



World's Largest Circulation Magazine



AARP The Magazine's Healthiest Hometowns

By Sarah Mahoney and Brad Edmondson, September & October 2008

These cities have made robust living—and active retirement—a priority. After reading why, you might want to move there too.

4. SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO



When Susan McDuffie, 56, retired last year as an occupational therapist for the Santa Fe public schools, she didn't lack for things to do. In fact, she's not sure how she ever found time for a job in the first place. She works a few days a week at a gallery that sells work from more than 400 Native American artists. Her own pottery is shown at another gallery where she works one day a week. She's a regular at a flamenco dancing class, and she's writing a sequel to *A Mass for the Dead*, a mystery set in 14th-century Scotland that she published two years ago.

Susan is a good match for the place that calls itself "the city different." Santa Fe has been blending Spanish and Native American cultures since it was founded as a Spanish trading post 400 years ago. The result is an unparalleled range of artistic and cultural influences—it is "the artiest, sculpturest, weaviest, and potteryest town on earth," according to travel writer Jan Morris. Artists flock to Santa Fe for the kind of light you get by combining low humidity, clean air, and an elevation of 7,000 feet.

Of course, those are some of the same qualities that make Santa Fe a healthy place in which to live and retire, too. Its rates of diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol are among the lowest in the country, in part because of a city-funded health campaign aimed at older residents. In addition to offering a 268-bed hospital and easy access to specialists in nearby Albuquerque, Santa Fe is teeming with alternative medicine specialists who graduated from the local University of Natural Medicine or the New Mexico Academy of Healing Arts.

Known for its outdoor lifestyle and emphasis on healthy eating, Santa Fe boasts a network of trails that leads into the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. And Deborah Madison, author of several bestselling cookbooks, is a regular at the local farmers' market, which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary and has a new building in the city's rail yard.

Despite its relatively small size, the city has its own symphony and community orchestra, plus an opera with an international reputation and the annual High Mayhem Emerging Music and Arts Festival. "I love the mix of cultures and influences here," says Susan. "You can't get it anywhere else."

Population:	72,056
Median housing price:	\$499,900
Average number of sunny days:	283 per year
Healthy bragging rights:	American Lung Association ranks it #2 in the United States in air quality
Where the action is:	The Plaza is the heart of downtown
Favorite workouts:	Hiking in the 1.6 million-acre Santa Fe National Forest
Totally unexpected:	Has the highest U.S. art-per-capita rate—even greater than New York City's