to evolve alongside these realities. In addition to core economic and connectivity indicators, we now incorporate measures of resilience – such as climate risk exposure and adaptive capacity – alongside public transportation accessibility and emerging forms of digital engagement. Together, these metrics reflect the true dynamics shaping urban success in this decade.

For leaders shaping the future of cities, Europe's Best Cities offers more than a ranking. It is a strategic lens on where momentum is building, where perception lags performance, and where decisive action can define the next era of European growth. The urban future is being written now. We invite you to explore the cities authoring the most compelling chapters.

I'm always eager to chat about how you can empower your city and region, so please get in touch.

Ranking a Continent Poised for Global Growth

Welcome to the fourth annual Europe's Best Cities report, our yearly check-in on how Europe's urban powerhouses are perceived and how they perform in an environment that never stops shifting.



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The continent's appeal remains undeniable: a mosaic of history, innovation, and everyday delight that continues to draw residents, visitors, and investment. In 2026, that magnetism persists even as travellers and cities alike navigate a new mix of headwinds and tailwinds.

Travel demand into Europe remains robust, buoyed by strong transatlantic capacity and a steady rebound from Asia-Pacific. Value-conscious visitors are extending stays and embracing rail and regional itineraries, and a widening network of night trains and improved intercity links make multi-stop trips simpler (and more sustainable) than ever.

Exciting events have already attracted even more visitors to the region this year, like the Milano-Cortina 2026 Winter Games and Europe's Capitals of Culture in Oulu, Finland, and Trenčín, Slovakia.

At the same time, geopolitics continues to set the tempo, with the war in Ukraine, the evolution of EU policy and enlargement discussions, and the normalisation of post-Brexit travel frameworks all shaping sentiment, investment and mobility.

Cities are balancing welcoming visitors with resident well-being, piloting new visitor management measures and sustainability standards. Cost-of-living considerations remain front of mind, even as inflation moderates in many markets. New EU border technologies like the Entry/Exit System and ETIAS are rolling out in phases, requiring travellers to plan a bit earlier and to pack a touch more patience alongside their passports. Against this backdrop, Ipsos, in partnership with Resonance, again fielded research across the region to gauge where Europeans most want to live, visit, and work.

As in prior years, we asked the following three open-ended questions:

1. Thinking about places across Europe, including small towns and large cities, what are the top three towns or cities you would most like to live in some day?
2. Thinking about places across Europe, including small towns and large cities, what are the top three towns or cities you would most like to visit in the next 12-24 months?
3. Thinking about places across Europe, including small towns and large cities, what three towns or cities do you believe currently offer the best job opportunities?

The responses highlight a vibrant mix: global hubs retain their star power, while rising second cities and regional capitals continue to climb, propelled by quality-of-life gains, innovation ecosystems, cultural programming, and improved connectivity. Our analysis backs up the Resonance exploration into how livability, lovability, and prosperity intersect to shape perception – and how those perceptions translate into market opportunity.

We invite you to explore the findings and to consider how your city or region can sharpen its proposition in this dynamic context.

Thank you for your interest in Europe's Best Cities. Here's to a year of smart strategy, memorable journeys, and cities that keep getting better.

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Our Methodology

How we ranked Europe's Best Cities for 2026

To rank the performance and perception of Europe's Best Cities for 2026, we analysed metropolitan areas with populations of more than 500,000 (according to EuroStat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). We determined the Top 100 cities using a combination of core statistics and user-generated data from online sources such as Google, Instagram, and TikTok to measure quality of place when it comes to experiential factors. This ranking also excludes all Russian cities, as it has since 2022, due to the country's illegal invasion of Ukraine and its ongoing military aggression.

This blend of data led to the creation of Resonance's proprietary Place Power™ Score, the foundation of all of our Best Cities rankings. So how does Resonance choose the metrics to effectively measure an urban region's performance relative to its competitors? While many factors shape our perception of urban regions as desirable places to live, work or visit, Resonance's rankings are focused on the shared factors that demonstrate moderate to strong correlations with the performance of urban regions when it comes to attracting prime age population (age 25–44), visitation trends and/or business formation. Based on our ongoing analysis, these factors are an eclectic mix that range from the number of large companies headquartered in a city, to the variety of nightlife and outdoor recreation experiences.

Since these factors can change and evolve over time, we continually update our methodology to reflect these shifts. For example, in recent years we've included new measures such as Weather (to gauge the volatility of precipitation) and Public Transportation (to assess residents' accessibility to public transit). We've also refined our data sources to improve global coverage and reduce regional bias. For example, we now integrate online review data from Google, which offers stronger representation across regions, and supplement global social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook with increasingly used platforms, such as TikTok and Reddit.

In total, our performance data measures 47 metrics across 33 subcategories. All metrics are weighted evenly and aggregated up to the

category level, and all categories are weighted equally and aggregated up to each Livability, Lovability, and Prosperity index.

As part of our partnership with Ipsos, we combined the performance data of the categories that comprise our overall Livability, Lovability and Prosperity indices with perception data reflecting the opinions and preferences of 5,000 respondents across 10 European countries. Each country was given equal weight in the total data set. The survey was constructed to extract the towns and cities where these 5,000 people would most like to live, where they would most like to visit, and where they believe they would find the best job opportunities. This was accomplished with three open-ended questions where respondents could identify the towns and cities that they prefer.

We asked them, when thinking about places across the globe, including small towns and large cities: which three towns or cities would you most like to live in, most like to visit and do you think currently offer the best job opportunities?

This open-ended question methodology enabled us to capture the destinations that are top of mind to survey participants rather than restricting them to a predetermined list of cities. The responses to these questions were aggregated and coded to benchmark the perception equivalent of our performance results, creating a true balance across our three overall indices of Lovability, Livability and Prosperity.

Livability

Our most layered overarching category quantifies a city's physical sense of place.

To score a city within our Livability category, we evaluate the perceived quality of its natural and built environments. This includes the availability of green space in its urban centre and how many quality parks, outdoor experiences, and sights and landmarks are recommended online by locals and visitors. We also look at key socioeconomic factors such as income relative to cost of living – a factor that not only retains talent, but also attracts it (and, by extension, attracts skill-seeking companies as well). Livability also looks at the natural attributes of a region such as the amount of tree cover and the quality of the air residents and visitors breathe.

LIVABILITY METRICS

Walkability

The average travel time for an individual to reach daily activity venues in a city on foot. Daily activity venues include outdoor activities, learning institutions, supermarkets, restaurants, transit stations, cultural activities, gyms, government services, and healthcare facilities. (15min-City)

Biking

The average travel time for an individual to reach daily activity venues in a city on bike. Daily activity venues include outdoor activities, learning institutions, supermarkets, restaurants, transit stations, cultural activities, gyms, government services, and healthcare facilities. (15min-City)

Weather

The annual average amount of precipitation, such as rain and snow, that reaches the Earth's surface each year, relative to the European average. (OECD and weather-and-climate.com)

Climate Risk

Powered by AlphaGeo, the resilience-adjusted climate risk score measures a city's exposure to climate-related hazards – such as extreme heat, flooding, and storms – adjusted for its capacity to mitigate and adapt to these risks. (AlphaGeo)

Air Quality

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a measure of air pollutant concentrations. (IQAir)

Green Space

This category includes metrics that measure the share of land area covered by green area, including trees, shrublands and grasslands, in a city's urban centre. (OECD)

Sights & Landmarks

The number of sights and landmarks rated above four stars, as well as the popularity of those assets, as listed on Google. (Google)

Nature & Parks

The number of natural areas, parks and outdoor activities rated above four stars, as well as the popularity of those assets, as listed on Google. (Google)

Public Transit

The estimated share of urban population who can access a public transport stop within a walking distance of 500 metres (for low capacity public transport systems) and/or 1,000 metres (for high capacity public transport systems) along the street network. (United Nations)

Internet Infrastructure

Average internet download speed, deviation from world average. (OECD)

Standard of Living

Reflects the overall economic well-being of residents, using the value of goods and services produced locally as a proxy for income, adjusted for the relative cost of living in the city. (OECD and National Statistic Offices)

Health

Includes metrics that measure the population's life expectancy at birth, the crude mortality rate, and the availability of physicians relative to population size.

Perception

Ranking in a survey of 5,000 respondents from 10 European countries about the top three European cities and towns that they would most like to live in someday. (Ipsos)

Lovability

Lovability speaks to the relative vibrancy and quality of place of a city relative to its competitive set.

For almost a decade, our research has shown that the more vibrant a city or region is in terms of its culture, dining and nightlife, the more visitors, young professionals and large corporations it attracts. A region's lovability also inspires residents, businesses and visitors to promote a region to the world more effectively and cost-efficiently than destination marketers can ever hope to. Best Cities ranks a city's performance in each of these areas based on the number of stories, references and recommendations shared online about that city in key user-generated digital channels like Google, Instagram and TikTok.

LOVABILITY METRICS

Google Trends

Popularity of a city worldwide on Google Trends in the past 12 months, relative to the other cities analysed. (Trends.Google.com)

Facebook Check-ins

Measures the total number of check-ins posted by residents and tourists in a region. (Facebook.com)

Instagram Posts

Measures the total number of posts, including Reels, geo-tagged to a city. (Instagram.com)

TikTok Videos

Measures the total number of posts, including videos and short-form content, geo-tagged to a city. (TikTok)

Reddit

Calculates a Reddit engagement score based on the number of weekly visitors and weekly contributions to the destination's subreddit, such as r/Paris. (Reddit)

Museums

The number of museums and galleries in a city rated above four stars, as well as the popularity of those assets, as listed on Google. (Google)

Nightlife

The number of local nightlife experiences, including bars, lounges, comedy clubs, and nightclubs, rated above four stars, as well as the popularity of those assets, as listed on Google. (Google)

Shopping

The number of shopping outlets and centres, including shopping malls and markets, rated above four stars, as well as the popularity of those assets, as listed on Google. (Google)

Restaurants

The total number of restaurants listed within a destination rated above four stars, as well as the popularity of those assets, as listed on Google. (Google)

Theatres & Concerts

The number of theatre, concert, and event venues rated above four stars, as well as the popularity of those assets, as listed on Google. (Google)

Family-Friendly Attractions

The number of zoos, aquariums, amusement parks, and fun and games, such as mini-golf and video arcades, rated above four stars, as well as the popularity of those assets, as listed on Google. (Google)

Perception

Ranking in a survey of more than 5,000 respondents from 10 European countries about the top three European cities and towns that they would most like to visit in the next 12 to 24 months. (Ipsos)

Prosperity

Human capital is becoming a region's most valuable resource when it comes to generating wealth and prosperity, and, for many cities, it is increasingly in short supply.

To assess a city's prosperity, Resonance evaluates the foundations that enable economic growth and the attraction of talent. Corporate presence and a thriving start-up ecosystem signal a city's capacity for innovation, job creation, and global competitiveness. High labour force participation and educational attainment reflect the availability of skilled workers, while low unemployment supports stability and resilience. Business infrastructure, such as international airport connectivity and venues capable of hosting major conventions, facilitates trade, investment, and knowledge exchange. Together with the reputation of leading universities, these factors shape a city's ability to cultivate human capital, foster entrepreneurship, and sustain long-term economic vitality.

PROSPERITY METRICS

Convention Centre

The size of the largest convention centre in a region based on indoor exhibition space. (Venue websites)

Large Companies

The number of companies with more than 1,000 employees that are headquartered in a city. (Crunchbase)

Labour Force Participation

A region's active workforce, defined as the percentage of all people age 15+ who are employed or are actively seeking work. (OECD and National Statistic Offices)

Airports

Number of direct destinations from major airports within an 80-kilometre radius of the principal city. (Flightsfrom.com and travelmath.com)

University

The aggregate score of the highest-ranking university in a destination, reflecting its academic reputation, research output, and global influence. A top-performing university attracts talent, drives innovation, and strengthens a city's human capital – key drivers of long-term prosperity. (QS Top Universities, Leiden, and Times Higher Education World University Rankings)

Economic Output

The GDP per capita in a region, reflecting the value of goods and services produced per person. Higher economic output signals a productive economy and stronger capacity to invest in infrastructure, services, and talent. (OECD, Eurostat, and National Statistic Offices)

Business Ecosystem

The quantity, quality and overall state of a city's business environment that contributes to the success of start-ups. (StartupBlink)

Unemployment Rate

The rate of unemployment in a region. (OECD and National Statistic Offices)

Educational Attainment

Percentage of the population who have completed tertiary education or higher in a region. (OECD, Eurostat, and National Statistic Offices)

Perception

Ranking in a survey of more than 5,000 respondents from 10 European countries about the top three European cities and towns that they think currently have the best job opportunities. (Ipsos)

Resonance is proud to partner with AlphaGeo on the World's Best Cities 2026 Report

Resilience is a race

Darwin taught that it is not the strongest or most intelligent who survive – but those most adaptable to change.

AlphaGeo is the first AI-powered geospatial software that rigorously measures the exposure to risk, adaptation capacity – and ultimately the resilience – of every location on Earth.

Together, Resonance and AlphaGeo are guiding investors into the future-proof geographies of the 21st century.

AlphaGeo. Invest in resilience.

Learn more at www.alphageo.ai



Europe's Top 100 cities, in detail

Europe's great cities have always been the continent's engine rooms. They are where capital is raised, ideas are tested and culture is exported – places that pull in talent and ambition, then turn it into jobs, neighbourhoods and identity. In 2026, that role feels sharper and more consequential than it has in a generation.

Europe and its cities are undergoing an existential transformation not seen since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Russia's continued aggression has made security a daily consideration, not an abstract policy debate. Energy has been reclassified from commodity to strategy. Supply chains are being rewired closer to home. And with the transatlantic relationship less predictable, European leaders are leaning harder into the continent's own capacity: more coordination, more shared investment, and more independence.

The realignment is visceral in Europe's great cities of all sizes. They are the nodes where a more connected Europe becomes real: new and upgraded rail corridors, ports and airports; cross-border logistics that move everything from medical supplies to semiconductors; and the digital infrastructure that keeps a modern economy running. They're also where resilience gets built block by block – district energy, flood protection, retrofits, heat mitigation and new housing at the scale required to keep and attract vital talent.

The pandemic may feel distant, but it left a clear lesson: when systems crack – healthcare, housing, mobility – cities absorb the shock

first. Europe's best-performing cities didn't simply bounce back. They used disruption as a forcing function, pushing faster on decarbonisation, diversifying their economies, and making everyday life work better for residents as well as visitors.

And the story is no longer owned only by the usual capitals. Yes, London, Paris and Berlin again top our rankings, but secondary and emerging cities – often more affordable, faster to build and hungrier for growth – are rising alongside the global powerhouses. From manufacturing revivals and clean-tech clusters to new creative scenes and research ecosystems, Europe's urban network is broadening, not concentrating.

The 100 cities profiled in this report capture that momentum. Each is navigating the opportunity and peril both regionally and locally, balancing doing right by citizens while future-proofing prosperity in a battle for resources, investment and talent. Nevertheless, these 100 cities map a continent that is more aligned, more pragmatic and increasingly prepared to shape its own future.

1 London United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 1** Prosperity
- 1** Lovability
- 2** Livability

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** Nightlife
- 1** Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 12,451,000



OXFORD STREET

The “Capital of Capitals” claims the throne atop our fourth annual Europe’s Best Cities ranking in 2026. It secures the top position in three of our 34 subcategories (the most of any city), tops our overall Prosperity and Lovability indexes, and scores #2 for Livability.

London’s magnetic appeal continues to draw a global audience, from students and entrepreneurs to tourists and corporate titans. The city’s swagger is reflected in its strong international traveller spending, which in 2024 reached almost €18.9 billion (up from €14.9 billion in 2023) and secured London the third-highest amount globally, outpacing destinations like New York and Dubai.

Benefiting from a softer pound, London has remained a compelling bucket-list destination. Heathrow Airport recorded record-breaking arrivals, exceeding pre-pandemic passenger levels, and Gatwick Airport’s recent €274-million upgrade underscores London’s excellent infrastructure, enhancing the visitor experience with new concourses and improved amenities. The city’s airports, not surprisingly, rank #1 in our Top 100 cities.

A tourist tax on all these overnight stays is also planned (somehow, the city never bothered to do this previously), and it’s estimated the initiative will bring in €274 million a year to fund city services and infrastructure. If it happens, expect a 2027 implementation.

Beneath these tourist triumphs lies a luxury property market experiencing a fascinating paradox that savvy investors are exploiting. High-end home sales have dropped sharply as new tax policies put off many wealthy international buyers, pulling prices lower and leading to a glut of supply.

Americans aren’t deterred.

They now form the largest demographic of overseas buyers in London, accounting for 25% of prime purchases in the city last year, up from 18% in 2023, according to Beauchamp Estates.

“Americans are taking advantage of the markets being relatively flat,” said Ugo Arinzeh, an American real estate consultant based in London, in an interview with The Wall Street Journal. Real estate agents say they have never had as many inquiries from US clients, prompted by favourable exchange rates and political concerns back home.

The value proposition is compelling: according to data from Knight Frank, US \$1 million (€857,000) now buys 34 square metres in London, compared with only 23 square metres a decade ago.



NATIONAL GALLERY

This sustained investment confidence is palpable in the city's luxury hospitality renaissance. On the heels of the Peninsula London near Hyde Park Corner comes the equally captivating Raffles London at The OWO, the meticulously restored Old War Office, now hosting stunning guest rooms and restaurants by Michelin-starred chef Mauro Colagreco and turning the previously quiet Whitehall area into a chic nightlife hotspot. Here too, Americans comprise the largest demographic of buyers of the OWO's private apartments, which can cost up to €22.7 million.

Newer still are the Newman Hotel, an independent boutique new-build from Kinsfolk & Co in the creative village of Fitzrovia in central London, and the Chipperfield-designed The Chancery Rosewood in Mayfair, which has already been crowned the world's best new luxury hotel.

American institutional real estate interest is voracious, with US funds investing €3.50 billion into UK commercial property in the first quarter of 2024 alone. High-profile acquisitions, including MCR's purchase of the iconic BT Tower for transformation

into a luxury hotel, and Starwood Capital's substantial entry with a €930-million acquisition of 10 Radisson Blu Edwardian hotels, reinforce London's buoyant property market.

Architecturally, London's skyline is undergoing its most dramatic transformation since Christopher Wren rebuilt the city after the Great Fire. In 2023 alone, planning applications for 64 towers of more than 20 storeys were submitted. Although only six received planning approval, some 270 skyscrapers have been given the green light in the past decade, according to official data from the Greater London Authority, analysed by the New London Architecture think tank. There are currently 583 tall buildings in the planning pipeline.

Even if just a fraction of these get built, London's skyline is poised to change forever.

"Tall buildings have changed the face of London substantially over the last 20 years and will continue to do so," says Nick McKeogh, the chief executive of NLA, which has published an annual Tall Buildings Survey since 2013, according to The Times. "To meet London's housing needs, densification through tall buildings is not just necessary, it's an opportunity for innovation and growth."

Tower Hamlets topped this year's list, with 17 applications for 20-storey-plus towers, including the €591-million, 1,600-home Orchard Wharf regeneration project near the East India Docks. The scheme includes seven potential buildings between nine and 25 storeys tall. Southwark follows with 10 applications, including Berkeley Homes' Borough Triangle with four towers of up to 44 storeys delivering 900 homes, and the controversial Aylesham Centre redevelopment in Peckham, an 867-home scheme by Berkeley Homes with buildings ranging from four to 20 storeys.

The average tall building completed in 2014 was 26 floors, shooting up to 36 floors in 2022 and moderating to 29 floors in 2024. While 2024's residential tower applications totalled 13,000 homes – significant against the capital's 35,000 total completions – they remain well short of the government's 80,000 annual target for London.

The ambitious "Canary Wharf 3.0" project in particular exemplifies London's reinvention, blending traditional banking spaces with a mixed-use community and Europe's largest life sciences centre, a 76,400-square-metre research hub.

“London is truly Europe’s global city: with a trillion-dollar economy, more green space than any city on the continent and unrivalled connections to the rest of the world. As London’s growth agency, we’re really excited to be part of this ongoing evolution and we’re delighted to receive this recognition.”

—LAURA CITRON, CEO OF LONDON & PARTNERS

This transformation underpins London’s position as Europe’s top city for inward investment in 2023, according to EY, surpassing traditional rivals like Paris and Frankfurt while competing globally with financial centres like Singapore and Hong Kong.

London’s rise as India’s premier location for tech investments has reshaped the city’s global appeal, exemplified by innovators like InMobi Advertising, iGene Media and VenPep Solutions choosing London as a gateway to international markets. Climate tech, notably, is experiencing meteoric growth, with companies like Allume, Cloverly and Einride electing to scale in London.

All to say that the #1 ranking in our Large Companies subcategory is safe for a while.

Efforts to better connect the city’s attributes are underway, with both tube expansion projects and ambitious placemaking like the highly anticipated Camden Highline, slated to open in 2027. Inspired by New York’s acclaimed High Line, this 1.6 kilometre-long elevated greenway symbolises London’s commitment to enhancing urban livability through creative renewal projects.

Mayor Sadiq Khan, re-elected in May 2024 for an unprecedented third term, continues to pursue his vision of a “fairer, safer, greener” London, aiming to construct 40,000 new council homes by 2030 and driving ambitious plans for net-zero carbon emissions by the end of the decade. This synergy, bolstered by alignment between city leadership and the national government, promises to deliver tangible benefits to residents and businesses alike.

The city’s strategic vision is encapsulated in the ambitious London Growth Plan, developed by City Hall and London Councils, which aims to harness London’s strengths in finance, technology and sustainability to drive inclusive economic growth powered by the planet’s third-most-educated residents. Prioritising productivity growth, the plan targets raising London’s economic output significantly by 2035, creating 150,000 high-quality jobs by 2028 and driving inclusive prosperity through extensive investment in affordable housing, transportation infrastructure and skills training.

