

The 50 Best Small Southern Towns
Charming, Livable Places Affording a Gentler Way of Life
Gerald W. Sweitzer and Kathy M. Fields

POPULATION: 8,9891

NEAREST CITIES: Knoxville, TN (75 miles)
Chattanooga, TN (74 miles)

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: \$30,000

COST OF LIVING: Average 30bdrm home--\$110,000
Average rent, 2-bdrm apartment--\$400
Cost-of-living comparison—9.3%

SALES TAX: 8.75%

PROPERTY TAX: Average 3-bdrm home--\$650



Crossville is situated amid the abundant rolling valleys, towering forests, crystal clear lakes, and imposing peaks of the majestic Cumberland Mountains and Plateau. Cool temperatures prevail in the summer thanks to the 2,000-foot elevation, but winters are mild. The climate makes this area attractive to new residents moving from either the north or the south.

Prior to 1805, all of Cumberland County was Native-American territory. In 1794, Francis Bailey, the son of an English banker, wrote of the area, “It is a fine, large plain, or natural meadow, containing many hundred acres and covered throughout its whole extent with a tall, rich grass surrounded on every side by the neighboring mountains and watered with several fine springs which flow from one end to the other.” This early description captures the essence of the area, now home to numerous major resort communities that boast amenities like golf courses and tennis clubs and lakes for fishing, swimming, and boating.

John W. Dodge, known to many as the “Johnny Appleseed” who planted 42,000 apple trees, settled in this area in 1849. In 1856, Cumberland County was created. James Scott, proprietor of Scott’s Tavern, deeded forty acres of property to the new county on the condition that Crossville be named the county seat. Crossville was incorporated as a

town in 1901. The town celebrated its centennial anniversary in 2001 with a variety of special events.

Many of the downtown structures, walkways, and patios are composed of a unique buff-colored stone. This hard sandstone, found exclusively on the Cumberland Plateau, is called Crab Orchard stone, named after the oldest community in Cumberland County. The stone was used in the construction not only of numerous local government and commercial buildings but also of such national sites as the vice presidential residence in Washington, D.C., the Rockefeller Center, and Elvis Presley's pool at Graceland.

RECREATION

The nationally known Catoosa Wildlife Management Preserve, featuring 79,700 acres of state-owned woodlands, offers seasonal access for limited hunting of deer, turkey, boar, and other wildlife. The Cumberland Mountain Rustic State Park, which covers 1,700 timbered acres, provides cabins, a large swimming pool, a small lake for fishing and boating, a playground, tennis courts, ball fields, a golf course, campsites, and a restaurant.

Crossville Recreation Park is a forty-acre outdoor park with multiple-use fields, tennis and volleyball courts, a picnic area, and a walking trail. Crossville's 300-acre Meadow Park Lake is considered to be one of the best fishing lakes in the state. The Cumberland County Community Complex is the site of a recreational park with a playground, a picnic area, walking trails, and ball fields. This complex is also the venue for the annual rodeo and county fair.

According to *Golf Digest*, three of the top ten places to play golf in Tennessee are located in Cumberland County. Stonehenge Golf Course at Fairfield Glade resort was rated the number one course in Tennessee in 1995. There are six public eighteen-hole courses. Postcard-worthy views of the surrounding forested mountain ridges are common from the greens and fairways of many of the courses.

CULTURAL SCENE

The Cumberland County Playhouse opened in 1965 after a successful community fundraising effort; it is now the only major nonprofit professional performing arts resource in rural Tennessee. One of the ten largest professional theaters in rural America, it is also the top indoor tourist attraction in the Cumberland Mountains. The Playhouse draws more than 145,000 visitors annually for its young audience productions, comprehensive dance program, concert series, and touring shows on two indoors and two outdoor stages. Committed to the arts as an indigenous part of life in rural America, the theater regularly produces new works based on Tennessee and southeastern history and culture, and revives works with Appalachian themes.

The Cumberland Homesteads Tower and Museum tells the story of the Cumberland Homesteads, a local community that was built as part of President Roosevelt's New Deal during the 1930s to combat the effects of the Great Depression. The picturesque stone cottages in manicured settings are reminiscent of dwellings in the English countryside.

A group of early settlers established the first vineyards near the historic colony at Rugby (35 miles); the wines they produced won a number of gold medals at wine-tasting competitions in the 1880s. Today, two local wineries continue this early venture, still creating award-winning wines from the same vineyards.

Popular annual events include Crossville Depot Days in April, with arts and crafts exhibits and entertainment; Funtennial Saturday on Main Street in June, featuring a street fair, parade, music, dancing, crafts, and a barbecue cook-off; the annual rodeo in July at the Cumberland County Community Complex; the Cumberland County Fair in August at the same location; and the Parade of Christmas Trees in December in downtown.

