

Howdy!

Houston Info Package

By

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Why Houston?

Houston hasn't made it to the top of many lists from sheer luck. The city has changed quite a bit in the last decade and earned all the accolades that have come its way. *Forbes* ranked Houston as the “coolest city in America,” the *New York Times* listed the Houston metro as a top 10 “place to go” for travelers, and *CreditDonkey* rated Houston as the “Best City in America for Young Couples.” These rankings are simply an acknowledgement by the groups that Houston is a great place to live – a fact which locals have known for a long time. There are more - visit [here](#) – rankings that Houston has earned.

Jobs

From April 2010 through July 2014, the Houston area has added 375,000 jobs. This job growth was due to the more than 1,500 companies that announced significant relocations or expansions here over the past five years. A welcome bonus of this phenomenal job growth is that the region's gross domestic product - the value of all goods and services produced in the region - has grown by more than \$114.8 billion since 2010. This momentum has the Texas State Data Center forecasting that Houston will add 490,000 to 790,000 residents over the next five years. Despite the fall in oil prices in 2014/2015, the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land metro created 96,700 jobs in the 12 months ending February '15 and 20,800 jobs in the month of February '15, according to the Texas Workforce Commission.

Affordability

While housing is just one part of what makes a city affordable, it is likely the largest expense for a family, so living in a city with lower housing costs can be beneficial. Houston boasts a wide variety of housing types - modern lofts downtown, traditional single-family homes in the suburbs, and luxury high-rises – at very affordable prices. According to the Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) Cost of Living Index 2014 Annual Average, when compared to the 20 most populous metros, housing costs in Houston are 32.9 percent below average. Houston's overall costs are 17.4 percent below the average when compared to the 20 most populous metros. If one excludes the five most expensive housing markets—San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and San Diego—which tend to skew the average, Houston's housing costs are still 16.0 percent below the major metro average.

The C2ER Cost of Living Index for 2014 also shows that Houston's overall after-taxes living costs are 5.2 percent below the average for all 281 urban areas participating in the survey, partly due to housing costs that are 6.0 percent below the national average.

Diversity

According to the Migration Policy Institute, Houston is the most diverse, rapidly growing US metro area. In 2013 the Houston metropolitan area was home to 6.3 million people, of whom 1.4 million were foreign born. The region's population is 23 percent foreign born, compared to 13 percent of the U.S. population. This diversity adds to the large number of cultural events, art galleries, and international restaurants, plus many strong communities that welcome newcomers from all parts of the world.

Food!

Houston was ranked #1 on the Americas Best Cities for Food Snobs by Travel+Leisure Magazine in March 2015. The magazine wrote that Houston topped the list due to its "irresistible combination of refined tastes and downhome comfort."

The James Beard Foundation has recognized several Houston chefs in recent years, including Underbelly's Chris Shepherd, who won in the Best Chef Southwest category last year, and this year's nominees: Hugo Ortega of Hugo's, Justin Yu of Oxheart, and Terrence Gallivan and Seth Siegel-Gardner of The Pass.

For additional information on the City of Houston, visit the [Greater Houston Partnership](#).

Houston Attractions

Cultural

Museums

Houston has several museums that cater to almost every fancy and cater to the young ([Children's Museum](#)) as well. The museum district alone has about 20 museums with several others spread out across the city. There's the small ([The Printing Museum](#)) and the large ([Museum of Fine Arts](#)), the macabre ([National Museum of Funeral History](#)) and the historical ([San Jacinto Museum of History](#)). If you like museums, Houston has you covered.

Art Galleries

Gallery row at Colquitt and Lake St. has been home to a great set of art galleries for over 2 decades. Among the galleries here are Moody Gallery, Hooks-Epstein Gallery, and John Cleary Gallery.

Upper Kirby, Richmond Avenue, and the Montrose area are also home to several

galleries. Whether your tastes run to Latin American ([Sicardi](#)) or concrete artists ([Wade Wilson](#)), there are several to sate your appetite in Houston.

Houston Zoo

[The Houston Zoo](#) is a 55-acre (22 ha) zoological park located within Hermann Park in Houston. The Zoo houses over 6,000 animals as a part of over 900 species that the zoo has to offer, and receives 1.8 million visitors each year and is the tenth most visited zoo in the United States.