City marketing organisation London & Partners’ Tourism Vision sets an ambitious goal of positioning London as the most

visited, sustainable and diverse global city destination by 2030. Recognising the tourism industry as vital to London’s economy, the strategy aims to boost international visitor spending to €24.4 billion annually and attract 3 million more visitors compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Investment promotion through Opportunity London, a public-private partnership, is targeting €115.7 billion of inward capital focused on low-carbon infrastructure and real estate, underpinning sustainable and inclusive growth.

“2026 is another year to watch for London, as the capital city undergoes major growth and transformation including the opening of two major museums (London Museum and V&A East), new theatres and world-first events like Pro Climbing League,” says Laura Citron, CEO of London & Partners. “London is truly Europe’s global city: with a trillion-dollar economy, more green space than any city on the continent and unrivalled connections to the rest of the world. As London’s growth agency, we’re really excited to be part of this ongoing evolution and we’re delighted to receive this recognition.”

2

Paris

France

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 1 Livability
- 2 Prosperity
- 2 Lovability

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Health
- 1 Restaurants

POPULATION

Metro 13,171,000



EIFFEL TOWER ACROSS THE SEINE RIVER

Few cities coax global attention from so many. From entrepreneurs to tastemakers to bucket-listers, Paris blows minds. And that's increasingly so today, with future-focused urban reinvention the likes of which the world has never seen but can't wait to experience.

Paris is still the most compelling urban symphony on the planet – at once historic and progressive, elegant and gritty, intimate and global. The 2024 Olympic spotlight revealed not just athletic excellence, but a city that has remade itself on its own terms: slowed down for walking, calm for biking, lush for breathing and resilient for learning.

The transformation is as palpable as it is measurable. The city-wide 30 kph speed limit, once controversial, now feels inevitable. Parisians now navigate more than 1,000 kilometres of bike lanes as of late 2025, with cycling rates nearly doubling in the past two years. What were once car-dominated thoroughfares have become extended terraces and silent school zones – part of more than 100 hectares of new pedestrian space since 2020, with another 100 planned by 2030. The Plan Vélo's second phase, on track to be completed later this year, promises bike maintenance hubs and tourism liaisons across all 20 arrondissements.

Infrastructure is following suit. The first stage of the Grand Paris Express project opened in mid-2024, delivering new stations including new suburban lines and an extended Line 14, bringing Seine-Saint-Denis within 40 minutes of Orly Airport. Lines 16 and 17 will begin

service by 2027, creating one of Europe's densest transit networks. Metro redesigns – slimmed trains and extended operating hours – blend with this expansion to make the system feel both more accessible and decidedly more futuristic.

“Paris is pulling off a rare transformation: turning its heritage and contemporary creativity into a daily driver of urban quality,” says Dr. Chloé Voisin-Bormuth, Managing Director of Paris-Ile de France Capitale Economique. “The Grand Paris Express is changing the scale of the story, expanding horizons for residents and visitors alike, and positioning Greater Paris as the next obvious reference point in international city rankings.

The housing equation, long Paris's Achilles heel, shows signs of recalibration. The 2024 land credit reform streamlined permitting across the inner ring, enabling delivery of 4,500 new affordable and mixed-income units in 2025, particularly in developments like Chapelle International and Fleury-Marcadet. Real estate prices remain more tempered than London's, with a modest 2%-3% increase in 2025, thanks to zoning reforms and social-housing commitments. The fact that the city tops our overall Livability index demonstrates this ongoing stewardship.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

Famed Parisian retail has long mirrored the city's refined instincts and is keeping up. The renovated Galeries Lafayette Champs-Élysées anchors the avenue's revival with its rotating design galleries hosting new brand pop-ups.

Cultural infrastructure moves with characteristic ambition. The Louvre's €800-million "New Renaissance" renovation, approved in early 2025, will open in 2031 with the Mona Lisa in her own luminous chamber and a reimagined Seine-side entrance, anchoring a century-long vision.

This year brings the Musée d'Orsay's new 1,208-square-metre wing, housing Impressionist narratives in new light. The Bourse de Commerce welcomes major retrospectives, the Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art just opened, and the Giacometti Museum and School will open in the former Gare des Invalides train station in 2028.

This city does top our Museums subcategory, after all.

Long-neglected airport infrastructure (ranked #3) is also getting overdue attention, with the planned 2027 launch

of the CDG Express, a high-speed train connecting the airport to central Paris.

The investment community has taken notice. Paris ranks second only to London in European prosperity indices, with in-country FDI reaching more than €12.9 billion in 2024 (with the Paris region grabbing a healthy chunk), concentrated in AI, cleantech and quantum research. The France 2030 initiative has created 24 unicorns since 2021, most of them Paris-based. Station F expanded in 2025 to support 1,000 incubated companies as well.

It's no wonder Paris ranks #2 in our overall Prosperity index, led by its #2 ranking in both our Large Companies and Business Ecosystem subcategories. The city also ranks #7 globally in the 2025 World's Wealthiest Cities Report (not one of ours), with 22 billionaires calling Paris home.

Despite the Parisian economic miracle, income and opportunity disparities persist as entrenched challenges. Northeastern districts maintain unemployment rates near 12%, cratering the city's rankings for Unemployment Rate (#121) and Labour Force Participation (#47).

The city is trying to spread the wealth through 5,000 new training positions in technology and hospitality distributed across Zones Franches Urbaines, with converted warehouses becoming Youth Employment Hubs offering hospitality skills and digital job training. Tourism, after all, has also never been more lucrative.

After the Olympic-fuelled 2024 surge, 2025 estimates forecast 50 million visitors with strengthening spend patterns. New culinary destinations like Le Grand Café within the newly reopened Grand Palais complement evening-opened museums that draw locals and visitors alike and help the city top our Restaurants subcategory. The city now hosts 123 Michelin-starred restaurants, including Sushi Yoshinaga, a two-star Japanese restaurant, located halfway between the Opéra and Paris' Japanese Quarter, while sustainable-star recognition reinforces Paris's gastronomic leadership.

Meanwhile, the Four Seasons Hotel George V Paris has completed a three-year renovation that redesigned all 243 rooms and suites for the first time since 1999, reinvented as a collection of Parisian residences in collaboration with interior designer Pierre-Yves Rochon.

“Paris is pulling off a rare transformation: turning its heritage and contemporary creativity into a daily driver of urban quality. The Grand Paris Express is changing the scale of the story, expanding horizons for residents and visitors alike, and positioning Greater Paris as the next obvious reference point in international city rankings.”

–DR. CHLOË VOISIN-BORMUTH, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
PARIS-ILE DE FRANCE CAPITALE ECONOMIQUE



LA MAISON ROSE IN MONTMARTRE

3 Berlin Germany

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 3** Prosperity
- 6** Livability
- 6** Lovability

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3** Nature & Parks
- 3** Business Ecosystem

POPULATION

Metro 5,106,000



BERLIN SKYLINE WITH THE BERLINER FERNSEHTURM

Tolerance, cultural ambition and coveted talent make Berlin a city you'll be hearing a lot more about over the rest of the decade and beyond. Especially as an increasingly unified Europe gets defensive.

Berlin's hospitality and arts machine is humming (the city's techno culture is now UNESCO-recognised) while its growth story is anchored by projects coming online for residents and curious visitors alike. At the Kulturforum, the long-awaited Museum of the 20th Century (rebranded "berlin modern") is on track for a 2027 opening, a roughly €427-million investment that will finally let Berlin show its 20th-century holdings at full scale beside Mies's Neue Nationalgalerie. The city's already impressive #4 Museums ranking should rise accordingly.

Torrid growth in tourism and hospitality, meanwhile, underpins Berlin's Top 5 finishes for Sights & Landmarks, Museums and Nightlife. In 2024, the city surpassed 30.6 million hotel overnight stays for the first time since the pandemic, welcoming 12.7 million guests who generated billions in visitor spending. Roughly 10% of all Berlin jobs now depend directly on tourism, from hotels to culture and gastronomy.

Those hospitality investments feed directly into Berlin's #3 Shopping rankings. In Mitte, the long-planned AM TACHELES quarter is now largely open: a finely detailed 23,000-plus-square-metre masterplan by Herzog & de

Meuron and others that stitches together high-end residences, offices, galleries and a covered shopping arcade between Friedrichstrasse and Oranienburger Strasse. On City West's side of town, Ku'damm is quietly levelling up its mix of flagships, bars and restaurants; the Serenity Rooftop Bar at the Waldorf Astoria and modern German farm-to-table restaurant Konsulat in Charlottenburg give investors a sense of how quickly new concepts are tested and scaled here. New micro-attractions like High Swing, Europe's highest swing at 120 metres on the roof of the Park Inn at Alexanderplatz, and the retro-styled Sphere Bar in the TV Tower, amplify the city's already potent Instagram presence and help explain its #4 ranking for Instagram Posts and #5 for Google Trends.

Culturally, Berlin is in an extended victory lap. Its club culture, long an open secret, is now formally recognised as UNESCO intangible cultural heritage, crystallising decades of community-driven techno and electronic experimentation into a global calling card. That energy spills off of the dance floor and into venues like the Reethaus, a hand-thatched "modern temple" on the Spree whose MONOM spatial-sound system attracts avant-garde composers and DJs alike, and into



HAUS DER KULTUREN DER WELT (HOUSE OF WORLD CULTURES)

the Downstairs Comedy Club in the Meiningen Hotel Berlin Mitte, where local star Felix Lobrecht headlines underground stand-up nights. With heavy-hitting institutions like the Berlin Philharmonie, three opera houses and dozens of independent theatres being joined by immersive and cross-genre spaces, it's not hard to see why Berlin ranks #4 for Theatres & Concerts and #5 for Nightlife.

But the city ranks Top 3 in our overall Prosperity index for a reason, including #3 in our Business Ecosystem subcategory and #7 for Large Companies. And it does so while much of Germany treads water. The city's GDP expanded by 0.8% in 2024, outpacing the national economy yet again, with employment up 0.3% year-on-year, slightly above the federal average. The city now generates roughly €207 billion in economic output, powered mostly by services. Berlin has also become Germany's undisputed start-up engine: more than 4,800 start-ups – around a quarter of the national total – call the city home, including 27 unicorns, with the ecosystem growing more than 20% in 2025 alone. That depth of founder, tech and creative talent is exactly what global corporates and site selectors are now chasing here.

Big-ticket investment is following the talent. West of the city, Virtus Data Centres is building a €3-billion, 300-MW "megacampus" in Wustermark, 30 kilometres from the Brandenburg Gate, on more than 350,000 square metres of land. Phase I is due online in 2026, designed specifically for hyperscale cloud and AI workloads and coupled to nearby onshore wind farms, with waste heat plumbed into a future district-heating network. South of the ring road, the Verdion PremierPark Berlin logistics hub in Ludwigsfelde has just been completed: a €100-million, 150,000-square-metre brownfield conversion into DGNB Platinum-targeted industrial and light-production space right on the A10. In 2025, high-end auto brand Brabus Automotive took more than 9,000 square metres here for its Berlin operations – one of several global occupiers locking in future-proof supply-chain capacity.

But Berlin's biggest economic canvas remains Berlin TXL, the transformation of the former Tegel Airport into a 500-hectare testbed for climate-positive urbanism. At its core lies the Urban Tech Republic, a 202-hectare innovation park dedicated to mobility, energy, circular construction and smart materials, which will host the Berliner Hochschule für

Technik with around 2,500 students and the city's fire and rescue academy in the former terminal and hangars by 2029. Next door, the Schumacher Quartier is rising as one of the world's largest timber-construction districts: over 5,000 homes for more than 10,000 residents on 46 hectares, built to high energy standards, with an education campus, six daycare centres, sports facilities and daily-needs retail woven into car-light streets and parks. Senate decisions in 2025 cleared the way for full civil works, with large-scale construction ramping up from 2026 and the first buildings and school campus targeted for 2027 to 2028. Together with the adjacent 186-hectare Tegeler Stadtheide nature reserve, this bold urban project showcases both the city's innovation credentials and its #3 ranking for Nature & Parks.

Across town in Spandau, Siemensstadt Square is the other mega-bet on Berlin's future. On a 76-hectare industrial site, Siemens and partners are building a mixed district of labs, offices, housing, hotels and parks where around 35,000 people will eventually live and work. The scheme is backed by multi-billion-euro investment – Siemens alone is committing roughly €750 million, while total project volume is quoted at up to €4.5 billion.

“Berlin is a dynamic, forward-looking city renowned for its strong culture of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. With a vibrant start-up ecosystem, a diverse talent pool, and ongoing urban transformation, the city offers exceptional potential for future growth and groundbreaking ideas. With the Estrel – Europe’s largest hotel, congress, and entertainment complex – and the new Estrel Tower, Berlin’s first skyscraper set to open at the end of 2026, these are key venues where leaders from business and academia come together to discuss and help shape the future.”

–HEIKE MAHMOUD, COO OF ESTREL BERLIN

Ground was broken on the Estrel in 2024; the first buildings, including the Siemens Hub Berlin and a visitor pavilion, are due in 2026, with a 40,000-square-metre office and innovation campus opening in 2027 at the main entrance. For investors hunting real-estate innovation, this is one of Europe’s benchmark digital-twin-enabled redevelopments.

“Berlin is a dynamic, forward-looking city renowned for its strong culture of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. With a vibrant startup ecosystem, a diverse talent pool, and ongoing urban transformation, the city offers exceptional potential for future growth and groundbreaking ideas,” says Heike Mahmoud, COO of Estrel Berlin. “With the Estrel – Europe’s largest hotel, congress, and entertainment complex – and the new Estrel Tower, Berlin’s first skyscraper set to open at the end of 2026, these are key venues where leaders from business and academia come together to discuss and help shape the future.”



OBERBAUMBRÜCKE

4 Rome Italy

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 3** Lovability
- 4** Livability
- 23** Prosperity

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** Sights & Landmarks
- 3** Google Trends

POPULATION

Metro 4,306,000



THE COLOSSEUM

The Eternal City has always been coveted. These days, the bounty is an immersive step back in time in a city investing in ambitious upgrades for both residents and visitors, kicked off by the millions of pilgrims who descended here for the 2025 Jubilee.

Rome's status as the Eternal City has rarely felt more literal. In 2025, the Jubilee placed the city on centre stage, drawing an estimated 35 million pilgrims in addition to the more than 20 million annual tourists already thronging its piazzas. Of course the new Pope kept Rome in even more global conversations. The result is a capital in full bloom: sacred and secular life converging in an atmosphere thick with ceremony, art and discovery in a city ranked Top 4 in both our overall Livability and Lovability indices.

The Jubilee's "Pilgrims of Hope" theme is being carried through a sweeping beautification push. Streets have been resurfaced, monuments scrubbed and new cultural showcases unveiled. Largo di Torre Argentina (where Julius Caesar met his end) has reopened as a public archaeological park, while Caravaggio's masterpieces are featured in blockbuster exhibitions across the city. These initiatives build on recent reopenings like the National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art's enhanced exhibition spaces and the Trevi Fountain's careful restoration. No wonder Roma ranks #1 for Sights & Landmarks in Europe.

The hospitality surge that began in 2023 has only accelerated. Palazzo Talia, transformed by filmmaker Luca Guadagnino into a boutique

jewel of 26 rooms and suites with restored Renaissance frescoes, has become a must-stay. Bvlgari Roma, Six Senses Rome and the upcoming Thompson Rome anchor a luxury wave joined by Nobu and the soon-to-open Corinthia and Rosewood, while the recently debuted Romeo Roma (featuring a glass-bottom spa pool suspended over ruins) redefines what it means to "sleep in history." Even legacy addresses like Rome Cavalieri remain unmatched, with La Pergola the city's only Michelin three-star jewel.

But investment is not just confined to hospitality. The long-delayed Metro Line C added new stations in 2025, easing movement across the dense historic core, while the city has approved mixed-use redevelopments in Ostiense and Tiburtina aimed at creating creative and residential districts. Global companies, particularly in fashion and mobility, are expanding local hubs, seeing opportunity in both Rome's talent and lower costs relative to Milan.

Expect expanded pedestrian zones around the Colosseum and Piazza Venezia in 2026, and the opening of the Metro Line C Piazza Venezia station in 2032.

5 Barcelona Spain

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 3** Livability
- 5** Lovability
- 11** Prosperity

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2** Public Transit
- 3** Instagram Posts

POPULATION

Metro 5,094,000



BARCELONETA BEACH

The Catalan capital is as popular as ever, but today it's welcoming the world on its own terms, doing right by its residents while building long-term economic sustainability.

It feels like Barcelona is back – but older, wiser and far more intentional about what comes next. After a decade of political tension and overtourism angst, the city has moved into a post-identity-crisis era. The result is a metropolis that still floods your Instagram feed (#3 in our Instagram Posts subcategory) while unapologetically rewriting the rules of engagement, whether by protesting, taking action against overtourism (increasingly with water guns) or addressing the commodification of housing.

Despite this local middle finger, tourism has roared back: in 2024, Destination Barcelona welcomed more than 15 million visitors and over €14 billion in spend, helping explain its #4 global ranking for Nightlife and #5 for Family-Friendly Attractions. At the same time, licences for more than 10,000 tourist flats will not be renewed by 2028 and pub crawls have been banned, signalling a clear pivot to quality over volume.

The hardware of the new Barcelona is impossible to miss. The Consell de Cent green axis and a growing superblock network underpin a #4 ranking for Nature & Parks, joined by calmer streets on Montjuic and new play spaces across Eixample. The city's #2 ranking

for Public Transit reflects dense metro, rail and tram coverage, with the T-mobilitat smart ticketing system and long-awaited projects like the L8 extension and Sagrera high-speed hub rolling out through 2027.

Economically, Barcelona has become one of Europe's most competitive urban regions. Tech- and knowledge-intensive sectors drive more than half of the local economy, anchored by the 22@ innovation district, a growing health and biotech cluster and big-ticket data, AI and semiconductor investments. No surprise the city ranks #6 in Europe in our Business Ecosystem subcategory for its start-ups and foreign R&D.

Meanwhile, Sagrada Família's final push toward the 172-metre Tower of Jesus Christ, due in 2026, coincides with Barcelona serving as UNESCO World Capital of Architecture and host of the UIA World Congress. Add 42 Michelin stars (Top 5 for Restaurants in Europe), 68,000-plus shops, and 10,000 bars and restaurants, and you get a city clearly past its wobble, now focused on livability (for which it ranks #3), talent, and long-term bets for residents, investors and visitors alike.

6 Madrid Spain

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 4 Lovability
- 5 Livability
- 6 Prosperity

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Nightlife
- 2 Family-Friendly Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 6,983,000



GRAN VÍA

Madrid's sustainability-driven investment in its bounteous urban and natural assets is an ode to reuse and the conviction that everything old can be new again.

This past summer, as Spain's capital baked under record temperatures, the city's ambitious green transformation offered both respite and hope. The Bosque Metropolitano, Madrid's audacious attempt to create Europe's largest metropolitan forest, continues its steady advance around the city's perimeter, promising a 75-kilometre ring of trees that will reshape both climate and character (and improve the already impressive Top 5 Nature & Parks ranking). The forest will feature up to 2 million new trees and other vegetation, part of a broader urban rewilding that includes the recently completed Santander Park and an expanding network of cycle lanes (Biking, as a result, should improve from its #80 spot in the coming years). Madrid's electric bus fleet, now among Europe's most extensive, hums quietly through streets where plane trees offer precious shade. This isn't merely environmental theatre: it's public transit infrastructure with intent (ranking #11 in Europe).

Yet it is Madrid Nuevo Norte that represents the city's most brazen gambit. Stretching across 230 hectares of former railway land, the first residential construction may begin in 2027, marking the start of one of Europe's largest urban regeneration projects. It promises 10,500 new homes, hundreds of thousands of square metres of office space and a reimaged

Chamartín station that will anchor Madrid's claim as a continental transport hub. Global tech and finance firms are already scouting locations along what will become Madrid's new business spine. Lucky for them, Madrileños rank #23 in our Educational Attainment subcategory.

Cultural ambitions are equally impressive. The Royal Collections Gallery, which opened to considerable fanfare in 2023, has settled into its role as a magnet for international visitors and a boon to the city's Top 3 Museums ranking. Meanwhile, neighbourhood venues like Cines Embajadores continue their quiet renaissance, part of Madrid's broader cultural ecosystem spanning expanded spaces at CaixaForum and Matadero Madrid to a planned cultural hub in Carabanchel, scheduled for 2026. The hospitality sector is responding: Gran Vía's Belle Époque buildings are being reborn as boutique hotels, while new properties in Lavapiés and Chamberí opened in 2025 to meet demand from visitors drawn by Madrid's cultural magnetism. Global hotel operators have staked claims across the city's southern districts, anticipating the passenger flows that will follow #24-ranked Barajas airport's nearly €2.4-billion expansion, a project that begins interim improvements in 2026.

7 Amsterdam Netherlands

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 4 Prosperity
- 10 Lovability
- 11 Livability

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 Standard of Living
- 5 Economic Output

POPULATION

Metro 2,989,000



THE EYE FILM MUSEUM AND A'DAM TOWER

Amsterdam is emerging from its 750th year with more intention than indulgence.

The city's recalibration – prioritising residents while still welcoming visitors who got the memo on responsible tourism – keeps it at #11 in our Livability index even as visitor nights climb (you can thank the city's Top 10 Lovability ranking for that). In 2024, tourist overnights hit 22.9 million, already above the official 20-million cap, and city statisticians see a path towards 28 million by 2027. Tourism still generates roughly €11,000 per resident each year, so policy has shifted from “volume to value”: caps on stays, a near-ban on net new hotels and stricter rules on disruptive visitors.

That pivot is clearest in hospitality. Rosewood Amsterdam opened in 2025 in the former Palace of Justice on Prinsengracht, a 17th-century canal-side block now holding 134 rooms and suites, three restaurants and bars, a spa and an indoor pool. In the Museum Quarter, the rebranded Mandarin Oriental Conservatorium – with its dramatic glass atrium – is launching in early 2026, while Mama Shelter Amsterdam follows in Amsterdam Noord in 2027.

