

10 Things to Consider When Relocating After 50

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Deciding on a new city to call home after 50 can be best approached if you think like an informed consumer. That means doing your research. You are effectively buying an area's offerings of a new lifestyle, and your new place in life.

You may be a grandparent who wants to live near grandchildren. You may be a divorced or married empty nester, or a solo ager with freedom to choose any city. That freedom presents many opportunities, along with challenges in making your final selection.

I've been developing a planning guide called Project MNP (My New Place) to help fellow 50+ers find a new place in life, including a new city if relocation is a goal. Short term rentals, AirBnB sublets and other arrangements can let you test out a place and live like a local, not a tourist. However, this becomes cost prohibitive if you have multiple cities in mind. To shorten your list, start with an online search.

Here are 10 of my top recommendations for relocating after 50:

1. Get the most out of your Google searches. Be kind to yourself by keeping your online research of cities under a tight focus. You'll avoid information overload and unproductive hours online. The goal is to curate the best information from the sources that provide transparency.

2. Ask a smart speaker for help. [Alexa](#) is becoming a trusted companion to older adults. This type of smart speaker and others like it (hands-free, digital voice-activated assistants) could be your time saver in finding quality data about your city of interest.

In a recent CityLab article, [Have a Question About Your City? Ask Alexa](#), assistant editor Linda Poon described how local governments are starting to use smart speakers as "an easy way to connect people to services and information." As Poon noted, local governments can communicate with residents and provide a city's crime data, neighborhood arrests, zoning and more.

3. Be aware of the difference between city data based on transparency and destination marketing. Convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce, tourist boards, city magazines, local hospitality industries and even local real estate companies have a common objective. They're in the business of destination marketing. You will find beautifully styled websites, photos, videos and ads that promote the area as the ideal place to live, visit, work, invest and run a business.

These organizations will serve you well when you are looking for inspiration about the city's best offerings. However, no city is 100 percent ideal. You will need to look elsewhere for full disclosure on the city's weaknesses, or at least realities. For example, a convention and visitors bureau will not boast that its city has a high crime rate, an opioid crisis, an affordable housing shortage or few services for older adults.

4. Resist the temptation to compare your current city to your future city. Over the years I have met fellow NY-LA transplants. We regularly compared the two cities. One would favor the home city, and complain about living in the other. Looking back, I now see how this mindset can lead to becoming perpetually miserable with a relocation. Cities have their own unique quirks and qualities. Embrace the change, and look forward to your new lifestyle.

5. Rely on city rankings, but not just one. City rankings can make your research much easier, with caveats. There are multitudes of rankings out there, each with different results. And you may not find just one city ranking list with the methodology and sources that would match your unique preferences in finding the ideal place for you.

Keep focused on what matters most for what you want and need. Here are several examples of popular city rankings, each with different methodologies and results:

U.S. News and World Report's 2018 Best Places to Live methodology is based on good value, desirable place to live, strong job market and quality of life. (The summary mentions millennials.)

U.S. News and World Report's 2019 Best Places to Retire methodology is based on happiness of local residents, housing affordability, tax rates and health care quality.

Milken Institute on Aging's 2017 Best Cities for Successful Aging ranks large and small cities separately.

6. Go hyperlocal. If you are considering a move to a large urban area with distinctly different neighborhoods, you may have to dig deeper than the major newspapers and social media channels to get a feel for the city.

In Washington, D.C., where I live, I tune in to the Twitter feeds of the D.C. police department, local news stations, the Capital Weather Gang from The Washington Post and Facebook pages for neighborhood groups.

Neighborhood newspapers are usually free and accessible online and cover local news that never hits the pages of large papers. Patch is a free online hyperlocal news platform that serves over 1,200 communities nationwide. Think of these small newspapers and sites as your magnifying glass to view neighborhoods within a large city.

7. Learn how much the city cares about older residents. When choosing a new city to call home after 50, we need to ask ourselves: Does the city pay attention to our demographic? What does the area have now, and what is being planned, for older residents?

Atlanta sets a good example. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Aging in Atlanta provides online news and information for older residents. State and city aging services there are numerous, including the Georgia Department of Human Services' Division of Aging Services and its Atlanta Regional Commission Aging Division.

Research a city and state government's Department of Aging. Look into issues that are important to you.

8. Walk the city, virtually. Before you visit, get to know streets and residential neighborhoods using Google Maps. Type in an address, and in most cases, you can view streets and sidewalks.

9. Become a local resident online, ahead of your visit. Meeting like-minded people virtually will help you develop a sense of belonging. At the same time, you may also find that you don't relate to locals. Exploring this early on can save you from making a mistake about your move. You can sign up online for meetup groups and receive newsletters for neighborhood associations, religious organizations and many other local community events. Let your interests guide you.

10. Listen to your emotions and instincts . Choosing a city to live in is an emotional decision, especially later in life. After all of the online research and local visits, the only task left to do is to have an honest discussion with yourself. You will be the one to find your own place.

By [Holly Lawrence](#)

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