Music

Besides [The Houston Symphony](#), which is the most well known of the local orchestras, Houston has several others that provide locals with great music. Other orchestras include [Texas Medical Center Orchestra](#), [River Oaks Chamber Orchestra](#), and [Moores School Symphony Orchestra](#).

If live music of other kinds is more to your liking, Houston has several options. [Fitzgerald's](#) has been around for over 30 years with open mic nights on Wednesdays. [House of Blues](#) and [Last Concert Café](#), a great Mexican restaurant too, in the downtown area also offer locals with great small venue options for live music.

NASA

While [Space Center Houston](#) is not technically in the city of Houston, it is close enough to the city and is called Space Center [Houston](#), after all. The center features more than 400 space artifacts, permanent and traveling exhibits, attractions and theaters related to the exciting future and remarkable past of America's human space-flight program.

Shopping

Galleria

With over 375 stores, [the Galleria](#) is the largest mall in Texas and eighth-largest in the United States. It is anchored by Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Macy's. It also has an indoor ice-skating rink, 2 Westin hotels, and an office tower.

Katy Mills

[Katy Mills](#) is an outlet shopping mall located in Katy, on the west side of Houston. It has over 200 stores and an AMC movie theater.

Premium Outlets

[Premium Outlets](#) is located in Cypress, about 45 minutes from Houston. The outlet center has about 145 stores of various brands and opened in 2008.

Outdoor Activities

Discovery Green

This is a 12 acre [urban public park](#) which opened in 2008. The park includes a lake, bandstands and venues for public performances, two dog runs, a children's area and multiple recreational areas. There are also two restaurants at the park. The park hosts several events like yoga, family-friendly movies, concerts, and festivals.

Memorial Park

This [park](#) is one of the largest urban parks in the US at 1,466 acres. The park is inside loop 610 and features tennis courts, playing fields, a fitness center, a swimming pool, and several miles of jogging and recreational and mountain bike trails.

Public Golf Courses

Houston is home to several golf courses, both public and private. The public courses include [BlackHorse Golf Club](#) (rated in the top 10 of Americas Top 100 Golf Courses for under \$100 by Travel & Leisure Magazine), [Augusta Pines](#) (host of the annual Champions Tour tournament, the Administristaff Small Business Classic), and [Golf Club of Houston](#) (home to Houston's only PGA TOUR stop, the Shell Houston Open).

State Parks

Houston has several state parks within short drives of the city that offer hunting, fishing, camping, and water activities. Nearby parks include Brazos Bend and [Galveston Island](#).

Clear Lake & Galveston

Even though Houston is over 40 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, there is no shortage of water activities within easy access of the city. Clear Lake is a brackish lake that feeds Galveston Bay. There are several communities that surround the lake and many companies offer boat rentals. [Galveston Island](#) is a barrier island that at one point in the 19th century was Texas' largest city. The island now hosts a theme park, one of the world's largest aquariums, a water park, and an amusement park. Of course, the miles of beaches and water activities are the main attraction.

Key Houston Neighborhoods

The city of Houston covers over 600 square miles, making it the largest city in the Southern United States. Neighborhoods in Houston are generally classified as either being inside or outside the Interstate 610 Loop. The loop is about 10 miles in diameter. The city's outlying areas, suburbs and enclaves are located outside of the loop. Beltway 8 encircles the city another 5 miles farther out from loop 610. Highway 99 is under construction (the stretch from US 59 to I-45 is now complete) and is expected to become a 3rd loop around the city when fully built.

Inner loop neighborhoods

River Oaks

River Oaks is the wealthiest and most expensive community in Texas, and among the top ten in the United States. It is currently home to River Oaks Country Club and covers about 1,100 acres. The neighborhood has about 1,600 homes, most of which are single-family homes. Prices range from \$1 million to over \$20 million. The neighborhood is zoned to River Oaks Elementary, Lanier Middle, and Lamar High schools.