At city scale, the big story is redevelopment. Haven-Stad, the Netherlands' largest inner-city project, will turn docks west of the centre into 40,000 to 70,000 homes and up to

58,000 jobs. Across the water, the 32-hectare Sluisbuurt on Zeeburgereiland is rising as a high-rise, largely car-light neighbourhood of about 5,500 homes, with student towers and a university campus baked in. Further south, Zuidasdok is tunnelling over one kilometre of the A10 Zuid and expanding Amsterdam Zuid into the city's second major rail hub. The scale and density of these districts underpin Amsterdam and North Holland's top-tier standing in fDi's European Cities and Regions of the Future rankings and keep investors focused on a long pipeline of knowledge-economy jobs. The #4 overall Prosperity index ranking proves this out.

Efficient public transport and dense cycle lanes connect talent to the galleries and cafés of Jordaan and to the restaurant streets of De Pijp. Across the IJ, electric and hybrid ferries shuttle locals to NDSM Wharf, a roughly 10-hectare arts and nightlife playground anchored by Nxt Museum and repurposed warehouses filled with bars, studios and start-ups.

8 Vienna Austria

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 8** Livability
- 8** Lovability
- 17** Prosperity

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9** Biking
- 10** Museums

POPULATION

Metro 3,136,000



STEPHANSPLATZ

Vienna is quietly rewriting the European playbook for livable, sustainable growth.

Europe's renowned human-scale urban gem – with its Top 10 rankings for both Biking and Theatres & Concerts – is still drawing people in and treating them right. Fortunately, the development pipeline is anything but small. North of the historic centre, the 40.9-hectare Nordbahnhofviertel is filling in with mixed-income housing, community facilities and offices, plus more than 10 hectares of parks and play streets. By build-out it will host around 5,500 apartments stitched into the tram and S-Bahn network and designed to keep most daily needs within a short walk or ride. Out at Aspern Seestadt, one of Europe's largest lake-side new towns continues to rise on the U2 line, aiming for more than 25,000 residents and 20,000 jobs anchored in mobility, construction tech and urban services.

Underneath it all, the U2xU5 project is Vienna's biggest climate-infrastructure bet. Twelve new stations and nine kilometres of tunnels will ultimately create capacity for an extra 300 million public-transport journeys per year and deliver the fully automated U5 – Vienna's first – from Karlsplatz towards Hernals. Closer to the Gürtel, the 11-hectare "Village im Dritten" is turning former railway land into a climate-friendly district with about 2,000 flats, offices, a school campus and generous

green courtyards, with completion targeted for 2027. East in Landstraße, Vienna doubles down on its role as a life-science capital: more than 750 organisations across the city now employ over 49,000 people and generate some €22.7 billion in revenue. Expect the current #19 spot for Business Ecosystem and #17 for Large Companies ranking to improve in the coming years.

Tourism is surging, too. Vienna logged a record 18.9 million overnight stays in 2024 – up 9% year-on-year – and more than €1.2 billion in room revenue, with roughly four-fifths of visitors coming from abroad. The expanded Wien Museum on Karlsplatz, which drew some 650,000 visitors in 2024 – its first year after reopening – helps the Top 10 Museums ranking, as did city-wide celebrations in 2025 for the 200th birthday of Johann Strauss II and a new museum experience dedicated to the "waltz king." Looking ahead, Eurovision 2026 at the Wiener Stadthalle will stress-test the city's event infrastructure – and very likely set new records for overnight demand.

9 Copenhagen Denmark

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 7 Livability
- 10 Prosperity
- 15 Lovability

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Biking
- 5 Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 2,198,000



ISLANDS BRYGGE

One of Europe's most buzzed-about capitals is only getting started.

Copenhagen keeps proving how a city built for people – and bikes – stays ahead. The harbour is swimmable, the sidewalks lively and the 2025 opening of the M4 Sydhavn metro extension has successfully knit Enghave Brygge and Sydhavnen to the city core, reinforcing the capital's #1 Biking and #5 Walkability pedigree. Both contribute to the city's impressive #7 Health ranking.

This connectivity is unlocking new cultural anchors. The metro now whisks visitors to the Opera Parken, a lush city centre green space that doubles as a climate-resilient garden, and to Nordhavn, where the recently opened Nordhus has become the district's "living room" – a communal dining and cultural venue that locals have embraced as the antidote to sterile urban renewal. The city's ethical tourism initiative, CopenPay, which rewards climate-friendly behaviour with free cultural experiences, returned in summer 2025 with such success that it is now being modelled by Berlin, Helsinki and other cities.

In 2026, the headline opening is the Water Culture House on Paper Island (Christiansholm). Designed by Kengo Kuma, this architectural marvel of cone-shaped brick forms will feature indoor and outdoor

pools bleeding into the harbour, cementing the transition of this former industrial storage island into a world-class leisure destination.

Economically, the city is sharpening its focus. Late 2025 saw the formal launch of Innovation District Copenhagen in Nørrebro and Østerbro. This massive partnership between the government and the University of Copenhagen is densifying the area to house the booming quantum tech and life science sectors – key data for enterprises scouting high-value talent.

However, real estate investors should note a local reality check: while the Jernbanebyen project (a massive 36-hectare former railway yard) remains the city's most promising mixed-use development site, locals and developers alike whisper that it is currently caught in bureaucratic limbo, with zoning complexities tempering the pace of its rollout. Meanwhile, #30-ranked Copenhagen Airport continues its Terminal 3 expansion to handle over 40 million annual passengers, ensuring this green capital remains accessible, even as it becomes more selective about its growth.

10 Stockholm Sweden

PLACE POWER™ SCORE

- 7** Prosperity
- 10** Livability
- 20** Lovability

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** Labour Force Participation
- 3** Climate Risk

POPULATION

Metro 2,455,000



SERGELS TORG

Ambitious tech and housing investment activate an enterprising and educated citizenry.

The city that turned Spotify and Klarna into global players is now re-tooling its urban fabric with the same rigour it once reserved for code and cap tables. Ranked #4 for Educational Attainment and boasting Europe's highest labour force participation, Stockholm's talent is hard at work, visible in everything from transit planning to timber engineering.

On the south-eastern edge in Sickla, Stockholm Wood City is where global capital and Nordic climate anxiety meet. The world's largest planned mass-timber district will span about 250,000 square metres over 25 blocks, with about 2,000 new homes and 7,000 workplaces, plus schools, shops and restaurants. Construction is underway, with first move-ins targeted around 2027. For investors, it is a purpose-built, five-minute city: dense, transit-served and branded as a showcase for low-carbon real estate.

North-west of the centre, Hagastaden is turning the "life science cluster" cliché into a tangible urban district. The Forskaren hub adds tens of thousands of square metres of labs, offices and collaboration space, anchoring a neighbourhood that will have thousands of new homes and provide tens of thousands of jobs by the early 2030s. Pocket parks, ground-floor food and

short walks between hospital, university and venture capital are tightening the loop between research and commercialisation – and quietly pushing up demand for lab space and hotels.

Deep-tech investment is following. Coherent's decision to base the world's first six-inch indium-phosphide wafer capability in the region – fuel for optical communications and AI interconnects – is a pointed bet on local engineering and photonics talent, and part of a wider upswing in FDI into advanced manufacturing and data infrastructure.

Tourism and hospitality are keeping up. Stockholm Stadshotell, a 32-room five-star conversion in the historic centre, is already on global hot lists. Up by Brunnsviken, the new 215-room Hagastrand brings a 2,500-square-metre spa resort into royal parkland within 15 minutes of the city centre. By 2027, Stockholm Wood City's first residents, a fully humming Hagastaden and a more connected Arlanda Airport will sit alongside centuries-old stone and water in a city balancing archipelago calm with serious growth ambitions.



11 Oslo Norway

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Health
- 3 Climate Risk

POPULATION

Metro 1,651,000

A compact dynamo's secret formula is enchanting global talent.

Oslo's waterfront has never been hotter and locals are literally sweating the details. The city's floating-sauna scene keeps expanding, now with universal access baked in. Trosten, the aluminum- and- terrazzo showpiece moored in Bjørvika, set a new bar for inclusive design and put Oslo's year-round fjord dips on the global map. The city's active lifestyle and low-emission habits underpin its high rank for Health (#3) and Climate Risk (#3) while a nearly 10-kilometre harbour promenade, pocket parks and quick escapes into the forested Marka sustain Oslo's standout Green Space (#5) credentials. It all adds up to an impressive #7 ranking for Standard of Living. But this city works as hard as it plays: Oslo ranks #6 for Economic Output and #9 for Labour Force Participation. Culture? The new Museum of the Viking Age, home to the Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune ships, should open in 2027. Transit is the 2026 headline. To stitch the new Fornebu into the network, Oslo is undertaking its biggest metro expansion in 60 years: summer closures and a rebuilt Majorstuen hub will unlock an 8-kilometre line later this decade. The payoff is massive: faster commutes, new jobs and a surge of mixed-use development at Fornebu, all aligning with the city's coveted workforce and bike-first mobility push. It's all part of the National Transport Plan for 2025-2036, which includes a staggering €35-billion investment in the rail sector alone.



12 Munich Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Climate Risk
- 6 Large Companies

POPULATION

Metro 3,066,000

Bavaria's party capital is also a business behemoth – and a magnetic hometown.

Munich's tech flywheel keeps spinning: Apple's European Silicon Design Centre downtown is in the middle of a second, roughly €1-billion expansion through 2029, while BMW – an enterprise so large it has its own postal code – is retooling its city plant to launch the Neue Klasse in 2026 en route to all-electric production in Munich by 2027.

This growth sits on strong foundations: a #7 ranking for both Business Ecosystem and Unemployment, #6 for Large Companies and #9 for Convention Centre Messe München. This massive facility (encompassing more than 200,000 square metres of halls) hosted BAU 2025, EXPO REAL 2025 and the returning IAA Mobility. Together, these powerhouses cement Munich's #5 overall Prosperity standing. They also fuel a pipeline of life-science and software start-ups, drawing talent from across the globe to Isar Valley. The Technical University of Munich and Ludwig Maximilian University are hotbeds of innovation, powering the city's #10 ranking for Universities. Munich is also leaning into its #9 Biking and #11 Walkability rankings, with new protected links on the Altstadt bike ring, calmer streets around the 370-hectare Englischer Garten and fresh Isar riverbank promenades that tie leisure trails to daily commutes.



13 Lisbon Portugal

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 Public Transit
- 7 Shopping

POPULATION

Metro 3,115,000

Europe's It city keeps them coming despite a year of tragedy and torrid tourism.

It's a testament to the strength of Lisbon's brand that perception outweighs performance in Livability, Lovability and Prosperity. Lisbon's transformation from best-kept secret to urban benchmark is only accelerating. Bikes and trains rule: new protected lanes and a bigger Gira bike-share bolster a #9 ranking for Biking, and Europe's #4-ranked public transit system grows via Metro's expanding Circular Line. The targeted 2026 opening of the Estrela and Santos stations will shorten daily commutes and weekend family trips. Lisboaetas and visitors alike mourned the horror of the funicular accident that claimed 16 lives and exposed maintenance negligence. Yet visitors keep coming, buoyed by new openings like the MACAM modern art museum in a reimagined palace – complete with a 64-room luxury hotel – as well as the MUDE design museum and Hyatt's Andaz Lisbon late 2025 launch on Praça do Comércio. Portugal posted record travel-service exports in 2024 and likely will again in 2026, and the city's gateways are expanding to meet the demand. After choosing Alcochete for the region's next international airport, officials this year asked ANA to accelerate capacity at Humberto Delgado while the new field is completed.



14 Budapest Hungary

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 Unemployment Rate
- 7 Family-Friendly Attractions

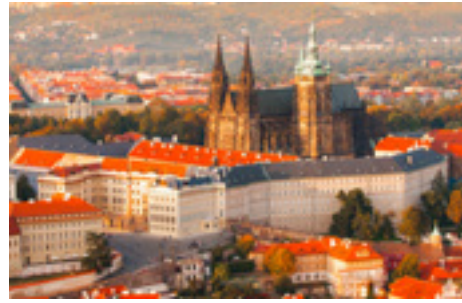
POPULATION

Metro 2,969,000

Fresh investment momentum validates global confidence in the Hungarian capital.

Budapest continues its magnetic pull of digital nomads and enterprises seeking European vibrancy with first-mover economics. The Danube-split city delivered big in 2025 under the reign of its progressive mayor, Gergely Karácsony: medieval Buda's hills house those #8-rankings for both Sights & Landmarks and Nature & Parks, while modern Pest buzzes around a City Park studded with architectural marvels.

The hotel scene is surging: 22 new hotels with 3,000 rooms are planned by 2029, with Hungary's first Radisson Collection and the new Kimpton BEM the latest newcomers and 2026 bringing a Ruby Hotel in the Corvin Palace, Budapest's oldest department store. A new Time Out Market just opened at Corvin Palace and a new National Gallery is being built in City Park. The investment surge reflects Budapest's climbing rankings and top 10 lifestyle finishes: #7 for Family-Friendly Attractions, #8 for Theatres & Concerts, and #9 for both Museums and Shopping. It's the kind of leisure that attracts international talent, and the attitude that makes people feel safe. Just look at the outpouring of support over Pride. Most compelling for businesses: unemployment is low (#7) and educational attainment is high (#9 in Europe).



15 Prague Czechia

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 Unemployment Rate
- 9 Instagram Posts

POPULATION

Metro 2,217,000

Focusing on resident needs created a more accessible city while tourists weren't looking.

Prague's post-pandemic reset is paying off in 2026, with quality-of-life fundamentals like a #12 ranking for Standard of Living meeting a steady buildout of culture and mobility. Along the Vltava, the city is investing in people-first riverfront embankments: Rašínovo, Náplavka and Čapadlo host markets, galleries, and sports, cultural and gastronomy events that bolster a #9 ranking for Instagram Posts. Museum programming is equally magnetic: Kunsthalle Praha, DOX and the National Gallery's citywide venues sustain a #20 Museums finish and a year-round calendar that spills into the streets at Signal Festival each fall. The renovated Savarin Palace off Wenceslas Square is now home to a second city museum devoted to Alfons Mucha, whose theatrical posters and decorative panels defined Art Nouveau illustration for the world. Urban build-out continues. Around Masaryk Station, Zaha Hadid's LEED Platinum Masaryčka has created a destination retail-and-office scene that creates a dialogue with Old Town. Tunnelling on the new Metro D line has finished south of Pankrác, and the Smíchov City regeneration will add mixed-income housing and offices toward a new intermodal terminal. Hospitality investment continues with the W Prague reanimating the Grand Hotel Evropa on Wenceslas Square and the new riverfront Fairmont Golden Prague.



16 Brussels Belgium

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 University
- 10 Airport

POPULATION

Metro 3,408,000

Belgium's capital welcomes the world as one of the continent's fastest-growing tourism markets.

Brussels closed 2025 with record-breaking tourism momentum and is positioned for transformative infrastructure investment and sustained real estate expansion. With 32 million travellers coming to the best-connected city in Europe annually by 2032 – from the current 24 million – Brussels Airport started construction on a Hub 3.0 in 2025, featuring terminal expansion, an intermodal hub and new hotel facilities scheduled for phased completion. This €500-million investment should boost the city's current #10 ranking for its airport connectivity.

In the EU's administrative centre (with the #9 spot in our overall Prosperity index), housing is expensive; new homes delivered through 2025 set the stage for continued expansion, with property analysts projecting steady 3% annual price growth through 2027. Brussels also moved to house its homeless by joining Housing First – a programme adopted in many European cities – and devoting 1% of social housing to the most vulnerable. Which will help make the #13 ranking for Standard of Living a reality for more residents. It's been a decade since Brussels began pedestrianising its central 1000 district, making the Grand-Place a joy to stroll and bike. The rest of the city still has work to do to improve the #42 ranking for Biking and #55 for Walkability.



17 Warsaw Poland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Educational Attainment
- 3 Unemployment Rate

POPULATION

Metro 3,395,000

Poland's capital city is an ascendant economic and entrepreneurial powerhouse increasingly lauded as the new heart of Europe.

Warsaw is fast becoming Europe's gravitational centre, where the past and future of the continent meet on the Vistula. The shift rests on frontline EU borders, Frontex's Warsaw headquarters and logistics corridors linking Poland's Baltic ports with European markets.

The planned Centralny Port Komunikacyjny, a new air-rail hub 40 kilometres west of the city that is due by 2032, will lock in that gateway role. The Warsaw West station, just reopened after five years of modernisation, accommodates nearly 1,000 trains daily. At Plac Defilad, the Museum of Modern Art's new building anchors a cultural axis beside the Palace of Culture and Science and will improve the #11 Museums ranking. Next door, TR Warszawa, now under construction, will supercharge the city's #12-ranked Theatres & Concerts. A short walk away, Varso – the EU's tallest tower – is a fitting landmark in the city with the third-lowest unemployment rate in Europe and the second-most educated workforce. The city is also finally elevating the long-ignored Vistula River, revitalising the west bank and opening a scenic pedestrian bridge in 2024. High-end hospitality reflects the city's #12 ranking in our overall Prosperity Index, with PURO Warsaw Old Town launched in 2025 and more flags on the way.



18 Milan Italy

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Convention Centre
- 4 Airports

POPULATION

Metro 4,981,000

A no-nonsense devotion to the finer things makes Italy's northern power a globally coveted vanguard.

Milan's current glow-up is wonderfully ground-level: #5 Walkability meets #9 Biking as the city rolls out its "Città 30" 30-km/hour speed programme and designs the region-wide Biciplan Cambio 750-kilometre network of cycle paths connecting suburbs to the core. The 15-kilometre M4 metro now links Linate Airport to the city centre in 12 minutes and can carry 24,000 people hourly end-to-end to San Cristoforo: game-changing for both visitors and residents. Milan's #4 Airport ranking will only rise, and the connectivity boosts #3-ranked Allianz MiCo, one of Europe's largest meeting venues. Schedules were tight for completion of the 16,000-seat Santa Giulia Arena, a key venue of Milano-Cortina 2026, the Winter Olympic Games, but the Olympic Village at Porta Romana is ready to become Italy's largest publicly supported student housing complex (with 1,700 beds) after the Games. Old and new Milan meet at the new De Montel urban spa park, which offers cutting-edge treatments and thermal waters that have soothed since Roman times – all in an historic Art Nouveau venue. Meanwhile, the MIND innovation district keeps clustering life-sciences tenants, supporting the #14-ranking for Business Ecosystem and #9 for Large Companies.



19 Dublin Ireland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Economic Output
- 1 Standard of Living

POPULATION

Metro 2,267,000

The storied capital has always attracted flâneurs and entrepreneurs. They're just more flush these days.

Dublin's knack for mixing storytellers with start-ups keeps paying off – on the streets and in the stats. It has the highest Standard of Living in Europe, and you feel it in a compact core that's #11 for Walkability and #9 for Biking, with the Dublin City Centre Transport Plan designed to trim through-traffic and string together safer cycle spines from the Docklands to the Grand Canal.

The business story is equally kinetic. Economic Output sits at #1, with big tech and biopharma investing in cloud campuses on the west side as the Grange Castle life-sciences cluster adds capacity. Europe's Top 5 most-educated residents keep multinationals anchored in "Silicon Docks," while Trinity and UCD feed a steady pipeline of researchers and founders. Tourism and hospitality are surging, in line with the city's #15-ranked overall Prosperity index. The Leinster near Merrion Square debuted in 2024 and 2025 brought refreshed rooms and new dining at heritage addresses across the Georgian core; and Clerys Quarter and North Dock retail continues to fill with global flagships. Dublin Airport – now leveraging its North Runway – has reduced taxi times, and terminal upgrades aimed at smoothing peak flows are continuing in 2026.



20 Hamburg Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

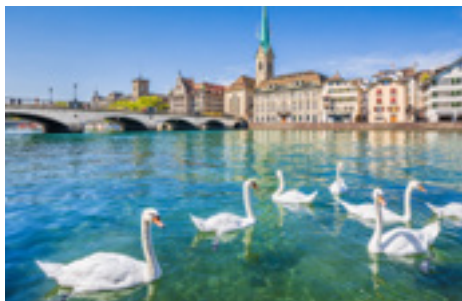
- 3** Climate Risk
- 7** Theatres & Concerts

POPULATION

Metro 3,493,000

Germany's second city is as creative as it is ethical.

Hamburg's maritime swagger is translating into hard assets – and fresh reasons to linger between the Alster and Elbe. The city's rankings of #3 for Climate Risk and #12 for Nature & Parks aren't abstractions, they're experienced on the streets of Hafencity, Europe's largest inner-city redevelopment. In 2025, the 42-hectare Westfield Hamburg-Überseequartier began opening in phases: flagship retail, dining, and the Port des Lumières immersive arts venue, with the Hafencity Cruise Center recently opening for berth ships directly into the district. Hotels will follow, with Novotel and ibis Styles adding hundreds of rooms by 2026. Equally exciting is the upcoming opening of the UBS Digital Art Museum, Europe's largest venue dedicated to digital and immersive art, anchored by the permanent teamLab Borderless Hamburg exhibition. Expect the city's #15 Museums ranking to soar along with its #7 spot for Theatres & Concerts ranking, now that The Reverb by Hard Rock has opened atop St. Pauli's Second World War bunker, adding a rooftop garden from which to admire Hamburg's ascent. The city remains a semiconductor hub, with Nexperia investing another €184 million to scale next-gen silicon-carbide and gallium-nitride chips. A €20-million near-term upgrade to Hamburg Airport will enhance connectivity for one of Europe's most future-ready port cities.



21 Zürich Switzerland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** Biking
- 2** Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 1,613,000

Brains and bikes make the perfect pair in this prosperous Swiss powerhouse.

Switzerland may be the Playground of Europe, but its largest city puts in the work. A #5 Labour Force Participation ranking places Zürich among the most prosperous cities on the continent, winning on Internet Infrastructure (#17), Standard of Living (#18) and the third-highest University ranking. Extra credit to ETH Zürich and a cadre of fellow higher-ed institutions for that one.

Naturally, Zürich tops Smart City rankings with aplomb – most recently with IMD International in 2025. The new Swiss Games Hub, which upgraded offices last year, proves this brainy streak isn't stopping.