Residents of Crossville who are seeking city attractions are only a couple of hours from the popular aquarium adjoining the renovated historic downtown Chattanooga and the many cultural offerings on the University of Tennessee campus in Knoxville.

MAIN STREET

Favorite local restaurants include the Bean Pot Restaurant, a good family eatery; Gondola Pizza and Steak House, an Italian-Greek restaurant with excellent hamburgers; and Vegas Steakhouse. Halcyon Days serves yummy sweet potato fries, and Mitchell's Drug Store on Main Street in downtown is known for its tasty milkshakes. M.C.'s Ice Cream and Sandwich Shop is located in the Village Green mini-mall at the Fairfield Glade resort.

The thriving downtown shopping district offers a small-town array of specialty shops and local department stores. The Cumberland General Store, an old-fashioned general merchandise retailer, sells items from the past including quilt racks, lanterns, and coffee grinders. Crossville's restored 1920s-style downtown train depot, where famed Sgt. Alvin York said his good-byes en route to his World War I exploits, now contains a gift shop featuring railroad memorabilia. Mountain crafts associated with the Cumberland Mountains are readily available in local stores; you can find quilts, pottery, baskets, hand-carved wood items (birds, toys, walking canes), soap, and candles. Forty outlet stores at Factory Stores of America Outlet Center sell brand merchandise at discount prices. Two local wineries, Stonehaus Winery and Highland Manor Winery, have produced award-winning wines for over a decade.

HOUSING

Housing choices range from modest ranch styles priced from the low \$60,000s to sprawling estates selling for \$350,000. Recent house building has been dominated by two categories; ranch style from 1,200 to 1,600 square feet in the \$80,000 to \$90,000 range and 1,600- to 1,900-square-foot houses in the \$95,000 to \$115,000 range. Fairfield Glen, the largest resort, provides permanent accommodations to over 5,000 residents on 12,700 acres. Options include condominiums starting as low as \$60,000. Prices average \$125,000 for a modest three-bedroom, two-bath home; \$190,000 for a 2,800-square-foot three-bedroom, two-bath home; and \$220,000 for an exclusive three-bedroom, two-bath home on a lake with a boat dock.

ECONOMICS

Number of employers with fifty or more employees—19

The major industry is manufacturing—apparel, automotive equipment, baked goods, canned goods, ceramic tile, stone and wood products, charcoal, and rubber products. Large employers include Flower's Snacks of Tennessee (400 employees); Crossville Rubber (250 employees); Aristokraft (200 employees); and Manchester Tank (190 employees). Avery Dennison, a large local employer, recently discontinued local operations, but the town is coping with the plant closing. The tourism and retirement

industries are growing steadily as a result of the golf and lake resorts in the area and from the sales of second homes.

EDUCATION

High Schools—1; Elementary schools (K to 8)—8; Private Schools—2

Roane State Community College in nearby Harriman offers continuing education classes and courses for transfer to the state university system. Crossville is thirty minutes from the main campus of Tennessee Technological University (8,500 students) in Cookeville, where students can obtain a bachelor's or doctorate degree in different fields of engineering.

HEALTHCARE

Cumberland Medical Center—202 beds; Physicians—64; Dentists—22

Cumberland Medical Center, a not-for-profit regional facility, was named one of the Top 100 Hospitals in America for 1998 by HCIA, Inc. The facility features a 24-hour physician-staffed emergency department, surgery, outpatient services, cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation, and a regional cancer center. Five nursing homes and two assisted-living facilities are located in the county.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Twenty Christian denominations are represented. The nearest synagogues are located in Knoxville and Chattanooga.

STAYING CONNECTED

The *Crossville Chronicle* is a local newspaper published triweekly. The *Glade Sun* (for Fairview Glade residents) and the *Cumberland Times* are published weekly. The daily Knoxville and Chattanooga newspapers are delivered to the Crossville area. Several cable television operators and local AM and FM stations serve the area. Local internet service is available. Network affiliate television stations are located in Chattanooga and Knoxville. There are five local bookstores, including two Christian bookstores.

GETTING THERE

Crossville is located in the eastern part of central Tennessee, north of Chattanooga and west of Knoxville. It is two miles from I-40 at US 127. Daily commercial airline service is available at the Knoxville and Chattanooga airports. Airlines such as AirTran, Comair, Northwest, and United serve Knoxville, while American, Delta, Northwest, and US Airways serve the Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport. Crossville Memorial Airport, a general aviation airport with a 5,400-foot paved and lighted runway, provides full aircraft service and maintenance, aircraft rental, flight instruction, and charter flights.



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