West U

West University Place is a city surrounded by the City of Bellaire, Houston, and Southside Place. The city covers about 2 square miles and is considered among the most highly desirable places to live in Houston. The City of West U has a recreation center, many parks, and other sports facilities to serve city residents. The city is zoned to West U Elementary, Pershing Middle, and Lamar High schools. Property values have historically been high in West U due to its character, schools, and proximity to the medical center, downtown, and the Galleria area. Home prices range from mid \$600s to over \$2 million.

Bellaire

The City of Bellaire covers just over 3.5 square miles. It is divided by Loop 610 and consists of mostly homes. Noting the proximity to West U and the larger lots, generally 75ft wide by 120ft deep, Bellaire saw increased interest from both developers and home owners who desired the location of West U but preferred the lower prices for larger lots. The City of Bellaire has many public parks for use of residents. School zoning for elementary schools is separated by loop 610. Those inside are zoned to Horn Elementary and those outside are zoned to either Condit or Lovett. All Bellaire students are zoned to Pershing and Bellaire High schools. Home prices range from the low to mid \$400s for small townhouses to over \$3 million for mansions.

The Heights

“The Heights” is used colloquially to describe the neighborhood of Houston Heights and also the surrounding neighborhoods. In 2013, CNN Money ranked Houston Heights as #4 in their Top 10 Big City Neighborhoods. Elementary schools that serve the area include Crockett, Field, Harvard, Helms, Love, and Sinclair. Travis Elementary is another highly desirable school in the Heights. Middle schools serving the Heights area are Hamilton and Hogg. Reagan and Waltrip are the high schools for this neighborhood. Pricing ranges from the low \$300s for small cottages to over \$1 million for larger & newer homes

Montrose

Located in the “heart of Houston,” Montrose is primarily a residential neighborhood. It is very diverse with mansions, bungalows, and cottages. In the past couple of decades, the neighborhood has seen a lot of gentrification with townhouses being developed to meet demand for new construction close to downtown. The neighborhood’s elementary school needs are served by MacGregor, Poe, Wharton, and Wilson. Lanier and Gregory-Lincoln serve the middle school needs. All of Montrose is zoned to Lamar High. Montrose is also home to St. Thomas University. Home prices range from the low \$300s for condos to over \$1 million.

Medical Center / Rice Village

As the name implies, the area surrounding the Medical Center and Rice University is called the Rice Village. There is a namesake shopping center at the center of it, adjacent to the University. The Texas Medical Center is the largest medical center in the world with 21 hospitals and 8 specialty institutions. The medical center alone is over 1,000 acres in size. This area includes the neighborhoods of Southampton, Southgate, & Boulevard Oaks. Elementary schools here include Roberts and Poe. Lanier serves the middle school needs of the neighborhood. Lamar is the high school for the area. Home prices range from the low \$300s for condos to over \$4 million, with some over \$6 million.

Braeswood

This is an area of Houston that includes Braeswood Place, Linkwood, Old Braeswood, and Knollwood Village. It is west of the medical center and south of West U. Bellaire is generally to the west of Braeswood. Twain and Longfellow are the elementary schools for the neighborhood. Pershing is the middle school and Lamar and Bellaire serve the high school needs for the area. Home prices range from the low \$500s for the older ranch style homes to over \$2 million for the newer mansions.

Rice Military

This neighborhood is adjacent to what was a military encampment, Camp Logan,

and was initially owned by the Rice family. It is now comprised of mostly newer townhouses that were developed from the early 2000s when demand for affordable homes close to Memorial Park grew. The communities of Cottage Grove, Camp Logan, Crestwood, and Glen Cover are also colloquially included when referring to the Rice Military area. The area is served by Memorial Elementary, Hogg middle, and Lamar high schools. Home prices range from the low \$300s for smaller townhouses to over \$1.5 million for single family homes close to Memorial Park.

Near Loop – out to beltway

Galleria

The neighborhood surrounding the largest shopping mall in Houston is also called the Galleria. There is a diverse mix of residential property types here from condos to mansions. The neighborhood includes other shopping besides the Galleria mall and is generally upscale. It includes subdivisions like Afton Oaks, Larchmont, and Highland Village. St. Georges Place and Briargrove serve the elementary school needs while Lanier and Lamar serve the middle and high school needs for the inner loop areas and Grady and Lee serve the needs for the areas outside the loop. Property prices range from the low \$300s for smaller condos to over \$2 million for mansions.