Off the clock, Zürchers enjoy one of the best street-level experiences in Europe. Zürich is a mobility marvel, ranking #1 for Biking and #2 for Walkability. A new cycling tunnel provides 440 metres of bike-only roadway beneath the main railway station. It arrives just as Switzerland is experiencing a 50-year tourism high, with Zürich's numbers continuing to ascend since Covid. The city welcomed a roster of new hotels in 2025, and more are on the way, including its first Moxy and an Aloft in the historic Karaköy building. The skyline is getting an upgrade, too: Zürich will welcome the world's largest wooden skyscraper, at 108 metres, in 2029.



22 Istanbul Türkiye

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

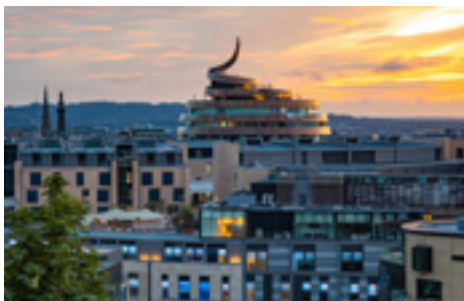
- 1** Tik Tok Videos
- 1** Shopping

POPULATION

Metro 14,206,000

The world is increasingly obsessed with Türkiye's intoxicating ancient capital.

The engine of Türkiye's tourism economy welcomed 12.4 million visitors between January and August 2025, accounting for 35% of Türkiye's international arrivals. (The city's #2-ranked Airport helps.) Unsurprisingly, the hospitality market here is turbulent, with all the hoteliers you'd expect working for a piece of the City on Seven Hills. They're vying for a traveller base that's ready to shop, eat and explore – then tell the world about it. Istanbul tops this year's rankings for TikTok Videos and ranks #3 for Facebook Check-Ins and #6 for Google Trends, driving the #7 ranking in our overall Lovability index. There's plenty to post about: the #1-ranked shopping at the Grand Bazaar, Europe's best urban parks, and the fourth-best restaurant scene in Europe (really). And just wait for the transformation of the Haydarpaşa and Sirkeci rail stations into cultural destinations, complete with an archaeopark over an unearthed ancient city. With international adoration secured, livability is Istanbul's next challenge. Standard of Living, Air Quality and other Livability metrics trail far behind the city's accolades. But that may be changing. New megaprojects are underway, and there are plans to inject the historic Beylerbeyi neighbourhood with more than 1,000 much-needed units. There's also the city's 2050 Vision, focused squarely on equitable living, mobility and city sustainability.



23 Edinburgh United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 University
- 4 Air Quality

POPULATION

Metro 912,000

Scotland's capital is rich with history. Now, it's ambitiously planning for the future.

The Athens of the North may be shaped by its Enlightenment past, but it's also facing the future head-on. This storied city, which plans on becoming net-zero by 2030, loves to think ahead. Major projects abound, with billions of pounds at play. There's the Liberton Community Campus, transforming an existing high school into a Passivhaus community hub, and the massive West Town project, which envisions 7,000 new homes across 83 hectares of newly developed city land. But while Edinburgh focuses on the business, tourists are continuing to enjoy its pleasures. The city is the second-most visited in the UK after London. The draw? Cinematic views, among the freshest air in Europe (#4 for Air Quality), an array of sights (including its famed castle), and a happening citizenry that puts on the world's premier Fringe Festival each year. This vibrant showing is buoyed by a reliable inflow of students who flock to the city's #4-ranked universities. Visitors, meanwhile, are finding an increasing number of hotels ready to host them. Between 2014 and 2024, the city added 23% more hotel rooms. As of writing, 17 more hotels are in the pipeline to 2028. That goes nicely with news that the Tour de France will begin in the city in 2027.



24 Frankfurt Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Convention Centre
- 5 Standard of Living

POPULATION

Metro 2,722,000

Frankfurt is leaning into its role as a global commerce capital with a focus on livability.

Ranking #16 in our overall Prosperity index and #7 for Economic Output, Frankfurt boasts more than 200 banks, including 170 international firms. Most are clustered around Messe Frankfurt, one of the largest convention centres in Europe and #2 in our ranking. Capital is flowing accordingly: by late 2024, foreign investors had announced a multi-billion-euro investment pipeline, outpacing other German markets and fuelling new deals in finance, real assets and digital infrastructure. Diversification is real, from a new insulin plant in Höchst by 2029 to the opening of multiple new data-centre campuses in 2026, cementing Frankfurt as Germany's cloud gateway. Infrastructure is keeping pace. A new Terminal 3 at Frankfurt Airport will add capacity for up to 25 million more travelers (on top of today's 70 million) in 2026 and lift its already strong #21 Airports ranking, while 50 new skyscrapers in the works.

The city's Top 5 Standard of Living ranking proves Frankfurt is sharing its wealth with residents. And double-digit tourism growth from the UK, US and China is coaxed by impressive rankings for both Theatres & Concerts (#19) and Restaurants (#32).



25 Helsinki Finland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Climate Risk
- 7 Green Space

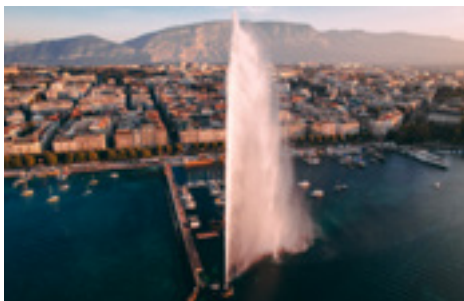
POPULATION

Metro 1,598,000

Stylish, clean, and in harmony with nature, Helsinki is a breath of fresh urban air.

Helsinki, with its 330 islands, is a model of urban naturalism, earning #8 for Business Ecosystem and #7 for Green Space. Nearly 40% of the city is green, from pocket parks to Central Park, 10 square kilometres of urban woodland. The city runs a focused climate-resilience agenda, and its #7 Air Quality and #3 Climate Risk rankings are worn with pride.

The capital of the country that topped the World Happiness Report again in 2025 is doubling down on green mobility and culture. The 1.23-kilometre Kruunuvuori Bridge, part of the €326-million Crown Bridges network, will be one of the world's longest bridges for trams, pedestrians and cyclists, helping lift a #49 Public Transit ranking when pedestrians cross in 2026 and trams in 2027. Tourism is following the Nordic vibes. In 2024, Helsinki beat its pre-pandemic record with 4.5 million overnight stays, fuelled by travellers drawn by saunas, food and architecture. New hotels like The Hotel Maria and Solo Sokos Hotel Pier 4 raise the bar for stays, while the Helsinki Biennale brought contemporary art to the archipelago in 2025. A renewed Makasiiniranta waterfront and a new Architecture and Design Museum set for 2030 will anchor Helsinki's status as a lovable and livable European capital.



26 Geneva Switzerland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Biking
- 1 Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 628,000

Walk, bike, and maybe even solve world peace in Switzerland's storied city of dialogue.

Geneva has always been a hub. But what was once a Middle-Ages trading centre now stands as a global capital of the precision arts of watchmaking, finance and diplomacy. This is the "Peace Capital," a critical node in the UN system and a centuries-old pillar of the financial world. That profile keeps rising: the number of multinationals in the city has doubled over the last decade, and NGOs now number well over 400. Safe to say, there are important reasons to end up in Geneva, and the data agrees: the city led Switzerland's tourism in 2024, with more than 3.7 million overnight stays.

Yet, what's most remarkable about this city happens at street level. Geneva is a pleasure to get around, ranked #1 for both Biking and Walkability. Ample trails and paths snake through the city's compact streets and along the banks of the River Rhone – welcome escape for those pondering global policy. Still, Geneva's not resting on its mobility laurels, and there will be more to love here in the coming years. Its contemporary art museum, MAMCO, is set to reopen, renovated and refreshed, in 2028, while its Plaza Centre Cinema – a modernist beauty – should re-emerge as an immersive, multi-use venue in 2026.



27 Manchester United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 Airports
- 6 University

POPULATION

Metro 3,399,000

A creative and economic rebirth buzzes from arenas to FDI in England's worker bee city.

The historic engine of English industry – and UNESCO City of Literature – is shifting into high gear across both culture and development. The 2024 opening of the 23,500-seat Co-op Live arena, the largest indoor arena in the UK, attracted one million fans in less than a year, and earned kudos as the Top UK Concert Venue and winner of a Greener Arena award. Watch the Theatres & Concerts ranking (already an impressive #22) climb the charts. Urban reinvention is afoot with a newly centralised "single pipeline for growth" now coordinating more than €1.2 billion of planned annual investment across six Growth Locations. Among the boldest is the regeneration of Old Trafford around Manchester United's stadium, projected to create thousands of homes, over 90,000 jobs and a 100,000-seat Norman Foster-designed stadium. Victoria North, the €4.6-billion, 15,000-home redevelopment north of the city centre, will bring new communities in phased delivery from 2027. Greater Manchester's €85 billion economy, up 50% since 2000, now leads the nation in FDI outside London. Tech and life sciences are driving new investment into the Oxford Road Corridor, with Bruntwood SciTech's 2025 expansion adding flexible lab and office space and building on a respectable #25 spot in our overall Prosperity index. Meanwhile, Manchester Airport's €1.5-billion terminal overhaul cements its Top 5 ranking for connectivity in Europe.



28 Athens Greece

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Theatres & Concerts
- 11 Health

POPULATION

Metro 3,594,000

The 2,500-year-old cradle of Western civilization is also Europe's new It City (again).

Athens is having another moment. The mythic city ranks #14 in overall Lovability, with its #18 Sights & Landmarks score backed by the Acropolis, Agora and other scenic ruins woven into the cityscape. The new Excavation Museum – more than 1,000 artefacts displayed beneath the Acropolis Museum – opened in 2024 and reinforces a #16 Museums ranking alongside the Benaki and a renovating National Archaeological Museum.

Add a nightlife scene that runs till dawn and a #9 Theatres & Concerts ranking, and the siren song keeps getting louder. A record 8 million foreign visitors arrived in 2024 and hotel keys keep coming, with two new Hiltons now in the city and another on the way, including the landmark Hilton Athens reborn as The Ilisian Athens. Along the Riviera, One&Only Aesthesis anchors rising high-end stays.

Many head for the Athens Riviera, where the Ellinikon megaproject is turning the former airport into a new coastal city: the Riviera Tower is rising to 51 storeys and early park sections and marinas are due by 2026. Mobility is the quiet revolution, with an ambitious metro expansion adding more than 15 new stations to ease congestion. Above ground, the new 40,000-seat Panathinaikos stadium, opening in 2027, will give that #9 Theatres & Concerts ranking yet another big-night boost.



29 Luxembourg City Luxembourg

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Climate Risk
- 3 Economic Output

POPULATION

Metro 645,000

With history and prosperity to spare, Luxembourg City is a petite Western European marvel.

The eponymous capital of Western Europe's landlocked powerhouse, Luxembourg City is keen to keep a centuries-long prosperity streak going. Once a steel epicentre, now a financial hub and one of the capitals of the EU, Luxembourg City ranks #3 for Economic Output, standing tall alongside cities many times its size. Standard of Living (#6) follows suit, as does the city's ranking for Health (#28).

But it's not all finance and power plays. This, after all, is the "Gibraltar of the North", famed for its high-impregnable fortifications. These marvels of history, from crumbled fortress ruins to the Bock Casemates tunnels, make up a sprawling UNESCO World Heritage Site that draws history buffs yearly. While it preserves its past, the city is working hard to expand its horizons. Demolition has begun for its Nei Hollerich development plan, which will build a new neighbourhood alongside the city's central railway station, with capacity for 2,200 new homes. It promises new parks and public spaces – the city's #9 Biking and #11 Walkability may just climb higher. What's more, Luxembourg's landlocked position may have some key practical benefits, too: this northerly enclave ranks #3 in our Climate Risk subcategory.



30 Cologne Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 Convention Centre
- 11 Family-Friendly Attractions

POPULATION

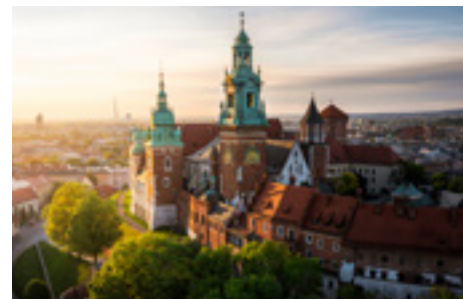
Metro 2,234,000

Cologne connects to its culturally rich past and poised future, while focusing on both business and pleasure.

Cologne is a 2,000-year-old city as undersung as it is spectacular. Its twin-spired cathedral still dominates the skyline; the UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of Germany's most visited landmarks and contributes to a #20 TikTok Videos ranking.

Yet the city's future story is increasingly told in glass towers, R&D labs, and a vibrant, inclusive culture. The latter was on full display in July 2025, when more than a million attendees flocked to the city for ColognePride, one of Europe's largest Pride celebrations. The Cologne Carnival season runs from November to mid-February, combining solstice celebrations with Lent festivities, and cementing a #11 ranking for Family-Friendly Attractions. Certainly a few of the city's iconic Kölsch beers will be enjoyed.

Hospitality is also ascendant: 2026 may finally see the reopening of the 130-room Althoff Dom Hotel just steps from the cathedral, signalling investor confidence in the city's economic vitality and tourism appeal. The Koelnmesse complex (ranking #4 in the Convention Centre subcategory) is in the midst of a €690-million renovation, making events like the world's largest video game trade fair even more comfortable. The Ford Cologne Electric Vehicle Center is now producing the all-electric Explorer SUV, a €2-billion investment and a milestone in Cologne's industrial reinvention.



31 Kraków Poland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 Family-Friendly Attractions
- 13 Shopping

POPULATION

Metro 1,501,000

Poland's historic soul offers a walkable trip back in time but clearly shows its future.

Few European cities wear their history as vividly as Kraków, where Wawel Castle rises above the Vistula and the Cloth Hall continues trading, just as it has for centuries. Yet behind the Gothic façades, the city is fast becoming one of Europe's most dynamic modern economies. Tourism is surging, with Ryanair's €760-million expansion of its Kraków base helping to drive record passenger numbers at John Paul II International in 2025. On the cultural front, a museum devoted to the brilliant, beloved polymath Stanisław Wyspiański anchors a growing arts corridor and burnishes a #14 ranking for Museums (to go along with the impressive #8 Family-Friendly Attractions ranking). Business confidence remains equally high. Western Europe accounted for 83% of Kraków's 2024 FDI, with R&D and tech leading the charge. Heineken's shared services centre expansion is adding 400 skilled jobs, while UBS and Volvo's EV tech hub are deepening Kraków's position as Central Europe's talent magnet, as is Google's ongoing investment in AI research. Sustainable transport is advancing: the long-awaited metro system won't arrive until 2035, but a 2026 commuter rail upgrade will cut airport to downtown travel time. With the 16th-highest employment rate in Europe and residential investment accelerating, Kraków is balancing heritage and innovation with rare finesse.



32 Valencia Spain

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 Convention Centre
- 11 Nightlife

POPULATION

Metro 1,776,000

Valencia is entering its next chapter as an exemplary, sustainable second city.

Valencia heads into 2026 with its 2024 European Green Capital credentials intact and its resilience tested. The devastating October 2024 floods disrupted politics and upended lives, but the port and tourism infrastructure has been stabilised and the beaches have lived to delight another day. Sustainability remains central. In 2025, the City of Arts and Sciences began installing a geothermal plant to slash energy use and emissions, reinforcing Valencia's role as the first city in the world to verify the carbon footprint of its entire tourism sector. And the CAS's L'Umbracle, Mya, along with the city's countless other venues, contribute to a #11 ranking for Nightlife and #13 for Restaurants.

Flagship projects like Parque Central's first 11.5 hectares of reclaimed railway yard green space have matured into vital public anchors, while CaixaForum València and the Centro de Arte Hortensia Herrero contribute to Valencia's #19 ranking for Museums. Infrastructure development is accelerating. The spanking new pedestrian (and future tram) tunnel linking Xàtiva and Alacant stations is a key step in pulling Line 10 closer to the historic core. Summer 2025 saw record flight service, with more than 100 destinations, 37 airlines and 3.6 million inbound seats, a boost to a #76 Airports ranking.



33 Florence Italy

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 12 Public Transit
- 14 Sights & Landmarks

POPULATION

Metro 786,000

A city as a museum? Florence is as close as you'll find.

Florence, one of the world's great Renaissance beauties, is grabbing the overtourism bull by the horns at last. The city that ranks #14 for Sights & Landmarks and #17 for Museums – and that topped Italy in tourist-tax revenue in 2024 by attracting more than 16 million visitors – has passed a long-awaited urban development plan that will guide Firenze's evolution for the next decade. The initiative sets rules for housing, sustainability, and the preservation of the historical landscape, especially the UNESCO Heritage Site that is the city centre. There's a ban on rickshaws, golf carts, and other "atypical vehicles." Twenty-four electric shuttles that carry eight passengers each will operate on two designated routes. Significantly, in April 2025, the opening of new Airbnbs in the UNESCO World Heritage Site was forbidden. However, another 300 short-term apartments will be added to the thousands already available. They were originally intended to lure residents back into the heart of the city, but under pressure from developers, they'll now be luxury digs going for €1,000 per night. So while Florence hosted the International Forum on Tourism in 2025, an effort devoted to sustainability and accessibility, the jury is still out on the historic city's long-term efficacy of balancing its overall Lovability (#28) with its Livability (#22).



34 Lyon France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 Health
- 9 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 2,309,000

Roman bones, bouchon soul and a future humming along the rivers. Lyon is a taste of the future.

A Roman city founded more than two millennia ago, Lyon is best savoured nose to tail, past to future, literally and figuratively. Ranked #21 for Restaurants, it's also #8 for Health. (Perhaps the #11 Walkability and #9 Biking rankings help.) Lyon may be old but it's innovative: the PATLY project seeks to take the gastronomic capital from 4.6% to 15% food autonomy and provide access to healthy food for all by 2030. And the Voies Lyonnaises public transport cycling network is rolling toward a 354-kilometre mesh by 2030, with major links from the city centre to the suburbs and regional destinations. At the merging of the Rhône and Saône rivers, La Confluence, the 150-hectare masterplanned remake of the city's industrial presqu'île, will create a community of some 17,000 residents and 25,000 employees by 2030, showcasing multi-generational, multi-priced housing, a climate-ready public realm and the landmark Musée des Confluences. Twenty minutes away in Décines, the 20-hectare OL Vallée sports and leisure district keeps adding economic clout and reasons to linger. There's everything from City Surf Park to the 59,000-seat Groupama arena, home to both a Ligue 1 men's team and the OL Lyonnes, the world's best women's football club – a prize in a universe of ascendant women's sports.



35 Stuttgart Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

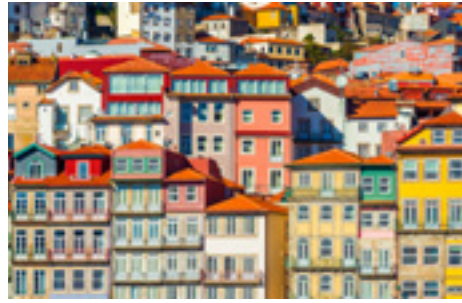
- 3** Climate Risk
- 9** Biking

POPULATION

Metro 2,558,000

Urban efficiency meets Swabian hospitality in the wine country, today more than ever.

The Stuttgart 21 rail project was to be a silver bullet for a de-industrialising region, promising jobs, urban renewal and train connections to the Paris-Bratislava superroute. But that was three decades and many breathtaking cost overruns ago. (In the meantime, Stuttgart has attained a #9 ranking for Biking.) Still, Stuttgart 21 is advancing. Real estate will be freed up when tracks go underground and the €1.4-billion Rosenstein redevelopment – a strategic reimagining of the city's future spatial, social, and economic fabric – now has timelines and costs calibrated, with homes for up to 10,000 residents in addition to new parks and commercial zones. Small wonder this urban gem ranks #10 in our Standard of Living subcategory and #11 for Economic Output. At Messe, rooftop photovoltaics are generating several gigawatt-hours annually as the conference venue aims to produce most of its power in-house: watch the #21 Convention Centre ranking climb. Tourism momentum is real after a record 2024, and the city's fun side is ready. Wine is grown in 16 of the 23 city districts, and the annual Wine Village attracts a million visitors. Hotels are responding. Scandic unveiled a 174-room hotel refit downtown in late 2025, adding Nordic sensibility to design-forward towers and reliable mid-market inventory.



36 Porto Portugal

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 22** Health
- 24** Shopping

POPULATION

Metro 1,340,000

Everyone wants a piece of Portugal's king of the north. Especially the world's FDI.

Portugal's northern engine is revving again. Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport set a new record in 2024 (almost 16 million passengers) and rolled into the summer with 120+ destinations and a new Porto-Rome Fiumicino link. Watch a #57 ranking for its airport rise with a €50-million runway upgrade and airport expansion plan – timely in a city with air traffic levels similar to those of Lisbon. Booming tourism has required city leaders to cut rowdiness by expanding a city centre Containment Zone: after 9 p.m., alcohol can now only be purchased in cafés, bars, restaurants and clubs, with general retail sales not allowed. The #34-ranked Restaurants will soon ascend as the city basks in the World Culinary Awards title of Europe's emerging culinary city and host city for the 2026 second Portuguese Michelin Gala. The transformation of the vast Campanhã slaughterhouse opens in 2026 with offices, galleries, dining and an extension of the Museu das Convergências – Portugal's freshest culture- and innovation mash-up. Watch the #29 ranking for overall Lovability climb. Capital is following the action. Porto drew almost €2.4 billion in FDI between 2020 and 2024, attracted by a workforce skilled in tech, logistics and tourism, and the city received recognition from the Financial Times as the top European city for FDI strategy in 2025.



37 Utrecht Netherlands

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2** Labour Force
- 6** Airports

POPULATION

Metro 914,000

A laid-back university hub nurtures economic opportunity for its residents.

