

America's 10 Best Outdoor Towns

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Salida, Colorado

It's sunny more than 300 days of the year in Salida, Colorado, a meteorological marvel that adds to those of geology. Rearing up from the Rocky Mountain hideout are more than 15 peaks topping 14,000 feet, while foaming all around is the legendary 150-mile stretch of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area. Salida has become the epicenter for

whitewater paddling action in the West, with not only the natural class III and IV rapids on the Arkansas but also two municipal playholes in the town's own artificial park. One of the Salida calendar highlights is the [FIBark](#) festival, which stands for First in Boating on the Arkansas River and happens every June. Fat-tire enthusiasts take advantage of the fact that the 2,500-mile Great Divide Mountain Bike Route passes through the valley floor while hikers hoping to bag a "14er" store up on calories at [Bongo Billy's Salida Cafe](#) (719-539-4261) and [Amicas Pizza](#) (719-539-5219). Steeds stay at the [Beddin' Down Bed, Breakfast and Horse Hotel](#) (800-470-1888).

Boone, North Carolina

The tallest mountain in the East lies not in Vermont, New Hampshire or Maine but near Boone, North Carolina. It's 6,684-foot Mount Mitchell, a centerpiece of the Pisgah National Forest and Blue Ridge Mountains, whose valleys hide hip little hiking towns like this one. Appalachian State University attracts outdoorsy students to Boone, where you're as likely to find a latte ([Espresso News](#), 828-264-8850) as a low-key country restaurant with fried chicken ([Dan'l Boone Inn](#), 828-264-8657). Paddlers hit the Nolichucky and French Broad Rivers for class III and IV rapids ([Mountain Adventure Guides](#), Erwin, Tenn., 866-813-5210) while mountain bikers wheel along the 18-Mile Ride ([Magic Cycles](#), 828-265-2211). There's even skiing here at [Sugar Mountain Ski Resort](#) (800-784-2768) and a handful of other small resorts. For a classic adventure, tackle the 40-mile stretch of the Appalachian Trail that runs through here; even in the summer, temperatures remain refreshingly cool.

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Livingston, Montana

Hollywood loves Livingston, having unpacked its cameras several times for major motion pictures—including "A River Runs Through It"—in this Montana town of

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7,000. Still, Hollywood hasn't spoiled Livingston; though well-known artists and writers have settled here, the place retains its Western charm and authentic connection to the outdoors. The angler-friendly Yellowstone River runs along the southeastern side of town, while Yellowstone National Park sits just 60 miles south. More than 2,000 miles of trails spider-web through the adjacent Gallatin National Forest, and the state's tallest mountain, 12,799-foot Granite Peak, is found in Livingston's backyard of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. Finally, prodigious snowfall makes for excellent skiing and riding at Bridger Bowl, a 30-mile drive, and cross-country skiing and snowshoeing just about anywhere. Visit [Dan Bailey's Fly Shop](#) (406-222-1673) for fishing tips, Timber Trails (406-222-9550) for hiking and biking gear and [Chico Hot Springs Resort](#) (406-333-4933) for a place to sleep—it's a rustic lodge with a dash of Hollywood.

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