Memorial

The Memorial area of Houston is west of Downtown. It is bounded by Buffalo Bayou, loop 610, Highway 6, and extends just north of the I-10 and ends at the Memorial Villages. The Villages include Spring Valley Village, Piney Point Village, Bunker Hill Village, Hedwig Village, Hilshire Village and Hunters Creek Village. These independent cities operate autonomously of Houston and have joint fire and police coverage. CityCentre, a recently built upscale mixed-use development is in the west end of the memorial area. Memorial City Mall provides additional shopping in the area. Spring Branch ISD is the primary school district for the area. There are several exemplary schools in the area for elementary through high school needs. Home prices range from the \$200s for condos to several million dollars for mansions on large plots.

Tanglewood

While some people may consider this subdivision as part of the Galleria area, it is distinct enough in Houston and has its own identity. While the neighborhood was developed in the mid-1940s, many of the older homes were torn down in multiple waves of redevelopment to make way for larger homes. Since the mid-2000s newer homes make up the majority of the homes here. Briargrove Elementary and Grady Middle serve the subdivision. A new elementary school, Mark White, is slated to

open in 2016 and pupils of the Briargrove zone will be allowed to apply to this new school. Students for high school are zoned to Lee but can choose to attend Lamar or Westside. Prices range from \$2 million to over \$5 million.

Meyerland

Meyerland is a neighborhood of about 6,000 acres. It was first established in the early 1960s and has since seen redevelopment with older homes having been torn down to be replaced by larger homes. Meyerland is home to a Jewish community center, a couple of Jewish congregations, as well as several smaller synagogues. Lovett, Kolter, and Herod serve the elementary school needs of the area. Almost all of the neighborhood is zoned to Johnston middle with a small section being zoned to Pershing. Bellaire serves the high school needs of the neighborhood. Home prices range from the mid-\$400s & low \$500s to over \$1 million.

Suburbs – outside the beltway

Sugar Land

Sugar Land is a city in nearby Fort Bend County and over 80,000 people live there. It is Southwest of Houston and accessible from the city primarily by US 59. It was the site of Imperial Sugar's operations, hence the name. It has been rapidly growing due to its many master planned communities, easy access to the City and many amenities available in the city itself. Sugar Land is mostly served by the Fort Bend ISD and there are several elementary and middle schools with Dulles, Kempner, Clements, and Austin being the high schools. Home prices range from mid \$200s to over \$2 million.

Katy

Katy is a small city to the west of Houston and is spread out over 3 counties. The population of the city alone is around 15,000 while the area has 270,000. There are several master-planned and upscale residential communities in the area. There are several schools serving the area and they are all part of the Katy ISD. Home prices range from the mid-\$150s to over \$1 million

Pearland

To the south of Houston lies Pearland. A small city that is mostly in Brazoria County and portions of which are in Harris County and Fort Bend County. There are a few master planned communities with Shadow Creek being among the most recognized. Most of Pearland is served by Pearland ISD while other parts are covered by Alvin ISD (Shadow Creek is a part of Alvin ISD), Fort Bend, Clear Creek, Houston, and Pasadena ISDs. Home prices range from mid \$150s to almost \$1 million.

Spring & The Woodlands

Spring and The Woodlands lie north of Houston and have served primarily as commuter neighborhoods to Houston for several decades. In the past several years, the area has become home to many companies and growth here has come from people relocating to live and work here. A few years ago ExxonMobil announced it would consolidate and relocate its corporate headquarters to the area and would have 10,000 employees working at its campus. This announcement and construction on the office complex has spurred great demand for homes in the areas which are in close proximity to the Exxon campus. The Woodlands is a master planned mixed use community that has homes, retail, entertainment, offices, and many parks and trails. A few different ISDs serve residents of the Woodlands. Home prices in Spring and the Woodlands range from the mid-\$200s to over \$2 million

Energy Corridor

This area is west of Houston and primarily south of I-10, outside Beltway 8 and referred to as the “energy” corridor due to the heavy concentration of energy company offices. There are several subdivisions that have been developed over the past few decades and the area is served mostly by Houston ISD. Some areas are served by Katy ISD and Spring Branch ISD as well. Home prices range from the low \$300s to over \$2 million.