Utrecht is a distinct hometown and destination all its own, despite being only a 25-minute train ride from Amsterdam. It's home to an astounding 29 universities and colleges attended by 70,000 students from 125 countries. The biggest is Utrecht University, founded in 1636, which nurtures Europe's seventh-most educated citizenry. Education and research account for most of the local economy and Utrecht ranks second in Europe for Labour Force Participation. The city's medieval urban grid bursts with Dutch history that can only be possible in a place that for centuries was the cultural and religious heart of the nation. But city leaders are looking to the future. The Utrecht 2040 vision for Healthy Urban Living plans to maintain leads in transit (currently #18) and add green spaces (#20 for Nature & Parks). Creating new urban hubs and transportation links to ease crowding and congestion are key to the ambition of making Utrecht a 10-minute city. The pre-eminent example of the vision in action is Leidsche Rijn, the largest new development in the Netherlands, with 30,000 houses as well as office and industrial space. The full build-out, including a new hospital, schools, retail, places of worship and public transit to the city centre, should be ready by the end of the decade.



38 Rotterdam Netherlands

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

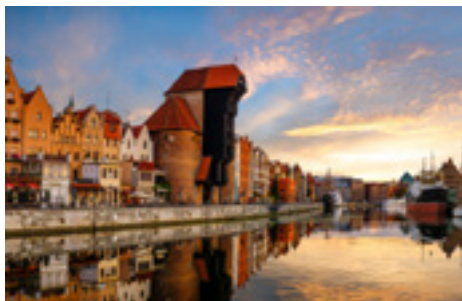
- 6 Airports
- 9 Labour Force Participation

POPULATION

Metro 1,896,000

Europe's largest port keeps proving that second cities can be first movers.

Europe's largest seaport is a fluid, flavourful and architecturally inspired new world. The city's ranking for Museums could move up from #54 as FENIX, a migration museum in Katendrecht, now rises like a stainless steel tornado from warehouses that welcomed immigrants, defying far-right sentiment. The notorious former Chinatown and red-light district is now Rotterdam's culinary and cultural heart. Rotterdam's massive port is the city's industrial past and its sustainable future: the Shore Power Project at the cruise terminal is online and the Maasvlakte 2 expansion positions Rotterdam as a hydrogen ecosystem and offshore wind hub. The city's #6 Airports and middling #124 Public Transit ranking could rise as approval was granted for Europe's first full-size automated airport bus to operate on public roads, linking the city centre to The Hague Airport. Housing is diversifying: with the need for a million new homes in the Netherlands within the decade, Rotterdam is turning to water-based projects like the stunning Spoorweghaven, potentially Europe's largest floating community. The 55-metre mass-timber SAWA, "the healthiest building in the Netherlands," was opened by Her Majesty Queen Máxima in late 2025. And at Feyenoord City, plans have at last been made to upgrade rather than replace the stadium.



39 Gdańsk Poland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

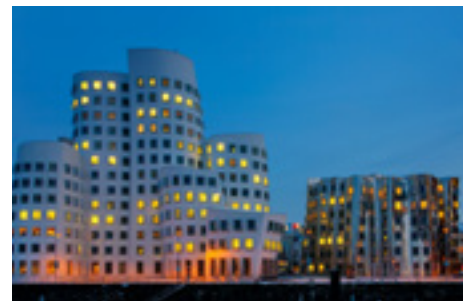
- 1 Unemployment Rate
- 19 Family-Friendly Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 1,232,000

A defiant Polish city savours sacrifice through art and commerce.

Resilience, thy name is Gdańsk. The city's architecture alone – more Amsterdam or Antwerp than Kraków – reflects the shifting empires of Baltic history. The earliest shots of the Second World War were fired here by the Nazi battleship Schleswig-Holstein. And, 40 years later, Gdańsk became the birthplace of the Solidarność (Solidarity) movement that expedited the fall of the Iron Curtain. Today, the city revels in doing right by those who fought for its freedom, drawing industries like finance, engineering and manufacturing, and boasting the continent's lowest unemployment. Gdańsk is also a creative dynamo: the historic Młode Miasto (Young City) shipyards are being developed into a 16-hectare mixed-use cultural and business district, with Euro Styl's DOKI quarter slated for handover in 2027 and Montownia's food hall already a daily meeting point. Baltic Hub's €470-million T3 terminal was inaugurated in 2025 and PKM Południe is a planned rail link for southern districts that are forecast to reach 100,000 residents by 2030. The city is also a notable cultural destination. Its Communist-era apartment blocks are enlivened by 60 murals, including images of Chopin and Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa, and 2026 will see the continued construction of the 11.5-hectare site of the Museum of Westerplatte and the War of 1939.



40 Düsseldorf Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 Convention Centre
- 9 Standard of Living

POPULATION

Metro 1,482,000

A vibrant economy humming with defence contracts and immigration balances efficiency and revelry.

Few cities balance precision and personality like Düsseldorf. Corporate confidence remains high, with Rheinmetall – a top systems supplier for defence – predicting operating profit margins of over 15% and anchoring the city's Top 10 ranking for Economic Output. Messe Düsseldorf's glow-up and new brand goes hand in hand with new international connections in Türkiye and Mexico and through a new Gulf office in Dubai. Locally, Phase 1 of the U81 light rail, connecting Messe with the airport, football stadium and city centre, is slated for a mid-2026 opening.

Urban investment is visible along the Rhine. The MedienHafen (Media Harbour) district is home to more than 800 companies and keeps layering newbuilds onto an architectural postcard. The sculptural Tadao Ando Campus & Tower, now with plans for a hotel, museum, food hall, offices and brewery, will add a striking new design-forward destination.

Tourism and culture are riding the same wave. Kunstsammlung NRW's 2025 programme celebrated artistic ties with the Japanese community, the third largest in Europe. And swanky Königsallee adds flagships and dining concepts – Santiago Calatrava is building a luxury mixed-use complex there, with 35,000 square metres of workplaces, luxury retail and upmarket restaurants.



41 Bern Switzerland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Climate Risk
- 5 Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 513,000

A stealthy Swiss city boasts plenty of history with an eye on the future.

Life is good on the banks of the Aare River, and locals and visitors alike seem a bit smitten with Bern. Switzerland's de facto capital city, which ranks #34 for overall Livability in our rankings, also enjoys a Lovability perception (#41) far above its actual Lovability performance (#128).

That doesn't mean there's not plenty to love. This is, after all, a UNESCO World Heritage Old City, its quaint alleys snaking through historic arcades and around its Zytglogge clocktower. The river is swimmable – bragging rights for any city – and culture comes to life in converted power plants and palatial museums alike. Then there's the craft advantage: Bern hosts more than 200 independent breweries, the most of any Swiss city. A #5 Walkability ranking, plus #9 for Biking, means it's easy to explore them responsibly.

These pleasures are well-earned: Bern has hustle, ranked #17 for Labour Force Participation and #13 for Economic Output. In recent years, the city has proved to be a centre for climate action as well. It hosted Climate Forum Switzerland 2025, actively monitors its urban heat, and codified into law its goal to be net-zero by 2045. All the more noble when you consider that Bern has the third-lowest Climate Risk in Europe.



42 Wrocław Poland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 12 Family-Friendly Attractions
- 15 Health

POPULATION

Metro 973,000

Beautiful and bustling, we're all charmed by Wrocław.

The fourth-largest city in Poland has 10th-century roots as a crossroads of commerce and culture. Since then, a storied history has forged a city stacked with diverse, colourful pan-European architecture, and earned Wrocław the title of "The Venice of Poland." The reason why should be clear as you meander over its historic bridges (more than 100!) and through its river-laced city blocks, savouring the #26-ranked Sights & Landmarks.

Yes, this gem on the Oder River casts a mighty spell, and its magic charmed a record 6.6 million visitors in 2024. Few cities do family-friendly fun like this one (for which it ranks #12), with Wrocław Zoo, the Hydropolis Science Centre, and its seasonal Christmas market pulling droves. Now, with its central Ruska Street preparing for modernisations, the door grows ever-wider for a world curious about increasingly ascendant Polish cultural power. This tapestry of fun and culture is the backdrop for a buzzing economic landscape that spans AI, IT, e-commerce, real estate and beyond. Multinational tenants include IBM and the Volvo Group, and a replenishing population of talent is built in, thanks to the Wrocław University of Technology.



43 The Hague Netherlands

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 Educational Attainment
- 8 Health

POPULATION

Metro 1,162,000

The political capital of the Netherlands delivers on livability for citizens while keeping humanity accountable.

The third-largest city in the Netherlands feels a world apart from the country's capital of Amsterdam, considering its global purpose. Consider the organisations that call it home: There's the Dutch Royal Family, the Peace Palace, and a stacked roster of global corporations, including Royal Dutch Shell, NIBC Bank, and T-Mobile.

Most of all, this North Sea city is a legal titan, home to the UN International Court of Justice and roughly 200 other international organisations. Its #6 Airports ranking keeps the world connected (and accountable), while the #8-ranked universities ensure brilliance isn't just flying in, but nurtured and developed here. In 2024, The Hague saw the sharpest jump in overnight visitors of any major Dutch city (10%). They're not all here to hammer gavels. Den Haag is a trove of historic architecture, from the 13th-century Gothic Binnenhof government offices to the 15th-century Grote Kerk, which still rings on the quarter-hour. Family-friendly attractions are a best-kept secret, ranked #43, and include the Madurodam Miniature Town and the LEGOLAND Discovery Centre. With fun and opportunity alike, the Hague's population has grown almost 30% over three decades. The skyline works to keep pace, with three residential developments planned by 2040, introducing more than 20,000 homes.



44 Marseille France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Biking
- 11 Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 1,889,000

For this famed port, a new chapter is written in food, festivals, and investment.

Marseille's shifty port city reputation seemed worlds away as it welcomed the Olympic flame to the Norman Foster-designed Vieux-Port in May 2024. It's a symbolic triumph for a city that has hustled to turn a new leaf since being named a European Capital of Culture more than a decade ago. Visitors flock to savour the fruits of that labour, not to mention the 28th-best restaurant scene in Europe, which benefits from Marseille's generous, beautiful coast – best appreciated at Calanques National Park, which helps earn the city its #15 Nature & Parks ranking.

Festivals, too, are a draw, and Marseille has them aplenty, from the experimental Propagations Festival to Delta Festival, which pulled droves of revellers to the beaches of Les Plages du Prado in 2025. (The #22 TikTok Videos ranking starts to feel more natural.) In 2024, the city recorded 19.5 million overnight stays – up 20% year-over-year. While its growing visitors frolic and post, Marseille is doing right by its citizens. Education, housing, and, importantly, safety top the city's priorities, and the Smartseille Odyssee project should introduce 280 new residences, and thousands of square metres of shops and office space, all built for sustainability. Then there's the Neomma, Marseille's new, €580-million metro, on track for 2027.



45 Nice France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 12 Green Space
- 22 Climate Risk

POPULATION

Metro 626,000

Blessed with charm and green spaces, this Côte d'Azur icon lives up to its name.

Cherished by artists like Matisse and Chagall, the urban heart of the Côte d'Azur draws 5 million visitors annually to stroll its seaside Promenade des Anglais, pan bagnat in hand, and ponder how their lives got so good. Hospitality is red hot, with occupancy dependably above 85% in the summers.

New hotels are cropping up, and the recently opened hilltop L'Hôtel du Couvent is gleefully stealing headlines and a Michelin key to boot, while the downtown Anantara Plaza Nice Hotel basks in its new reno (and spa). Step out from your suite, and you'll find a surprisingly bucolic city, with parks and gardens aplenty. In 2025, its Promenade du Paillon, which meanders from coastline to old-town Nice, grew another eight hectares. Every metre of this lush, tree-lined thoroughfare helps earn the city's #12 Green Space ranking.

Could Nice get much nicer? Several long-term projects say "oui": in the west of the city, there's plans for an exhibition centre and a new landscape park; in its Port District, redevelopment is underway; and in its city centre, a new Palace of Arts and Culture is planned for 2030. An airport expansion is underway as well – and it sounds like Nice will need it.



46 Basel Switzerland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Biking
- 2 Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 568,000

The world's most famous art fair is just one side of this Swiss wonder.

Basel's name has become synonymous with global creativity, and that's not without good reason. Here, solos sing out from the Jazzcampus, the Kunstmuseum Basel overflows with masterworks, and Art Basel – you think we'd forget? – steals the world's attention year after year.

Yet, Basel is just as much builder as it is painter, and there's a lot happening on the banks of the Rhine. The Dreispitz district, once warehouses, has been steadily transforming into schools, studios, and small businesses – the picture of a "cool" neighbourhood ascending. Then there's VoltaNord, a district-in-progress that turns a former train yard into a low-traffic, greenspace-rich destination for visitors and residents pining to call it home. That is, after all, how a city with the best biking (and second-best walkability) in Europe would do it. In the meantime, locals savour the Basel that has drawn and kept people here for generations. With the third-best standard of living in our rankings, they'll be happy to do it. Prosperity here is born not just from a healthy cultural sector, but also Europe's Biovalley – a tri-nation life sciences cluster stretching from Basel into France and Germany. More than 800 life-sciences companies and many more research groups orbit the city, supported by renowned accelerators like DayOne and BaselLaunch.



47 Cork Ireland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Economic Output
- 2 Standard of Living

POPULATION

Metro 509,000

Ever-more livable and prosperous, it's clear Cork isn't done popping off.

Tucked into Ireland's southern flank, where the River Lee meets Lough Mahon, Cork is buzzing like it's the late 1700s. The second-largest (and fastest-growing) city in Ireland is stealthily becoming one of the most livable cities in Europe, ranked #19 in our overall Livability performance, which is a great deal better than its overall perception.

That discrepancy will surely change: It's only a matter of time before newcomers spread the word about The Rebel City's special sauce: clean air, a sky-high standard of living, and impressive economic output – it ranks #2 for all three of these subcategories. The engine is a hopping economy that includes the likes of Pfizer, AbbVie, Apple, VMware, IBM, and other icons too plentiful to name.

As they invest in Cork, Cork invests in itself. Its Docklands Project is the largest regeneration effort in Ireland, with plans to create a “new, sustainable neighbourhood” in Cork's city centre. It will need that space: the city expects to add 111,000 new residents by 2040. If it's economic opportunity that draws them here, it's Cork's charm that will keep them. Walk – or better yet, take advantage of its #9 Biking – and meander to Oliver Plunkett Street, often lauded among the most memorable streets in the world.



48 Venice Italy

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 13 Facebook Check-Ins
- 17 Sights & Landmarks

POPULATION

Metro 546,000

Capturing hearts while challenging the sea itself. Only in Venice.

Few cities are as beloved as La Serenissima, reflected in its #22 ranking in our overall Lovability index. What's not to love? This is the iconic floating city, where gondolas drift through storied canals, ferrying wide-eyed visitors. And boy, are there plenty of visitors: 5.6 million a year, more than 15,000 a day. That's a lot of new bodies for a city centre of just 7.6 square kilometres, and Venice is extending its day-tripper tax to quell – and capitalise upon – the crowds. Still, you'll want to come to Venice, be it to experience its #17-ranked Sights & Landmarks or find enlightenment in Europe's 28th-best museums. Sardines by the water don't hurt either.

Meanwhile, Venice has bigger fish to fry, confronting climate change while also planning its bright future. In 2025, it unveiled plans for an 18,500-capacity stadium, designed by Populous. This year, it will welcome a new Orient Express Hotel and open its San Marco Art Centre, adding more for visitors to love. Yet flooding remains an existential problem for a city so bonded with the sea. Its multi-billion-euro MOSE sea barriers have already proved a divisive marvel, and all eyes will be on Venice as it continues to adapt over the next decades.



49 Bucharest Romania

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 Standard of Living
- 10 Shopping

POPULATION

Metro 2,164,000

Eastern Europe's 'Little Paris' is easier to get to – and effortless to enjoy.

Bucharest is building on its “undiscovered capital” buzz. Easier mobility for Romanians in the Schengen Area has cut friction for visitors and investors, and airports moved a record 16+ million passengers in 2024. The People's Salvation Cathedral has just opened, the largest and tallest Orthodox cathedral in the world. Hospitality is surging: the Corinthia Grand Hotel du Boulevard, a Belle Époque stunner, now boasts two Michelin keys, and Mondrian Bucharest is slated for 2026 near the Athenaeum. That's a stone's throw from Calea Victoriei, where luxury shops serve looks amid a tapestry of neoclassical, Art Nouveau, and modernist architecture. Keep shopping at the city's many boutiques, and watch the Promenada Mall, set to expand dramatically into 2027. The 10th-best shopping in Europe? Believe it. Ranked #20 for Restaurants, eating well is another Bucharest specialty, and its food scene has a new statement piece: the Marketta Food Hall, inside One Gallery – the restored 1930s Ford factory – brings a new culinary hub to Floreasca. Bucharest's high standard of living (#8) has resulted in strong housing momentum: average listing prices reached €1,862 per square metre by mid-2025. Romania posted a 57% jump in FDI projects in 2024, with Bucharest drawing roughly 40% of them, particularly in manufacturing, sales and business services, the second-highest in Central Europe.



50 The Ruhr Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 Family-Friendly Attractions
- 7 Nature and Parks

POPULATION

Metro 5,114,000

Lush, fun, and innovative, The Ruhr is a proud far cry from its industrial past.

Western Germany's far-flung former coal-mining and industrial metropolis is, at 53 towns and cities (Dortmund, Essen and Oberhausen being the best known), the country's largest metro by population. Since the last coal mine closed in 2018, the Ruhr has ingeniously embraced its greener, bolder future. The Ruhr Museum keeps innovating, the Bochum Planetarium explores the cosmos, and the Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord boasts climbing gardens and light shows. Together, they secure the city's standout #4 Family-Friendly Attractions ranking. Tourism is also building momentum after a record 2024, and the region – ranked #9 for Green Space and #7 for Nature and Parks – is gearing up for the huge IGA 2027: five garden shows across the metro, diving deep on the green future of The Ruhr. The rapid urban transformation is led by Duisburg's 6-Seen-Wedau, a €600-million brownfield redevelopment converting 60 hectares of former rail corridor into 3,000 residential units. In Essen, the ongoing Krupp-Belt expansion is delivering a high-density tech corridor, with specialised laboratory space and mixed-use towers slated for completion by mid-2026. Supported by the region's status as Western Europe's most price-competitive industrial hub, the 2024-25 cycle has seen record FDI in green hydrogen manufacturing and automated logistics, solidifying the Rhine-Ruhr's pivot from coal to climate-tech.



51 Glasgow United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 Air Quality
- 10 University

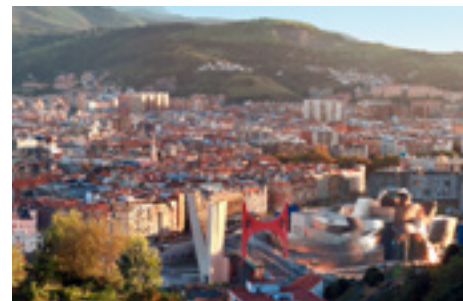
POPULATION

Metro 1,847,000

Come one, come all, and discover Scotland's artful, urban heart.

It's the home of Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet and the National Theatre of Scotland, a former European Capital of Culture, and acknowledged as the UK's top cultural and creative city by the European Commission in 2019. It's a UNESCO City of Music (hello, #24 ranking for Nightlife and #44 for Theatres & Concerts). And it's a machine for turning out Turner Prize winners. On top of that, tourism is bringing new audiences to enjoy it all. Almost 5 million overnight visitors stayed in Glasgow in 2024 – an increase of more than 20% over 2023 – contributing an economic impact of €2.11 billion. More than 430 conferences brought 140,000 delegates and €180 million to the economy over that time, aided by GLA, the city's #21-ranked airport.

Glasgow is thriving economically, with productivity well above the UK average, according to Bloomberg. To fortify its ascent, Glasgow is working on "the biggest overhaul of the city centre in half a century," designed to double downtown residents to 40,000 by 2035. This includes the conversion of the Met Tower into homes for professionals and a mixed-use redevelopment of a Marks & Spencer store for student housing that'll make space for talent flocking to the city's #10 ranked universities.



52 Bilbao Spain

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Green Space
- 15 Educational Attainment

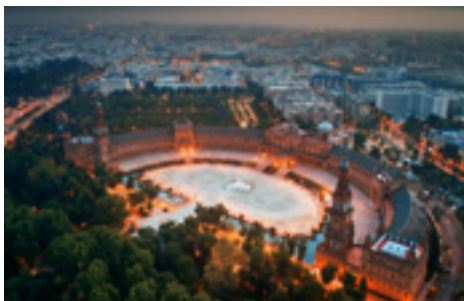
POPULATION

Metro 1,041,000

There's the museum, of course. But Bilbao is a second city marvel all its own.

The largest city in Spain's Basque Country has for almost three decades leveraged global interest in its Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Bilbao into a torrent of city building. The renovation and expansion of the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum alone is adding 2,000 square metres of new exhibition space for contemporary art, which should boost a surprisingly middling #53 Museum ranking.

Architecture and design continue to underpin the city's magnetism. Santiago Calatrava's Zubizuri Bridge and "Dove" terminal of the Bilbao Airport paved the way for Zaha Hadid's Zorrotzaurre, a 2.4-kilometre artificial peninsula in the heart of the city that is becoming "an island of knowledge, technology, innovation and advanced industry." The foundation stone was laid in 2025 for the first building of the Technology Park, and 60 new beachfront apartments are under development. Bilbao also excels in Green Space, with a #3 ranking burnished by new green corridors and ongoing work to complete the Bilbao Green Belt, which will link the forest parks of the hillsides around the city with its urban parks. A newly approved 6.7-kilometre north/south subway link will bring it all closer. Add to that the #17-ranked nightlife, and you have the ideal amenities to retain Europe's 15th most-educated citizens.



53 Seville Spain

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 10 Nightlife
- 12 Sights & Landmarks

POPULATION

Metro 1,557,000

Seville is sunny, easy to love, and a soon-to-be World Cup wonder.

