



## EDITOR'S PICK: THE NORTHEAST Burlington, Vermont

**PLAYGROUND:** Burlington's Community Boathouse offers rentals, tours, and fishing charters on Lake Champlain.

**Metro population:** 165,200.

**Median household income:** \$49,882. **Median home price:** \$125,252.

**Location:** 72 miles south of Montreal and 185 miles northwest of Boston.

**Climate:** 79 and lovely in summer, 27 in winter; 33 inches of rain, 79 inches of snow, and 161 days of sunshine per year.

"THE GREAT THING ABOUT BURLINGTON IS THAT IT'S SO CLOSE TO Vermont." So goes the saying among folks who live outside of town. Carved into the hills above the Lake Champlain shoreline, in the shadow of the Green Mountains, Burlington is the only semiurban area in a state with the highest percentage of rural residents in the country. The town is the focal point for art, music, food, theater, and commerce. Yet you need only drive a few minutes beyond its limits to find yourself surrounded by lakes, crystal rivers, and trail-packed woodlands. "There's sailing, fishing, and kayaking right on the lake. You've got four world-class ski resorts [Stowe, Mad River Glen, Smugglers' Notch, and Sugarbush] within an hour or two, and the road biking and running right out your front door are incredible," says 32-year-old Ohio transplant Erich Finley, who came to the Burlington area eight years ago.

Finley works in the marketing department for a gardening-equipment manufacturer and drives a biodiesel turbo Mercedes station wagon. He epitomizes the typical Burlington resident: a well-educated young professional who moved here for the quality of life,

even if it meant forsaking a more lucrative career in a larger city. Not to say that there aren't jobs available. IBM employs almost 6,800 people, and the University of Vermont another 2,800. Tourism is a bustling year-round industry, and Burton Snowboards and Ben & Jerry's are among a handful of international corporations based here.

For some, the town's allure is the surprisingly vibrant cultural scene and nightlife. On a regular Friday evening, you can catch live bluegrass at the Radio Bean organic coffeehouse, an up-and-coming rock band in the pedestrian mall on Church Street, or the latest jam band at Nectar's diner on Main Street, where the best fries in town are served beneath gobs of turkey gravy and where Phish once had a regular gig before becoming the Second Coming of the Dead. The local hangover remedy, biscuits with herb-cream gravy, served at Penny Cluse Café, is often a necessity.

Just about anyone in town will tell you that the greatest drawback to Burlington life is the housing. Occupancy rates are high, and competition between students and locals is fierce for rental apartments in the old Victorian homes and two-story boardinghouses. Consider buying and refurbishing a Cape Cod house in the New North End section of the city; the mortgage payments will be about the same as the rent for a nice two-bedroom apartment downtown. Of course, you could try living outside of Burlington — but that would mean moving to Vermont. —Greg Melville