Houston Schools

Houston Independent School District is the primary ISD for the greater Houston area. It is the largest ISD in Texas and has over 200,000 students in its system. It has several schools that are rated 9 or above by [GreatSchools](#). A few of the inner-loop schools are -

Elementary

River Oaks Elementary

ROE is a magnet Vanguard school for HISD. It is located on Kirby Dr. at San Felipe and functions as a neighborhood school for the River Oaks, Avalon Place, Oak Estates, and Royden Oaks neighborhoods.

Roberts Elementary

This school is a magnet school for fine arts and is also an IB World School. Located in the heart of the Texas Medical Center, Roberts borders the Rice University campus and serves the Rice Village community as well as Old Braeswood and parts of the medical center. It has a population of about 750 students.

Mark Twain Elementary

Twain is also an IB World school and is located in the heart of the Braeswood Place neighborhood near the Houston Medical Center.

Horn Elementary

Horn is one of the 2 elementary schools that serves the City of Bellaire. It is a total school magnet for art, communications, computers, life sports, and science. All students participate in classes in music and library. It is located inside loop 610 and is the elementary school for the parts of Bellaire that are inside loop 610.

Condit Elementary

Condit is the second elementary school that serves Bellaire. It is located outside loop 610 and those who live in the parts of Bellaire that are outside the loop are zoned to Condit. It is a neighborhood school, where all students are from the zoned surrounding neighborhood. The school has over 650 students.

Middle

Lanier Middle School

Lanier is a Vanguard magnet and IB Middle Years World school. It is located close to the intersection of Westheimer Rd. and Shepherd Dr. and is the feeder school for several elementary schools in the inner loop area. All students who are zoned to Lanier are zoned to Lamar High

Pershing Middle School

Pershing is located in the Braeswood Place neighborhood. It serves around 1,650 students in grades 6 through 8 and has a neighborhood program, a Pre-AP Gifted and Talented program, and is a fine arts magnet school. The school serves several neighborhoods that are both inside and outside loop 610. Students who are zoned to Pershing are zoned to one of several high schools, including Bellaire and Lamar.

Pin Oak Middle School

Pin Oak is a unique school where all pupils are admitted based on applications. Students can apply for their magnet or regular program. The school has a foreign language magnet program. Several neighborhoods both inside and outside loop 610 are served by Pin Oak. The school is located near the intersection of Westpark and loop 610.

High

Lamar

Mirabeau B. Lamar high school is located in the Upper Kirby district and serves grade 9 through 12 for several neighborhoods. Neighborhoods served include River Oaks & West U. The school has neighborhood, Advanced Placement, and IB Diploma Programme curriculums. It has one of the largest IB Diploma programs in North America. Students who attend Lee high school may attend Lamar as an option. *The Washington Post* recently ranked Lamar in the top 15 of high schools in the country – this is the 3rd year that Lamar has achieved this ranking.

Bellaire

The campus is located in Bellaire, just outside loop 610, and the school serves the incorporated city of Bellaire and the Houston community of Meyerland, as well as other Houston neighborhoods. The school has a magnet program for languages and also has Advanced Placement and is an IB World School. Pershing middle school, among others, feeds into Bellaire high school.

Private

Kinkaid

The Kinkaid School is a PK-12 non-sectarian school in Piney Point. It is the oldest independent coeducational school in Greater Houston. Among the school's notable alumni are James Baker III, George W. Bush, & William P. Hobby, Jr. The school has over 1,400 students.

St. Johns

St. John's School is a coed independent school, presenting a 13-year sequence of university prep training. St. John's has been described by Forbes.com as one of

"America's Elite Prep Schools," and listed by the Wall Street Journal as among schools in the United States with the largest percentages of graduates attending highly selective universities such as Harvard, Princeton, MIT, Columbia, the University of Chicago, and Rice. It is located in the River Oaks neighborhood and has about 1,200 students.

Duchesne Academy

Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart is a combined primary and secondary independent girls' school. It is part of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and the Independent School Association of the Southwest. Duchesne is in the Memorial area and is east of the city of Hunters Creek Village. It has about 700 students and has a student to teacher ratio of about 8:1.