Spain's fourth-largest city is as multilayered and beautiful as a fan wielded by a flamenco dancer. The Andalusian capital offers a warm, sunny climate and one of the largest historic city centres in Europe, perfect for exploring by foot or bike despite rankings to the contrary. Moorish and Baroque architecture radiates in panoramas from its spectacular cathedral and the Giralda bell tower. Add the sculpturally latticed Metropol Parasol, one of world's most memorable – and shade-giving – wooden structures, and you have a solid #12 ranking for Sights & Landmarks. Sustainability and resilience, along with heat, are part of everyday life in Seville, and the city that hosted the 2025 ITS European Congress is doing its part to meet the EU's ambitious goals for a climate-neutral future. With the proMETEO project, Seville is the first city to name heatwaves the way we do hurricanes in a bid to raise public awareness of their impact on health and to encourage people to protect themselves. Small wonder the city has a #27 ranking for overall Lovability. That ranking will grow now that Seville is hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup along with Portugal and Morocco. Its forgotten giant, the 70,000 seat La Cartuja Stadium, is getting a generational upgrade to welcome the world. New hotels will accompany it, including the anticipated Thompson Seville in 2026.



54 Eindhoven Netherlands

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 Labour Force Participation
- 16 Family-Friendly Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 796,000

Settle down on the cutting edge in this Dutch hub for innovators.

Eindhoven is proof there's no greater magnet than prosperity. This southern powerhouse is propelled by the Brainport Eindhoven region, renowned for its high-tech ecosystem and collaborative spirit among companies, knowledge institutions and government bodies. That synergy has made Eindhoven a fast-growing region with projected economic growth of 2.6% in 2026. The #8 Labour Force Participation and #26 Business Ecosystem rankings should come as no surprise. Nor should its rising population: Eindhoven has enjoyed steady growth in recent years, adding around 3,000 residents annually. Those who settle down here discover an all-ages city, where bouldering gyms sprout up in former Philips factories, and discovery parks abound, be it the PreHistorisch Dorp (for history), the UFO-like Evoluon (for technology) or the Eindhoven Zoo (for any animal you like). It takes #16 for Family-Friendly Attractions, accordingly. Today, the Dutch government is busy keeping Eindhoven's prosperous streak going. Project Beethoven commits €2.5 billion to enhance public facilities, housing, and transportation in the Brainport area into 2030. Innovation investment is enthusiastic, embodied in the Eindhoven Hendrik Casimir Institute. Opened late last year, this new science hub will hone the cutting-edge of semiconductor, quantum, and photonics research.



55 Bordeaux France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 7 Internet Infrastructure
- 9 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 1,394,000

The capital of the world's most prestigious wine region is much more than a Parisian escape.

Two hours southwest of Paris by high-speed rail, Bordeaux has long been a weekend jaunt for Parisians pining for fresher air, beaches and surfing (an hour away), local cuisine and one of the largest concentrations of wineries in a viniculture-obsessed nation. When the pandemic made big-city density dangerous, younger Parisians, seeking more room and cheaper housing, landed at this UNESCO World Heritage city with a tenth of the capital's population and all its marvels, from gastronomy to stunning 18th- and 19th-century architecture, kinetic nightlife and spectacular Seine-like promenades along the Garonne River. The recent arrivals enjoy historic streets – home to Europe's #9-ranked Biking and #7 Internet Infrastructure (ideal for remote working) and all the advantages of a city ranking #37 for Livability. Bordeaux's economic and cultural renaissance includes city-wide investments in sustainable mobility, energy transition, along with kilometres of promenades along the river. Canopia, a 600-metre-long green axis, will connect the Garonne to the train station, complete with shops, hotels, restaurants, and housing. Conference days inch up (the Conference Centre ranks #36) and new hotels like Hyatt's FirstName Bordeaux, a conversion of a tired 1970s building, spread out the welcome mat.



56 Bristol United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Biking
- 12 University

POPULATION

Metro 969,000

Bristol is building its next main event with generational creative zeal.

Much like Manchester, Bristol is going all-in on creative industry and capital over the next few years, nowhere more so than with the planned 2028 opening of YTL Arena at Brabazon Hangars on the city's former Filton Airfield, once home to the iconic Concorde. The 10.5-hectare facility's middle hangar is so massive it could swallow the seating bowl and stage of London's O2 arena whole. A festival hall is planned for the east hangar, while the west hangar will serve as a community hub with a food hall, work spaces and leisure facilities. Carbon neutrality is a given in the UK's first official Cycling City and the 2015 European Green Capital. Bristol's middling rankings for Theatres & Concerts (#47) and Nightlife (#34) will also improve, now that the town that gave the world artists like Massive Attack, Portishead and Banksy has reopened the Bristol Beacon music venue, following a five-year, €154-million transformation. The city's strong talent base – evident in its rankings for University (#12) and Educational Attainment (#25) – underlies the region's push into nuclear and renewable energy, with the opening of the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station an hour south of the city, now scheduled for the end of the decade. And local aviation innovator Vertical Aerospace completed transition testing – the final stage of its piloted flight programme – in 2025 and announced it will begin hybrid-electric flight testing in 2026.



57 Birmingham United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 14 University
- 17 TikTok Videos

POPULATION

Metro 3,123,000

The Brummie way is the fun way. A new stadium proves it.

Birmingham's ascent is captured in both its evolving skyline – just spy the sparkling, 49-storey Octagon or 51-storey One Eastside – and its ambitious pursuit of a good time. Few cities entertain like Birmingham, where classic pubs and underground clubs power a happening nightlife scene, ranked #23 in Europe. Want a peek? Check your feed: the city ranks #17 for TikTok Videos, lifted by a student population that flocks to the city's #14-ranked universities. In matters of stagecraft, the city is a practiced maestro, ranked #31 for Theatres & Concerts and distinguished by veteran institutions like The Old Rep – the UK's first purpose-built repertory theatre.

Now, a monumental new addition aims to take things up a notch: the Powerhouse Stadium. Announced in 2025, this 62,000-seat arena will be the future home of the Birmingham City Football Club. First renders have already earned it iconic status thanks to its 12 brick chimneys, inspired by Birmingham's manufacturing heritage. It's part of the nearly €2.8 billion Sports Quarter development that's transforming nearly 55 hectares of East Birmingham, and more fuel on the fire for a city that welcomed nearly 24 million day visitors on average per year from 2023 to 2024, behind only Manchester and London.



58 Málaga Spain

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 17 Nature & Parks
- 32 Google Trends

POPULATION

Metro 887,000

Málaga's sun-kissed treasures go far beyond the beach.

The urban gateway to Spain's Costa del Sol, Málaga brings 16 spectacular beaches within arm's reach to a travelling class eager to relish *la buena vida*. Safe to say, the vermouth-loving nightlife stays energised and high in our rankings (#36), as does the restaurant scene (also #36), which charms international palates with paella, good olives, and tins of sardines.

Enjoy the revelry, but don't forget to look around. After all, you're in one of Spain's most culturally significant cities, where a modern skyline is dwarfed by two massive hilltop citadels (the Alcazaba and the ruins of the Moorish Gibralfaro) and a soaring Renaissance cathedral that stuns, full stop. Picasso's home city honours its native son faithfully at the Picasso Museum Málaga, and 2026 will welcome the renovated (and renamed) Museum & Contemporary Art Centre of Málaga, now a multi-venue hub for the world's modern art buffs. While visitors savour, Málaga builds. A €615-million semiconductor facility is set for 2030, and a €1.5-billion airport expansion is underway, primed to almost double terminal space and dramatically boost capacity. What's more, Málaga will welcome its third major public hospital in the next decade, meant to be among the largest and most advanced in Andalusia.



59 Gothenburg Sweden

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Green Space
- 3 Climate Risk

POPULATION

Metro 1,091,000

Gothenburg is laying the foundation for its best century yet.

With a 400th birthday under its belt, Gothenburg is getting back to work. The plan for its fifth century? Build, build, build. Sweden's leading port city is entering a construction boom, with €93 billion expected in investment into 2035. A new rail station in the city centre should open in late 2026, and no fewer than three innovation districts are set to expand in the coming years: Lindholmen Innovation District, focused on tech and research; GoCo Health Innovation City, focused on life sciences; and Näst Innovation Destination Torslanda, focused on mobility. Expect the already strong #39 Business Ecosystem ranking – thanks in part to the mighty presence of Volvo – to only climb higher as more global companies flock to this well-skilled city that ranks #30 in Europe for Educational Attainment.

New housing is on the docket, too, a must for a city centre that expects to double in size by 2050. The Älvstaden (literally, “River City”) development project aims to tackle shelter challenges, laying out plans to bolster the city centre housing, manage climate change, and more closely connect the city with the Göta River upon which it sits. Watch the already meteoric Green Space (#2) and Climate Risk (#3) rankings closely.



60 Antwerp Belgium

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 25 Theatres & Concerts
- 35 Unemployment Rate

POPULATION

Metro 1,179,000

Rich with culture and ready to innovate, even crisis can't dull Antwerp's lustre.

Antwerp has conducted business on the River Scheldt since the Middle Ages, and has the centuries-old Diamond District (and Europe's second-largest port) to show for it. The #35 Economic Output ranking is proof that this second city still defines hustle, and the #35 Unemployment Rate ranking proves its citizens do, too. But it's not just diamonds behind the prosperity. Innovators are finding a foothold here, drawn in by incubators like The Beacon and Dunden, and supported by the University of Antwerp and nano-tech pioneer, imec. Start-ups have sniffed out the opportunity, choosing Antwerp's time-tested riverbanks as home base as they push the frontiers of pharma, cloud computing, AI, and beyond.

In exchange, Antwerp shares its cultural bounty with generosity, even as it reckons with a drug trade that has jostled its storybook image in recent years. Despite it all, this city remains a jewel box of cobblestone streets, high style, and vibrant museums. The newly announced M HKA Museum of Contemporary Art means there's more for art lovers on the way. In the meantime, catch a show. Antwerp is a born performer, ranking #25 in our Theatres & Concerts subcategory. Don't miss the magnificent Toneelhuis – a neoclassical gem in a city of gems – before it closes for renovations in 2026.



61 Palma Spain

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 17 Health
- 34 Nature & Parks

POPULATION

Metro 709,000

Mallorca's urban heart is on everyone's mind. And in your feed, too.

Mallorca's largest city is the urban jewel of the Balearic Islands, a region projected to have received 19 million international tourists in 2025 – about one in five visitors to Spain. If they're wise, those visitors will stroll Palma's historic streets, sneaking in tapas and sipping vermouth in the timeless Balearic way.

Among Europe's healthiest cities, Palma has historically been popular with German vacationers. Today, it draws an international audience that spreads the word: the city ranks #36 for Instagram Posts and #38 for Facebook Check-Ins, motivated by the mountains, palms and beaches that surround it. Tourism demand is high and, amid local calls to ease crowds, hospitality works to keep up. In 2026, the city will welcome the Aubamar Palma Resort, and new offerings from Spain's own Meliá Hotels are poised to follow.

Palma's airport is transforming, too, entering the final stretch of a €560-million modernisation effort that includes a refreshed terminal. That arrives in the wake of its €38-million revamp of the Paseo Marítimo, Palma's famous waterfront promenade, which reshaped its seafront into a bustling pedestrian boulevard with bike lanes, shaded green spaces and traffic reduction measures that reconnect the city to the sea.



62 Hannover Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Convention Centre
- 22 Climate Risk

POPULATION

Metro 1,310,000

Come for the trade fair. Stay for Hannover's cultural delights.

Hannover's industrious nature is enduring and contagious. That much was clear during Hannover Messe 2025, its blockbuster industry fair, where a contingent of 200,000 from 150+ countries gathered in the #1-ranked convention centre in Europe, ready to dive into the future of work. And where better to do it? This is the economic engine of the Leine River, home to corporate giants like Volkswagen, DHL, and Swiss Life. This roster of heavy hitters, paired with a healthy student population, helps Hannover keep unemployment low (#24) and prosperity high (#34 in our overall Prosperity index).

But Hannover is keenly aware that life's not all clock in, clock out. With the 27th-best weather in Europe, people naturally want to venture into the city to enjoy its ample green spaces (#46) and charming, pedestrian-friendly streets, ranked #39 in our Walkability subcategory. Plans for a nearly car-free city centre by 2030 could push it higher. Tourism is back to pre-COVID levels, stoked not just by trade fairs but also a healthy calendar of cultural events that includes Schützenfest, the world's largest marksmen festival, running since 1529. The arts also matter here, as its UNESCO City of Music honour – and night-daily theatre, opera and arts programming – would indicate.



63 Nuremberg Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Climate Risk
- 7 Unemployment Rate

POPULATION

Metro 1,198,000

Meet the industrial engine building the future in Bavaria.

History and industry – Nuremberg's gravitas starts there. Bavaria's powerhouse feels the part, with its Imperial Castle at its centre and strong presence from regional icons like Adidas, Puma, Diehl, Faber-Castell and Playmobil. In 2025, Siemens Energy doubled down on transformer production in the region, adding even more opportunity to a city with the seventh-lowest unemployment rate in Europe. Trade shows and industry events abound, supported by the #13-ranked convention centres, which include the flagship NürnbergConvention Centre.

Next on the city agenda: build the future. The city has welcomed a new cast of science and learning hubs as of late, including the multi-disciplinary Ohm Innovation Centre, the Cube One building at the University of Technology Nuremberg, and Kieslinghaus Erlenstegen, a cutting-edge medical facility. The public realm grows in tandem, embodied in the Q: a massive new city hub in a former distribution centre, set to open this year with 170,000+ square metres of mixed-use space. Yet there's a steward's heart powering all of this hard work. Nuremberg, with the third-lowest climate risk in this year's report, is nonetheless focused on cutting emissions and building a greener tomorrow. The long-term goal: a climate-neutral city by 2040.



64 Poznań Poland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Unemployment Rate
- 14 Health

POPULATION

Metro 1,057,000

Poland's business heart wants Europe's affection.

Poland's fifth-largest city (and storied birthplace of the nation) is a business and scientific hub, home to multinational corporations such as Roche, Amazon and Unilever and a university pipeline that helps explain the third-lowest unemployment rate in Europe. Enhancing its global connectivity, Poznań-Ławica offers direct flights to Dubai three times a week through flydubai. It has also recently upgraded its retail with a 900-square-metre Multistore and is planning a check-in hall expansion by 2029. The city is also a hub for events and exhibitions, with the Poznań Congress Center having more than 4,000 conference seats across 38 fully-equipped rooms – and an expansion set to add two new concert halls with more than 1,500 seats. Real estate investment is also getting bolder: Skanska's Nowy Rynek C (29,000 square metres; €74 million) is scheduled for completion in 2027 with net-zero operations, while the refreshed Wolne Tory concept would turn about 118 hectares of former railway land between Łazarz and Wilda into a new mixed-use district. Poland's third-largest town square, the Old Market Square from 1253, reopened in late 2023, and in 2027, the new Museum of the Greater Poland Uprising is expected to add another draw. Poznań also ranks #14 in our Health subcategory, demonstrating that it takes caring for its residents as seriously as it does economic development.



65 Turin Italy

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Biking
- 5 Walking

POPULATION

Metro 1,708,000

Turin's got history and heart. To savour it, simply step out the door.

Turin has a past – and resume – like few others. The first capital of the Kingdom of Italy, Torino was famously an anti-fascist centre during World War II, and emerged as a nexus of industry in post-war Europe. Today, the ever-evolving jewel of Piemonte thrives at the foot of the Alps, an only-in-Italy basecamp for culture, cuisine, and good fun.

The best way to see it all? Step by step, bite by bite, sip by sip. Few cities so persuasively invite you to get lost on its streets, its signature *portici* – historic, covered walkways – justifying the #1 Biking ranking and fifth-best Walkability ranking. When it's time to recharge, Piedmontese cuisine, in its unctuous glory, arrives courtesy of some of Europe's best restaurants (#23). It's worthy fuel for a nightlife scene (#18) that starts at aperitivo hour and goes well into the night, enlivened by a healthy population of students from the University of Turin.

It's exciting below street level, too: the Mont d'Ambin Base Tunnel, part of the new Turin–Lyon high-speed railway, will carve a monumental underground route through the Alps, cutting travel time from Turin to Lyon in half. When completed (estimates aim for 2033), it will be the world's longest railway tunnel.



66 Liverpool United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 16 Nightlife
- 18 Airports

POPULATION

Metro 1,549,000

Ever the cultural dynamo, Liverpool is a builder with a taste for revelry.

Liverpool grows its cultural cache, day by day, dollar by dollar. The city that gave us The Beatles is making big placemaking investments, eyeing a transformational new masterplan for St. George's Gateway, Liverpool's cultural quarter and home to the beloved Empire Theatre. It happens as regeneration projects progress in the city's North Docks, and the massive Liverpool North project plans a whole new neighbourhood, solidifying a multi-year agenda of Scouse hustle. Shorter-term projects include a revitalisation of the city's International Slavery Museum, which chronicles Liverpool's pivotal role in Britain's trans-Atlantic slave trade. It's set to re-open in 2028 alongside a similarly revitalised Maritime Museum, a one-two punch that should propel its #79 Museums ranking higher. Festivals are imminent and diverse, including the return of Africa Oyé, the UK's largest African Music celebration, back from its 2025 hiatus. Yet it's nightlife that's Liverpool's specialty, its #16-ranked scene fuelled by quality pubs, trendy bars, a lively student population, and a public transport system (#31) that just saw its biggest ever city investment: €1.85 billion. Now, with Ryanair routes added in 2025, a revamped Anfield Stadium to enjoy, and booming tourism numbers, Liverpool looks uninterested in slowing down – or having any less fun.



67 Bratislava Slovakia

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 14 Unemployment Rate
- 16 Weather

POPULATION

Metro 728,000

At the foot of the Little Carpathians, Bratislava is up to big things.

Bratislava may be a young capital (it took the title in 1993), but its status as a storied city can't be argued. Over the millennia, this Danube power-player has taken many names, a reflection of its myriad influences: Possonium in Latin, Pressberg in German, Pozsony in Hungarian – and today, Bratislava to the world. You can feel the story on its streets, which are decorated with sculptures, historic palaces, and an eponymous castle that can't be missed. These sights, plus Europe's 16th-best weather, distinguish it as a growing city-break destination that pulled 1.2 million tourists last year.

Things are good for locals, too: Bratislava is often called the Little Big City, and it does the nickname proud, with all the opportunity and ambition of a global metropolis in a compact, sub-million-person package. Here, in Slovakia's wealthiest city, unemployment is low (#14) and the labour force works hard (#19) – fuel for an industrial ecosystem that includes Volkswagen, IBM, Dell and Slovak Telekom. It cements Bratislava as the economic heart of its nation and delivers a fine standard of living, too (#31). Now, new residential is going up, including the nearly completed Sky Park, featuring more than 700 Zaha Hadid-designed luxury units.



68 Oxford United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 University
- 2 Air Quality

POPULATION

Metro 553,000

Less than an hour from London by rail, Europe's top university town is the best of many legendary worlds.

After nine centuries of learning, Oxford's university – indiscernible from the city itself – offers 350 graduate courses and anchors hundreds of education-focused organisations and businesses. Students keep pouring in, drawn – as generations before them – to the cobbled lanes, historic pubs and Gothic spires that have defined Oxford for almost a thousand years. The city's 40,000 students help Oxford rank #9 for Educational Attainment, and its commitment to productivity ranks it #7 for Unemployment Rate. Those who stay after graduation enjoy the second-best air quality in Europe and Top 10 biking, cruising the Thames (called "Isis" locally) between college, coworking and coffee.

Recent investment is adding bite: the Oxford North innovation district has opened its first phase, with new laboratories welcoming researchers in 2026, and the Ellison Institute of Technology's Oxford campus is targeted to open in 2027. Oxford Station's rebuild is now pegged to see Botley Road reopen in August 2026 and a 145-room Wilde Aparthotel is slated by the end of 2027, joining the refreshed Randolph and East Oxford's restaurant wave. Ancient urbanism aside, the city is also an understated green space gem (#53), where luminaries like JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis and Philip Pullman all found literary inspiration while strolling the tree-lined paths and riverside meadows.



69 Ghent Belgium

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 34 University
- 34 Business Ecosystem

POPULATION

Metro 683,000

Follow the day-trippers to Belgium's prosperous, enchanting second city.

Ghent's charms flow forth like the Lys and Scheldt Rivers it sits upon. Don't take our word for it: A short trip from Brussels (or Bruges) is all it takes to bask in the glory of its 12th-century Gravensteen castle, or walk along the picturesque Graslei, flanked by medieval guild houses. This has made Ghent a Euro-tripper sensation as of late, with visitor numbers doubling since 2010. Hospitality booms in tandem, and big-league operators like Marriott are leaning in to capture this growing affection.

Meanwhile, the #34-ranked Ghent University keeps the city flush with hungry talent. Its business ecosystem, also ranked #34, is all the better for it. Here you'll find a true automotive hub, its bustling ports home to Volvo and Honda assembly plants. Meanwhile, start-ups dot the city, pushing the limits of biotech, pharma, and deep tech.

Residential is evolving, too: 1,100 new homes will sprout up in the Afrikalaan neighbourhood in the next few years, while the Leopoldskazerne military barracks have re-emerged as a mixed-use district. And, of course, there are megaprojects simmering, including the monumental R4WO ring road project, which will pump at least €720 million into mobility and infrastructure improvements – revolutionising how Ghent connects with Belgium and beyond.



70 Malmö Sweden

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Climate Risk
- 15 Labour Force Participation

POPULATION

Metro 721,000

Smart and hard-working, Malmö emerges as Scandinavia's climate-savvy powerhouse.

Malmö isn't playing second fiddle to its Danish neighbour across the Øresund Bridge. The city is its own dynamic Scandi centre, where tech firms, design studios, and start-ups hum happily in shipyards, relics of the city's past as a shipbuilding powerhouse. Today's Malmö still bristles with the same brains and brawn, anchored by Malmö University, which brings more than 25,000 students and faculty to its redeveloped harbourfront. That academic horsepower propels a #27 ranking for Educational Attainment and the city's #15 rank for Labour Force Participation. 2025 marked the best tourist summer ever for Malmö, propelled by international visitors curious about the city's relaxed, waterside way of life and crisp ocean air (ranked #21 for Air Quality). The swimmable Ribersborg Beach – plus spas and saunas like only Scandinavia does – make this mighty second city's appeal plain to see. And nowhere is Malmö more mighty than in matters of climate, ranking #1 in our Climate Risk subcategory to go along with its fresh air. Active investments should maintain this supremacy: The transformation of Västra Hamnen into Sweden's first carbon-neutral neighbourhood has become a Malmö-wide race to carbon neutrality by 2030. In 2025, the city invested nearly €2.8 million into 45 projects across sustainable urban planning, emission mitigation, and resilience.



