

The 15 Most Beautiful Main Streets Across America.

A quintessential small town just isn't complete without a charming boulevard

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Between the major cities on the coasts of the United States are hundreds of small towns where a good portion of the American population lives today. Established over the last two centuries as the country expanded west, the majority of these municipalities have one thing in common: a charming main street. Lined with shops, restaurants, and other small businesses, these broad boulevards— often with their vintage flair intact—are a quintessential hub of any small community. Sure, European towns might have main streets with fairytale-esque cobblestones and half-timbered façades, but nothing says Americana like a paved road flanked by old brick buildings and hand-lettered signs. Here, a look at 15 of the most beautiful main streets across the country.

From **CT.org**...Notice the design features of each of the 15 character towns.

- They all have buildings with 2 to 3 stories; it demonstrates that one story is too short to create a space, four and more is too tall.
- Most have buildings on both sides of the main street; Pella has a big main street park and some are near river and lakefronts, but the preponderance of main streets have buildings on both sides of the street.
- They all, but two, have two-lane streets with on-street parking; two have a one-way street system.
- Maybe half have retro-fitted wide sidewalks with street lights; many appear to have traditional 4-5 foot wide walkways; only three have a pattern of street trees.



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Photo: Peter Ptschelinzew / Getty Images

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Galena, Illinois

It probably doesn't come as too much of a surprise that this town is named for the mineral galena, an ore of lead, which has been mined in the area for centuries. It has two other major claims to fame: It was once the largest steamboat hub north of St. Louis, and it was the home of President Ulysses S. Grant (and eight other Civil War generals). Its Main Street has a fun nickname: Helluva Half Mile.



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Telluride, Colorado

Like many towns in the mountains out West, Telluride was founded as a mining town in the late 19th century, but it became a major ski destination in the 1970s. Colorado Avenue serves as the main drag, perfect for après-ski shopping and dining or a long summer stroll while browsing the windows.



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Pella, Iowa

Settled by Dutch immigrants in 1847, the town of Pella is a veritable “Little Holland.” It’s home to the largest working grain windmill in the country and has a replica of a Dutch square named Molengracht, complete with a canal, which sits right off Main Street. Visit in May for the annual Tulip Time Festival.



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Deadwood, South Dakota

Another byproduct of a gold rush—this time the Black Hills Gold Rush—Deadwood grew quickly in the 1870s. It was a true Wild West town, filled with casinos, saloons, and plenty of debauchery. Today it's still a gambling town, with many historic gaming and drinking establishments lining Main Street, but it's a much more orderly scene.



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Beacon, New York

Not every town on this list was built during the westward expansion. Two fur traders purchased the land from the native Wappinger tribe in 1683, and a few decades later, two villages were erected on the site. Today it's best known as the home of contemporary art museum *Dia:Beacon*, which is a little ways off of Main Street, where you'll find a collection of restaurants and quirky boutiques.



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Photo: J.T. Crawford / Paducah Life Magazine

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Paducah, Kentucky

William Clark—half of the famous explorer duo Lewis and Clark—founded this town in 1827. General Ulysses S. Grant once occupied the city during the Civil War, establishing Paducah as a main supply center for the Union army. In 2013 the town was named a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts & Folk Art. While the main street is Broadway, you can find shops, galleries, breweries, and more across the entire historic district, which is managed by the town’s Main Street program.



Photo: Witold Skrypczak / Getty Images

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Brigham City, Utah

The first settlers in Brigham City, Utah, were a group of Mormons who arrived in the early 1850s. While the town suffered from economic hardship during its early decades, it boomed during World War II when the government built a major hospital there. Main Street nearly bisects the city perfectly.



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Bedford, Ohio

This suburb of Cleveland was founded in 1823 as settlers began building mills along the waterfall-lined Tinkers Creek. Broadway Avenue is the hub of Bedford's historic district, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



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Photo: Stephen Saks / Getty Images

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Livingston, Montana

The transcontinental Northern Pacific Railway put Livingston on the map when it opened a station in town. (It was the final place an engine could be serviced before traversing the Bozeman Pass.) The community then became the first gateway town to Yellowstone National Park. Main Street might only be a few blocks long, but it's packed with charm.



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Photo: Kent Kanouse via Flickr

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Natchitoches, Louisiana

Natchitoches was actually founded by the French in 1714, making it the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. Front Street along the Cane River Lake is the town's main thoroughfare, and it's lined with plenty of historic buildings housing shops and restaurants.



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Eureka Springs, Arkansas

Set in the Ozark Mountains, this Victorian town is known for its winding streets that cater to the hilly terrain. (In fact, there are no traffic lights here as no two streets cross perpendicularly.) It's not just Main Street that's recognized as historic—the entire town of Eureka Springs is on the National Register of Historic Places.



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Red Lodge, Montana

Originally a stop for stagecoaches heading west, Red Lodge boomed in the late 19th century when coal was discovered nearby. The town saw an influx of European settlers, not to mention a large group of Native Americans seeking work in the mines, making its small population one of the most diverse in Montana at the time. Broadway Avenue is full of classic Old West saloons, cafés, and bed and breakfasts.



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Photo: Josh Miller Photography / Getty Images

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Nevada City, California

During the California Gold Rush, dozens of towns cropped up across the state, one of them being Nevada City. At its peak more than 10,000 residents crammed into the community, though today that population has dwindled to a more comfortable 2,800. Nevada City has largely retained the look of its earliest days, preserving many old structures along and around Broad Street, the historic main route that today is filled with dining options.



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Photo: Stephen Saks / Getty Images

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Port Townsend, Washington

Located on a peninsula north of Seattle, Port Townsend is known for its many Victorian-style buildings. Its waterfront area, home to the main road, Water Street, was designated a National Historic District in 1976.



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Photo: Joe Rebello / Getty Images

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Staunton, Virginia

The birthplace of Woodrow Wilson was officially founded in 1747, though the area was settled about 15 years earlier. One of its most famous attractions? American Shakespeare Center's Blackfriars Playhouse, a re-creation of the playwright's famous Blackfriars Theatre in London. Staunton's Main Street was the first in Virginia to be awarded the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Great American Main Street Award.