71 Leeds United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 6 Air Quality
- 18 University

POPULATION

Metro 2,656,000

Ripe for fun and investment,
it's hard not to fancy Leeds.

Following its ambitious Leeds 2023 Year of Culture – see its #39 ranking for Theatres & Concerts and #29 for Nightlife – the city has doubled down on long-term investments to match its creative clout. The airport is undergoing a €115-million terminal expansion, with the first phase having opened in 2025 to accommodate rising visitor demand (and improve on its tepid #95 Airports ranking). That's just one of many visitor-friendly developments shaping the skyline. Hyatt has opened a Hyatt Place and Hyatt House for short-term and extended stays at a rejuvenated Sovereign Square near the railway station. And Whitbread's Premier Inn, the UK's biggest lodging brand, is opening a 143-room hotel atop Leeds City Market, revitalising the eastern quarter of the city centre. The flag will also transform Verity House, a vacant office building by the train station, into a 131-room hotel by 2027.

Leeds's six universities help sustain its reputation for student-fueled creativity and economic vitality. Roundhay Park remains a massive outdoor draw, and Leeds ranks #6 for Air Quality, ensuring healthy frolicking. The city's skilled workforce and academic engine helped secure West Yorkshire's designation as the UK's third Investment Zone, expected to unlock €253 million by 2030 and generate 2,500 new jobs (further boosting a solid #24 ranking for Unemployment Rate).



72 Bonn Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Biking
- 11 Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 800,000

Nowhere does “small yet mighty”
ring more true than in Beethoven's
birthplace.

Bonn may have a relatively small population today, but its importance to Europe and the world can't be understated (if only because Ludwig van Beethoven was born here in 1770 and his three-storey stucco house draws more than 100,000 visitors annually).

One of Germany's oldest cities, Bonn was founded two millennia ago as a strategic outpost for the expanding Roman army. As the capital of West Germany from 1949 to 1990, it was among the world's most important decision centres, becoming the seat of government of the reunited Germany from 1990 to 1999. Today, the federal government still maintains a substantial presence in the city – with a third of all national ministerial jobs based here – as well as 20 United Nations institutions, the most in the country. The office market is, unsurprisingly, a beneficiary.

The city's fortunate residents enjoy some of Europe's highest rankings in our Top 100, from Standard of Living (#14) and Economic Output (#15) to Walkability (#11), Biking (#9) and Green Space (#13).



73 Mannheim Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 11 Weather
- 15 University

POPULATION

Metro 1,335,000

Germany's university town
with a penchant for invention.

Meet the Rhine's stealthy success story: Mannheim. Few cities in our report rank so highly for Prosperity performance (#30) while ranking so low for Prosperity perception (#107). Its colossal, Baroque Mannheim Palace, home to the #15-ranked University of Mannheim (colloquially called the “Harvard of Germany”), could alone set the record straight. The world-changing inventions seal the deal. In 1817, the first-ever bicycle rolled through Mannheim's streets. In 1886, Karl Benz – yes, *that* Benz – drove the first automobile through town. He would eventually create the first compact diesel-powered car here, a few years after Mannheim's own Julius Hatry invented the first rocket plane.

Today, Mannheim – a city that has rebuilt itself more than once – remains ever the industrious German hub, hosting the likes of Mercedes-Benz Group, Südzucker (the world's largest sugar producer), IBM and others. Unemployment is low (#19), and the standard of living ranks Top 20 in Europe. Perhaps the #11-ranked weather, among the warmest in Germany, has something to do with it? Off the clock, Mannheim is a UNESCO City of Music and a techno adept. Time Warp, a 19-hour electronic festival, happens yearly. After all, what's all the hard work for if not a monumental party?



74 Tallinn Estonia

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Air Quality
- 1 Public Transit

POPULATION

Metro 646,000

Hop on the trolley and discover Estonia's vibrant capital city.

With its medieval spires and conical, red-tiled roofs sprouting from the city's verdant tree canopy, Tallinn's Old Town is enjoying almost three decades as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Kumu Art Museum displays the region's geopolitically fraught history in pieces, illustrating a pastoral Baltic homeland, Imperial Czarist fleets, Soviet propaganda, protest posters and, finally, independent Estonian voices. The city's #40 ranking for Museums, which includes the contemporary PoCo Art Museum and Seaplane Harbour maritime museum, is well deserved.

But transit and tech tell the story of the future: the #1 city in Europe for Public Transit (and Air Quality) drew 130 million riders in 2024, despite delays in implementing 70 new battery-powered trolleybuses that year. Noblessner, once the site of Soviet Russia's biggest submarine-building port, is now a buzzy city neighbourhood, and innovative start-ups (#10 in our Business Ecosystem subcategory) flourish everywhere in what some are calling "Europe's Silicon Valley." (The city also ranks #22 in Labour Force Participation.) Tallinn's entrepreneurial appetite is paying off: the two-Michelin-star 180° by Matthias Diether, and one-star NOA Chef's Hall are the first Michelin-starred restaurants in the Baltic States. The 3.18 million international visitors in 2024, an increase of 7% over 2023, will boost a tepid #89 ranking for Restaurants once word gets out.



75 Vilnius Lithuania

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Educational Attainment
- 12 Labour Force Participation

POPULATION

Metro 751,000

A Baltic wonder continues to build (and code) a monumental future.

Vilnius is bounding into its seventh century like the iron wolf of its creation myth. The largest (yet still compact) city in the Baltics, Lithuania's capital earns accolades and honours with an aplomb reserved for cities many times its size, most recently European Hospitality City 2025 and European Sleep Capital. Momentum into the next decade is fierce: Construction of the €100-billion Tech Zity is underway, set to be Europe's largest tech hub by the end of 2027 – a natural fit for a hard-working labour force (#12) that also happens to be the second-most educated in Europe. The business ecosystem (#18) crackles with IT, web, and fintech innovation. Global unicorns, like cybersecurity firm Nord Security, call this city home, alongside used clothing disruptor Vinted and Europe's first international Blockchain centre.

Yet, Vilnius knows there's more to life than work. There's hardly a better reminder than its UNESCO-protected city centre, replete with Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance beauty. New cultural assets are imminent. Construction on the new National Concert Hall kicked off in 2024, on track to light up Tauras Hill by 2028. Meanwhile, the city is taking submissions for a new, landmark Congress Centre. Targeted launch: 2031.



76 Toulouse France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Biking
- 11 Internet Infrastructure

POPULATION

Metro 1,491,000

Europe's aerospace hub is a well-fed, historic hometown with stratospheric ambition.

Adoringly dubbed La Ville Rose for its pink terracotta architecture, Toulouse moves with a spellbinding mix of beauty and brains. Its business ecosystem oozes authority: Airbus, Thales Alenia Space, CNES (the national space agency of France), and dozens of other cutting-edge firms employ almost 100,000 in this well-connected hub for rocket science. Now, it's anticipating an auspicious newcomer: a currently unnamed alliance of Airbus, Thales, and Italy's Leonardo. The three plan to merge their space divisions to strengthen European aerospace, block Elon Musk's Starlink, and generate billions in revenue – all from a headquarters in Toulouse.

Visitors should keep an eye to the sky, then turn back to the beauty around them, lest they miss a thing. Toulouse is quirky, bikeable (#9), and a UNESCO Creative City of Music, an honour that would fill the city's fabled medieval troubadours with pride were they here to see it. It also knows how to eat, its #43-ranked restaurants offering classic fare and contemporary cuisine alike, Michelin stars accounted for. With new high-speed rail bringing Paris within three hours by 2032, and the inter-city Metro Line C planned for 2028, expect to hear even more from this ascendant French wonder.



77 Strasbourg France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 8 Internet Infrastructure
- 9 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 865,000

More than just a festive destination, Strasbourg's year-round charm will win you over.

Home to arguably the world's best Christmas market – just ask the 2 million yearly revellers – Strasbourg offers the Franco-fairytale romance that Paris has outgrown. Even better, the joys are all-season. Tucked on the French side of the Rhine, this city was only "strategically" bombed during the Second World War. As such, its medieval and Renaissance history was mostly spared, and its Grande Île historic heart became the first urban centre in France to be recognised in its entirety by UNESCO. Grab a bike and get gawking. Strasbourg has worked diligently for its "French Cycling Capital" honours (ranking #9 in our Biking subcategory), with more than 600 kilometres of cycling paths, winding from the quaint Petite France district to its central Place Kléber (and ideally a bistro in between).

Compelling transformations are ahead for the formal seat of European Parliament. A Populous-led renovation of its Stade de la Meinau is giving football fans reason to anticipate summer. Meanwhile, along the Rhine, former port facilities will become new housing and public spaces as part of the multi-year Deux Rives project. With the eighth-best internet infrastructure, Strasbourg is a natural host to start-ups, too. They build happily in innovation parks and accelerators across the city.



78 Dresden Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 27 Sights & Landmarks
- 32 Theatres & Concerts

POPULATION

Metro 976,000

Dresden's triumphs – symbolic and silicon – keep coming.

No city embodies reinvention quite like Dresden. Infamously bombed in the Second World War, it now wears a meticulous rebuild with well-earned pride. In the Neustadt, trendy restaurants bustle inside repurposed offices, and the extravagantly baroque Blockhaus hides Archiv der Avantgarden – Egidio Marzona, Dresden's new museum sensation, featuring more than a million pieces of avante-garde art. Cross the Elbe and the storied Altstadt delivers in dramatic Saxon murals, Renaissance terraces, and more Baroque majesty. The palatial Zwinger alone could earn the city's #27 Sights & Landmarks ranking. It's joined by the Church of Our Lady and Semperoper opera house to seal the deal (and nab #32 for Theatres and Concerts along the way).

A key player in "Silicon Saxony," Dresden's economic development is headline-worthy, with billions flowing in from Infineon Technologies and TSMC to supercharge semiconductor manufacturing in the region. Investments in itself are similarly monumental, notably the Dresden–Prague high-speed line, which will reduce travel time between the cities to an hour. Yet, no project carries the symbolic might of the rebuilding of the Residenzschloss, Dresden's Royal Palace. Once nearly reduced to rubble, it should re-open this year after a room-by-room restoration – another hard-earned triumph for this resilient, urban icon.



79 Freiburg Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 18 Family-Friendly Attractions
- 19 Unemployment Rate

POPULATION

Metro 602,000

Green-minded before everyone else, Freiburg is scenic, sunny, and fun for everyone.

Freiburg set a long-term goal of becoming a sustainable city in 1970, way before it was urban *de rigueur*. Today, the rewards of that forward-thinking are joyously embraced by its locals, who breathe clean air (#21) and spend 2,000 sunny hours a year in some of Europe's best green spaces (#28). Four hundred solar panel installations take advantage of Freiburg's glorious climate, and 40% of the city is forested, much of it designated for nature conservation. The Black Forest lies to its south, thatched with trails and getaway hotels alike, and premier German viticulture happens here, the products savoured on storybook streets where Bächle – the city's signature, miniature canals – babble happily. It's not rare to see children racing boats down these little streams, just one moment of fun in a city that's a generous host for families. The ever-expanding Europa-Park theme park is a train ride away, and the city centre boasts a Gothic Cathedral. Take note, architecture enthusiasts.

Citizens are hard-working, ranking #31 for Labour Force Participation and #19 for Unemployment Rate. This compact metro is feeling its size, but the city hopes to stretch its legs with the new Dietenbach District, which plans 6,900 new homes in a new district in west Freiburg.



80 Sofia Bulgaria

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 27 Shopping
- 31 Museums

POPULATION

Metro 1,501,000

A treasure to those who know, Bulgaria's undersung capital thrives amid change.

As you may have heard, 2025 concluded momentarily in Bulgaria, with Sofia at the centre. An estimated 50,000 people poured into the capital to protest corruption, pushing the government to resign just weeks before the nation would join the euro. It marks a new chapter for Bulgaria and its consistently burgeoning capital city. In recent years, Sofia's red-hot housing market has led Bulgaria's residential boom. An inflow of qualified talent fans the embers, drawn by a menagerie of multi-nationals: Coca-Cola, Ubisoft, and Hewlett-Packard, to name just a few. Yet, many choose this 7,000-year-old hub to start something new, urged on by a pro-start-up city administration that keeps corporate tax low and opportunity high. Host to the Ottomans, Romans and (least inspiring, architecturally) the communists over its seven millennia, Sofia today is a treasured hometown. Her sights and landmarks (#44) span the epochs, from Roman baths to Orthodox churches to sobering communist time capsules like the Red Flat. Bounce back with an underlauded restaurant scene (#35) and world-class shopping (#27), from streetside handcrafts to destination malls. Museums are top of their class, ranked #31, bolstered by the new interactive museum of science and art, PHENOMENA. In a city like Sofia, it feels aptly named.



81 Bologna Italy

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Biking
- 14 Public Transit

POPULATION

Metro 788,000

Italian culinary tradition, served with a side of brains and ambition.

In 2025, UNESCO recognised Italian cuisine as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. No doubt, Bolognese kitchens played a part in that. This city, lovingly dubbed La Grassa – “The Fat One” – has gifted the world tagliatelle, mortadella, Ragù alla Bolognese, and other family-style heavy hitters. Bike or stroll its dazzling city streets, garnished with myriad palazzos, porticoes and piazzas, and discover Northern Italian food at its best. Tourism was up and hungry in 2025, with Bologna's brilliance travelling by word of mouth and stomach. The city ranks high for Google Trends, at #32, with Facebook Check-Ins (#43) and Instagram Posts (#47) close behind.

Between meals, Bologna is innovative and studious, home to the oldest continuously operating university in the Western world (ranked #53), which keeps fresh talent coming in and stokes this 2,200-year-old city's innovative spirit. Long-term investment focuses on work and play. The newly announced TEK District aims to be Europe's next data and AI hub, while the Baroque Palazzo Pepoli – home of the Museum of the History of Bologna – has reinvented itself as a year-round cultural destination. Meanwhile, in the Fiera district, a new, 10,000-person Euroleague stadium just opened its doors, a new home for the Virtus Bologna Basketball Club.



82 Sheffield United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 13 Public Transit
- 18 University

POPULATION

Metro 1,204,000

Scholarly, scenic, and ready for fun, Sheffield is a post-industrial success story in the making.

Sheffield, which George Orwell once called “the ugliest town in the Old World,” is now Yorkshire's brainy, prosperous hub. The “monstrous chimneys pouring forth smoke” that he scorned are gone. Instead, you'll find glassy university centres, myriad green spaces, and some of the cleanest air in Europe (#32). Nature is never far: a third of Sheffield lies within the Peak District National Park, full of trails, caves, and ample space to think.

And Sheffield is thinking ahead. This city is a magnet for students who flock here to study at the renowned University of Sheffield, which secures the city's #18 University ranking. Zealous learners power the #33-ranked nightlife, emerging from lecture halls hungry for a good pint and good company. Neither are hard to find in Sheff, and the #13-ranked public transit gets everyone home in one piece.

Looking ahead, the syllabus calls for more transformation. The city's ReNew grants are giving entrepreneurs more reasons to settle down here, and the ongoing Heart of the City initiative has created nearly 1.5 million square metres of new residential, commercial, and public space to support them. A new housing masterplan has their back, too, with aims to build 20,000 new homes in Sheffield by 2039.



83 Nottingham United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Biking
- 20 Weather

POPULATION

Metro 935,000

Nottingham's next chapter is being built. Blink, and you'll miss it.

Nottingham, birthplace of the Robin Hood myth, gives back to its people through boisterous regeneration and redevelopment. Billion of pounds have been poured into its bike-friendly streets (#9), fostering some of the UK's most ambitious city transformations. The €1.61 billion Island Quarter draws closer to a 2030 opening, a stunning new district with restaurants, an events hall, and soon residential homes and commercial space alike. In the city centre, the Broadmarsh development has turned old retail areas into a public green, flecked with cafes, local art, and Nottingham Castle views. Here, you'll find the Nottingham College City hub, officially buzzing since its opening in 2021. Meanwhile, innovators go to work in the new Elizabeth Garrett Anderson building at Nottingham Science Park, a stone's throw from the #21-ranked University of Nottingham.

The effort is rewarded with good fun. Rightfully so in the "Home of English Sport". Here, quality pubs power the #39-ranked nightlife, and the weather (#20) smiles down on Forest Fans who flock to City Ground for home games. Let 'em come: a major redevelopment of the stadium has been announced, increasing its capacity to 52,500 by 2033. With tourism booming in 2025, it shouldn't be hard to fill the seats.



84 Karlsruhe Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 17 Green Space
- 19 Unemployment Rate

POPULATION

Metro 718,000

Under the radar is no place for a city as grand and green as Karlsruhe.

Legend says Karlsruhe began as the dream of a sleeping noble. It's a fitting tale – we've all been sleeping on Karlsruhe while its big brothers, Stuttgart and Mannheim, enjoy all the attention. This city, the seat of Germany's Federal Constitutional Court, is a lush picture of urbanism defined by the central (and gobsmacking) Karlsruhe Palace, home to the Badisches Landesmuseum, which chronicles 50,000 years of cultural history. From here, the city grid radiates out, blooming with green spaces that include its Schlossgarten and Schlossplatz – palace courts prime for picnicking. Massive urban forests stretch to the North and South, easily earning the city's #17 Green Space ranking.

Among the greenery, you'll find a tech stronghold where citizens work hard (check the #31 Labour Force Participation) and unemployment is low, #19 on our list. The Karlsruhe TechnologyRegion is home to thousands of companies across tech, IT, cybersecurity, and manufacturing, while the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology serves as the headwaters for a healthy flow of start-ups. This year, the Rastatt Tunnel is planned to come into service, part of an evolving route that will eventually link Karlsruhe and Basel, connecting this ascendant city to the rest of the Rhine.



85 Southampton United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Educational Attainment
- 11 Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 695,000

The rising star of England's southern coast hasn't lost its industrious, port-city spirit.

A maritime capital long called the "gateway to the world", Southampton has since emerged as a bucolic surprise of a satellite city, just 90 minutes outside of London (traffic allowing, of course.) Along these storied shores – famously the departure point of the RMS Titanic – the air is crisp (#18, with a pinch of sea salt) and nature is closer than you're expecting. Eleven Green Flag-certified parks, plus ample urban forestry, power Southampton's #11 spot in our Green Space subcategory, and the Isle of Wight's famed beaches are a ferry ride away. Venture 15 minutes out, and the New Forest National Park greets you: 566 square kilometres of protected wilderness, with a wildlife park to boot.

Emboldened by its bustling port, healthy labour force (#23), and Europe's 9th most-educated populace, Southampton is rearing to make big plans. Chatter around a revitalised St. Mary's Waterfront includes an expanded football stadium, enlivening the sports scene in South East England. Then there's the city's Renaissance Vision, launched last year, which lays out ambitious plans to create a new district in its West Bay, regenerate the Mayflower Waterfront, and reintegrate industrial districts into its historic city centre.



86 Zagreb Croatia

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 Weather
- 29 Shopping

POPULATION

Metro 1,168,000

Antique meets boutique in Croatia's beautiful, shoppable capital.

While it may not enjoy the stardom of cousins Dubrovnik and Split – we can't all be in Game of Thrones, after all – the storied streets of Zagreb are not to be missed. Its Upper Town (Gornji Grad) enchants via cobblestone streets, medieval buildings, and the St. Mark's Church, renowned for its colourful tiled roof. In contrast, the Lower Town (Donji Grad) showcases Austro-Hungarian influence through grand boulevards, parks, and neoclassical buildings. This collision of old and new underscores Zagreb's unique character. With the 4th-best weather in Europe, there's seldom a bad day to venture out and see it. An underrated cultural scene awaits, fuelled by events like the INmusic Festival, which has brought headlining acts to Zagreb for two decades. The #47-ranked museums are bolstered by only-in-Zagreb gems like the Video Game History Museum – opened in 2025 and honoured with the world's largest Pac-Man.

Often called "Little Vienna" for its architecture, Zagreb shares world-class shopping (#29) with its Austrian counterpart. Its Illica Street is lined with shops and boutiques, and the red umbrellas of Dolac Market stand for fresh farm goods, flowers, lace, and more. Come evening, and the #35-ranked nightlife clicks on, awakening a buzzing network of pubs, cocktail joints, and more.



87 Nantes France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Biking
- 11 Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 1,032,000

This maritime powerhouse is on a decades-long voyage of revival.

The historic Capital of Brittany, Nantes is ambitiously transforming – honouring its port city past while charting a course into the future. Its Île de Nantes grows ever more – a post-industrial dream district, the focus of a regeneration project that began in 2000 and should continue into 2037. The former shipbuilding site is now a showcase for urban design and the stunning Les Machines de l'Île: a cultural playground where you can find the towering Grand Éléphant and the rotating Carrousel des Mondes Marins, both striking in their Jules Verne-inspired glory. Just across the Loire, the Musée d'Arts de Nantes – founded by Napoleon – remains one of France's finest regional art institutions.

This abundance of culture earns points with travellers who find Nantes a quieter, more sustainable alternative to Paris. They find it easier to navigate, too: a green line snakes through the city, providing a self-guided foot tour that bounces from landmarks to gardens and beyond. The work of city organisation Le Voyage à Nantes, it cements the city's #11 Walkability ranking. Ongoing efforts bolster the city's stellar cycling (#9) as well, and the new Doulon-Gohards "agro-district" in eastern Nantes is a go. It should bring urban farming and 3,000 new housing units to the riverbank by 2034.



88 Lille France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Internet Infrastructure
- 25 Biking

POPULATION

Metro 1,522,000

With generational momentum behind it, Lille is a new Flemish master in the making.

Lille knows reinvention. A commerce hub from the get-go, the city boomed in the Industrial Revolution, yet found itself in crisis in the 1960s. Its rebound has been monumental. The construction of the Eurallille Business District in 1995 (now the 3rd largest in France), plus the arrival of Eurostar and TGV trains in the 80s and 90s, marked a turning point for a city that has since been named a European Capital of Culture and a World Design Capital. This Flemish dynamo has no plans on slowing down. Years of transformative projects are in the hopper, bringing new green spaces and pedestrian zones to a city that's joyously walkable (#22) and bikeable (#9) already. Whole neighbourhoods, like Port de Valenciennes, are transforming, and former warehouses are re-emerging as creative "eco-quarters". Futurist foundations are strong: 93% of Lille has fiber internet coverage, powering innovation at the University of Lille and tech accelerator EuraTechnologies.

With all this future-thinking, you could forget you're in a historic French city. Let Vieux-Lille remind you. This historic old town is a jewel box of architecture, home to a UNESCO-certified belfry and the Place du Général de Gaulle, Lille's stunning town square. Stroll through and take in the Flanders magic.



89 Belfast United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 17 Unemployment Rate
- 37 Economic Output

POPULATION

Metro 795,000

Titanic fame is just one piece of this Northern capital's success story.

Hustle is the Belfast way. The city that built the Titanic more than a century ago is projected to outpace the UK in economic growth in 2026, according to PwC. Powering this prosperity is a formidable cast of corporate characters that make the city's #37 Economic Output ranking possible. Across this maritime marvel, converted warehouses hum with Deloitte and Allstate, plus homegrown firms like FinTrU and Options Technology. A healthy supply of 20-something talent keeps them spry, courtesy of the city's Queens University and Ulster University. With some of the lowest unemployment in Europe (#17), it seems that talent is settling down up north.

Belfast's Titanic Quarter, one of Europe's largest urban waterfront regeneration projects, continues to progress, with 20,000 people already living, working and visiting daily. Its beloved Titanic Museum will get a new, landmark counterpart in the city by 2030: Belfast Stories will transform a former Bank of Ireland building into a €115-million visitor attraction – more energy for a city that pulls millions of visitors each year. They come to explore Belfast's stealthy cultural bounty: a UNESCO Creative City of Music since 2021, it's home to 18 theatres and hosts 80 festivals a year, mixing work and play like few others can.



90 Leipzig Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 22 Climate Risk
- 24 Family-Friendly Attractions

POPULATION

Metro 979,000

Arts and commerce forge a stealthy German urban gem.

Calling Leipzig a “secondary” German city is an understatement. There may be fewer than a million people living here, but this industrial centre, so heavily damaged by Allied bombing at the end of the Second World War, has emerged as an exciting urban renewal story in a country full of them. Yes, there are the typical German economic attributes: here, an enviable convention centre; booming regional offices for Porsche, BMW, Amazon and others; a cargo airport with DHL's global hub; and, impressively, some of the most affordable housing in Europe. But there is also growing global interest in the city's arts and culture, with Lonely Planet declaring Leipzig “ready to take over as Germany's coolest city.” A lot of the buzz is around Spinnerei, a 19th-century cotton mill adapted into a community hive housing more than a dozen galleries and hundreds of artists' studios. The centre also features indie cinema, a restaurant and a beer garden. Expect the city's #37 Theatres & Concerts ranking to ascend rapidly. The cultural lineage of Leipzig is well earned: Wagner was born here, and Bach, Mendelssohn and Mahler all lived and worked in the city. Also naturally endowed, Leipzig ranks #22 in Europe for Climate Risk.



91 Montpellier France

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9 Biking
- 11 Walkability

POPULATION

Metro 823,000

France's fastest-growing city looks like a sure bet.

The French call it la surdouée (the gifted one). The term of endearment has had particular resonance over the past 25 years, as Montpellier became the country's fastest-growing city by population, with almost half of residents today aged under 35. Many are drawn by the University of Montpellier, founded in the 1200s and home to the planet's oldest continuously operating medical school. With several other universities and dozens of schools, the city's 80,000 students provide ample talent for a rising economy. Centuries of medical expertise have nurtured a growing life sciences ecosystem, joining existing tech and IT regional operations for IBM, Ubisoft and Dell, with dozens more firms arriving every year. The lifestyle attraction is obvious: a great climate with Mediterranean beaches just a 20-minute bus ride away. The walkable medieval centre is connected to a 150-kilometre network of bike paths throughout the city, with even more leading to the sea, all contributing to a #9 ranking for Biking and #11 for Walkability. Free public transit has also been available to all residents since 2023, making Montpellier one of the largest European cities to embrace the concept.



92 Kiel Germany

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3** Climate Risk
- 14** Air Quality

POPULATION

Metro 502,000

In Kiel, the Baltic wind is more than postcard scenery – it’s part of the city’s operating system.

Life in the smallest city in our Top 100 lands at #61 for Livability, but the numbers that matter for the next decade are #3 for Climate Risk and #14 for Air Quality, helped by sea breezes and efforts to dramatically cut maritime emissions. The Port of Kiel has invested €50 million in shore power, aiming to supply 80% of all ships with green electricity while berthed, cutting noise and fumes right where the cafés meet the quay. The waterfront is changing, too: KoolKiel, an 86,000-square-metre mixed-use quarter at the southern tip of the fjord, is rising on a former harbour site, with homes, two hotels and commercial space; its first phase is due in summer 2027, including a 177-room Meininger Hotel. Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems employs around 3,300 people in Kiel, and GEOMAR will welcome the new 125-metre research vessel METEOR IV when it’s commissioned in 2026. The year-long “Science Comes to Town” initiative pulls research out of campuses and into everyday public life: think pop-up science spaces, hands-on demos and daily exhibitions across the city. Add ferry links, Kieler Woche’s global sailing spotlight and an Unemployment Rate ranked #32, and you get a maritime pocket power that’s steadily building momentum.



93 Katowice Poland

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3** Climate Risk
- 6** Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 2,382,000

Katowice has swapped coal seams for bass lines as it dances into a bright future.

Poland’s once rusting industrial heart today sits at #75 for Overall Prosperity in Europe, but its future-facing fundamentals are clearer: #3 for Climate Risk, #14 for Weather and #6 for Green Space, with forests and parkland stitched right into the urban grid. The investment story is getting outside of Polish borders, too. Nowy Wełnowiec, a 30-hectare brownfield regeneration north of the centre, moves into construction in early 2026, reserving roughly one-third of the district for open green space, including a four-hectare central park. For employers, the Katowice Special Economic Zone was named Europe’s best by fDi Intelligence in 2024, one reason the city’s unemployment rate is seventh-lowest on the continent. Mobility is also accelerating. Katowice Airport’s new rail-served multimodal cargo and fuel hub is scheduled to finish by mid-2026, while the Silesian tram operator is adding 50 low-floor vehicles with first deliveries this year, and the full fleet on tracks by mid-2027. Visitors feel the lift, too: UNESCO crowned Katowice a Creative City of Music in 2015, and the International Congress Centre beside Spodek can host up to 25,000 people. IHG’s 178-room Crowne Plaza Katowice opens in 2026 beside Silesia City and minutes from the Culture Zone’s myriad concert halls.



94 Naples Italy

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 13** TikTok Videos
- 19** Sights & Landmarks

POPULATION

Metro 3,286,000

Italy’s third-largest city is a 3,000-year-old lesson in how to live loud. And build smarter.

Naples still surprises first-timers: the street-level theatre, the sea air, the espresso-fuelled pace. It ranks #32 for Nature & Parks (those waterfront walks and hidden gardens have lured strollers for millennia) and #19 for Sights & Landmarks, from the Duomo to the stratified streets where every block feels excavated. The city’s #23-ranked museums, led by the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, help visitors connect the dots between pizza, power and empire. Nearby Pompeii keeps rewriting the script, with a newly revealed “black-walled” banquet hall of Trojan War frescoes adding fresh urgency to day trips.

What’s changed is the scaffolding behind the romance. Capodichino Airport is teeing up 2026 airside work, including a full runway refurbishment and a roughly 900-square-metre terminal extension. Just as important, Metro Line 1’s Capodichino station is nearing the finish line, aiming to reduce the airport-to-city hop to just nine minutes. Expect the #47 Airports ranking to soar in short order. Downtown, the €700-million Napoli Porta Est regeneration programme east of Piazza Garibaldi is designed to stitch rail, transit, retail and housing into a new civic district. And by 2027, Rocco Forte’s 46-suite Palazzo Sirignano should raise the bar for high-end stays.



95 Portsmouth United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 4** Labour Force Participation
- 9** Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 542,000

Nearing its first (official) century as a city, Portsmouth has reasons to celebrate.

Though only recognised as a city in 1926, Portsmouth's maritime heritage is 850 years rich. This city, proving ground for Europe's first dry dock and the embarkation point for the D-Day landings, has written chapters of naval history the world won't soon forget. Today, visitors can step through the awe-inspiring hull of the HMS Victory (or nearby HMS Warrior) and feel a bit of the legend themselves. These only-in-Portsmouth attractions keep tourism buoyant – as does its International Port, which had its best cruise season ever in 2024. Even now, Portsmouth's prosperity is born from the sea, bolstered by its status as a major naval base. Defence, marine engineering, and aerospace employ a substantial portion of a local workforce that ranks #9 in our Educational Attainment subcategory and #4 for Labour Force Participation.

Those smarts are helping the city tackle a deep to-do list of regeneration projects. The historic Hilsea Lido pool should re-open this year, adding a fresh family-friendly attraction, and several coastal projects will introduce more green spaces, public commons, and flood mitigation infrastructure. And did we mention the party? In 2026, Portsmouth100 kicks off: a year-long event that celebrates Portsmouth's century as a city, with cultural events, exhibitions, and more.



96 Graz Austria

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 9** Biking
- 22** Green Space

POPULATION

Metro 687,000

Hop on the train and come behold Austria's lush gem of a second city.

Straddling the River Mur, Graz is a historic tangle of Baroque and Renaissance buildings known by its red-roofed streets and the forested Schlossberg, a "city-mountain" once home to a medieval fortress. Its topography is lilted, adding rare dimension to its #22-ranked green spaces, among the finest around. Charming, clean, and flanked by verdant land on all sides, Graz can leave you feeling nestled away. Yet, this is Austria's second-largest metro and a UNESCO City of Design to boot. Here, cultural wonders of today collide joyfully with the past: there's the otherworldly Kunsthaus Graz (dubbed the "Friendly Alien"), a mere stone's throw from the classic beauty of its Hauptplatz town square. With top-10 biking infrastructure, plus a sunnier, more Mediterranean climate than Vienna, it's best seen on two wheels.

Last year ended with a bang for this Austrian wonder: the Koralm Railway opened in full in December, introducing a new, 130-kilometre high-speed line that connects the city with Klagenfurt for the first time. It should transform how Austrians (and the world) navigate the region, giving back time better spent enjoying local wines or exploring a year-long agenda of festivals that showcase local craft, film, and music.



97 Aarhus Denmark

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 2** Climate Risk
- 27** Internet Infrastructure

POPULATION

Metro 550,000

Denmark's second city does it by design.

Yes, it has the centuries-old storybook streets and buzzing student population (mostly from Aarhus University, one of Scandinavia's biggest and ranked #35 in our University subcategory) that you'll find in other European cities, but Aarhus's vibe is entirely its own. Maybe it's the afterglow of its 2017 European Capital of Culture honours. Or perhaps it goes back to July 2, 1941, when City Hall was inaugurated with its modernist clock tower, a beacon to democracy under Nazi occupation.

ARoS set the design tone in 2004 with its new art museum building, paving the way for daring architecture on the once-underused Aarhus Ø waterfront, where Isbjørget still draws design pilgrims. Restored in 2023, the 115-year-old Ole Rømer Observatory remains one of Aarhus's standout attractions and in 2026, ARoS is in the spotlight again with James Turrell's monumental Skyspace, As Seen Below – The Dome. Down in Sydhavnsquarteret, two new hotels arrive in 2026: the 211-room eco-minded Belle Guldsmiden and the 188-room Moxy near the station. Meanwhile, Aarhus H is rebuilding tracks through summer 2026 with new electric intercity trains rolling in 2027. A growing water-and-climate innovation scene now hosts the EIT Water headquarters in a city buoyed by a #2-ranked Climate Risk ranking and Europe's 27th-best Internet Infrastructure. Sustainability-minded residents, meanwhile, are satiated by dining options that feature two local restaurants boasting Michelin Green Stars.



98 Coventry United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 Weather
- 14 Labour Force Participation

POPULATION

Metro 765,000

This automotive innovator finds horsepower in brainpower.

Coventry may not make as many cars as it used to, but the city continues to innovate how the world gets around. The combined smarts of Coventry University and the University of Warwick – which earn this city its #17 ranking for Universities – have created a think-tank for all things locomotion, from e-motors to hydrogen fuel cells. Unsurprisingly, the start-up scene is healthy, grounded in R&D, manufacturing, and fintech. The #14 Labour Force Participation ranking is earned with entrepreneurial zeal.

The backdrop for all this ingenuity is the third-best weather in Europe (Yes, in England!) and a city once named a UK City of Culture. German bombing destroyed much of Coventry in the Second World War. What did survive is worth the world's time, including the stately Council House and the charming Spon Street. New builds include the €518 million City Centre South project, which kicked off in 2025 with ambitions to create a new, sustainable district in the heart of the city. Yet, we'll bet most Coventrians have their minds on their team. Coventry City F.C. is pushing for Premier League promotion in 2026. Admission would be the cherry on top after the city's purchase of the CBS Arena, which reunited The Sky Blues with their home stadium.



99 Cardiff United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 26 Public Transit
- 41 Educational Attainment

POPULATION

Metro 928,000

Is this the UK's new second city?

The Welsh capital has spent the past decade positioning itself as an irresistible hometown. The pitch: castles everywhere, Europe's #26-ranked public transit, Blue Flag Atlantic beaches to the south, and mountains (with more castles!) to the north. And then there's the clincher: the closest European capital to London by rail (under two hours), with Cardiff Central greenlit for a €162-million rebuild starting in 2026.

But it's what Cardiff has pulled off within city limits that's startling. The Cardiff Bay regeneration has turned once-sooty docks into a waterfront you linger in – anchored by the Wales Millennium Centre, the Senedd, and the Pierhead, plus the Norwegian Church where Roald Dahl was christened. The Bay Wetlands are further proof that the city is learning to build with nature, not against it. Next up is Atlantic Wharf: 12 hectares of redevelopment stitched into the Bay with up to 900 new homes, hotels, offices and a public square around a 16,500-capacity indoor arena – now under construction and tracking to open in 2028. If plans land, a 120-room floating hotel will moor in Roath Basin in 2027. With #41-ranked Educational Attainment, Cardiff's talent pipeline is ready for the next wave.



100 Newcastle United Kingdom

PLACE POWER™ HIGHLIGHTS

- 27 Air Quality
- 27 University

POPULATION

Metro 1,193,000

Those sounds you hear coming from North East England are just the gasps from visitors who haven't been in a while.

With a location just 2.5 hours from London by train and an airport that connects to more than 80 destinations, the Newcastle-as-HQ pitch is working, with nearly 9,000 registered businesses and a city centre steadily swapping empty floorplates for new uses. Even the retail and leisure sector is reinventing itself, with the recently opened Freight Island taking over almost 6,000 square metres above Eldon Square. The city's landmark development remains the 10-hectare Newcastle Helix (the former Scottish & Newcastle Brewery), a living "testbed for innovative technologies and solutions" that's doubling down on low-energy housing – 375 new homes are advancing, designed around solar power and the site's district heat network. Pilgrim's Quarter on Pilgrim Street is slated to welcome around 9,000 HMRC staff into a 43,000-square-metre hub by 2027. Connectivity is improving, too, with 46 new Stadler Metro trains in service by the end of 2026, and EasyJet's new base at Newcastle Airport adding 11 routes. A €75-million Utilita Arena upgrade also starts in 2026 (with further phases in 2027). The city's special blend of history-meets-youthful-energy is captured by Newcastle's #27-ranked university, which helps fuel the town's stealthy nightclub scene (ranked #47). The 27th-best air quality in Europe helps with the cardio on the historic trails... and dance floors.

Ranking cities' Place Power™ Score, by category

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	LIVABILITY	LOVABILITY	PROSPERITY	POPULATION
1	London	United Kingdom	2	1	1	12,451,000
2	Paris	France	1	2	2	13,171,000
3	Berlin	Germany	6	6	3	5,106,000
4	Rome	Italy	4	3	23	4,306,000
5	Barcelona	Spain	3	5	11	5,094,000
6	Madrid	Spain	5	4	6	6,983,000
7	Amsterdam	Netherlands	11	10	4	2,989,000
8	Vienna	Austria	8	8	17	3,136,000
9	Copenhagen	Denmark	7	15	10	2,198,000
10	Stockholm	Sweden	10	20	7	2,455,000
11	Oslo	Norway	9	19	8	1,651,000
12	Munich	Germany	17	17	5	3,066,000
13	Lisbon	Portugal	12	9	37	3,115,000
14	Budapest	Hungary	14	12	18	2,969,000
15	Prague	Czechia	13	11	27	2,217,000

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	LIVABILITY	LOVABILITY	PROSPERITY	POPULATION
16	Brussels	Belgium	18	23	9	3,408,000
17	Warsaw	Poland	20	16	12	3,395,000
18	Milan	Italy	29	13	14	4,981,000
19	Dublin	Ireland	16	18	15	2,267,000
20	Hamburg	Germany	19	21	19	3,493,000
21	Zürich	Switzerland	15	35	13	1,613,000
22	Istanbul	Türkiye	135	7	51	14,206,000
23	Edinburgh	United Kingdom	21	24	33	912,000
24	Frankfurt	Germany	39	42	16	2,722,000
25	Helsinki	Finland	24	40	26	1,598,000
26	Geneva	Switzerland	25	56	22	628,000
27	Manchester	United Kingdom	47	30	25	3,399,000
28	Athens	Greece	48	14	79	3,594,000
29	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	23	85	21	645,000
30	Cologne	Germany	42	32	28	2,234,000
31	Kraków	Poland	31	26	67	1,501,000
32	Valencia	Spain	32	25	76	1,776,000
33	Florence	Italy	22	28	109	786,000
34	Lyon	France	36	45	39	2,309,000
35	Stuttgart	Germany	45	58	29	2,558,000
36	Porto	Portugal	38	29	94	1,340,000
37	Utrecht	Netherlands	54	89	24	914,000
38	Rotterdam	Netherlands	131	53	20	1,896,000
39	Gdańsk	Poland	28	38	74	1,232,000
40	Düsseldorf	Germany	51	54	32	1,482,000
41	Bern	Switzerland	34	93	36	513,000
42	Wrocław	Poland	35	41	65	973,000
43	The Hague	Netherlands	50	70	31	1,162,000
44	Marseille	France	30	48	72	1,889,000
45	Nice	France	27	43	102	626,000
46	Basel	Switzerland	33	119	35	568,000
47	Cork	Ireland	44	92	38	509,000
48	Venice	Italy	126	22	111	546,000
49	Bucharest	Romania	99	34	49	2,164,000

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	LIVABILITY	LOVABILITY	PROSPERITY	POPULATION
50	The Ruhr	Germany	60	52	47	5,114,000
51	Glasgow	United Kingdom	107	39	46	1,847,000
52	Bilbao	Spain	43	61	58	1,041,000
53	Seville	Spain	40	27	146	1,557,000
54	Eindhoven	Netherlands	87	97	30	796,000
55	Bordeaux	France	37	67	68	1,394,000
56	Bristol	United Kingdom	63	55	54	969,000
57	Birmingham	United Kingdom	88	49	52	3,123,000
58	Málaga	Spain	26	36	149	887,000
59	Gothenburg	Sweden	70	73	44	1,091,000
60	Antwerp	Belgium	120	59	34	1,179,000
61	Palma	Spain	41	50	106	709,000
62	Hannover	Germany	69	87	45	1,310,000
63	Nuremberg	Germany	67	80	48	1,198,000
64	Poznań	Poland	46	69	71	1,057,000
65	Turin	Italy	66	37	101	1,708,000
66	Liverpool	United Kingdom	112	46	62	1,549,000
67	Bratislava	Slovakia	81	103	42	728,000
68	Oxford	United Kingdom	84	108	40	553,000
69	Ghent	Belgium	97	94	41	683,000
70	Malmö	Sweden	65	113	50	721,000
71	Leeds	United Kingdom	83	72	60	2,656,000
72	Bonn	Germany	58	104	61	800,000
73	Mannheim	Germany	100	109	43	1,335,000
74	Tallinn	Estonia	53	66	97	646,000
75	Vilnius	Lithuania	106	75	56	751,000
76	Toulouse	France	49	68	104	1,491,000
77	Strasbourg	France	52	77	100	865,000
78	Dresden	Germany	77	63	85	976,000
79	Freiburg	Germany	82	107	57	602,000
80	Sofia	Bulgaria	114	51	86	1,501,000
81	Bologna	Italy	80	71	80	788,000
82	Sheffield	United Kingdom	121	91	53	1,204,000
83	Nottingham	United Kingdom	68	88	77	935,000

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY	LIVABILITY	LOVABILITY	PROSPERITY	POPULATION
84	Karlsruhe	Germany	72	111	63	718,000
85	Southampton	United Kingdom	89	122	55	695,000
86	Zagreb	Croatia	110	60	87	1,168,000
87	Nantes	France	59	106	90	1,032,000
88	Lille	France	57	84	116	1,522,000
89	Belfast	United Kingdom	109	98	66	795,000
90	Leipzig	Germany	93	64	103	979,000
91	Montpellier	France	55	96	117	823,000
92	Kiel	Germany	61	124	99	502,000
93	Katowice	Poland	102	100	75	2,382,000
94	Naples	Italy	85	31	163	3,286,000
95	Portsmouth	United Kingdom	108	140	59	542,000
96	Graz	Austria	90	118	73	687,000
97	Aarhus	Denmark	91	133	70	550,000
98	Coventry	United Kingdom	115	121	64	765,000
99	Cardiff	United Kingdom	124	95	69	928,000
100	Newcastle	United Kingdom	116	99	78	1,193,000

Let's talk about why your city ranked where it did. Get in touch for a free, personalised briefing on your city's 2026 performance and the key opportunities you may be overlooking.

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