



Best Towns 2008

Ogden, UT

Mountain West

By: [Katie Arnold](#)

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THE REVIVAL: A hundred years ago, this Utah outpost—45 minutes north of Salt Lake, in the foothills of the Wasatch—was a hopping railroad junction. But after the diesel engine and I-15 came through, in the '50s and '60s, Ogden faded into anonymity as a blue-collar manufacturing burg with gobs of overlooked natural assets.

Soon after 38-year-old mayor Matthew Godfrey took office, in 2000, he hatched a mad plan: Transform Ogden into the adventure-sports capital of America. "Boulder pales in comparison to what we have," says Godfrey, who took an "If you build it, they will come" approach and green-lighted the construction of two kayak parks (the Class III–IV Ogden and Weber rivers flow through town); a paved trail network; and a rec center complete with climbing wall, vertical wind tunnel, and standing surf wave. Soon after, ski-brand giant Amer moved its HQ to town, along with 20 other outdoor-gear makers. Next up: a year-round, holographic ice tower (the brainchild of climbing legend and Ogden native Jeff Lowe), aquatic centers, and a velodrome. For now, Ogden is unpretentious and adrenalinized. And, unlike in Boulder, you can still nab a midcentury brick bungalow right in town for less than 200 grand.

THE LIFE: When more than nine inches of snow hits the mountains, Ogden rings the "powder bell" and locals hightail it to uncrowded Snowbasin, 20 minutes away. Come summer, mountain bikers

hammer the Shoreline Trail's 20 miles of foothill singletrack. The Bingham Cyclery's café/bakery, on the Ogden River, is the rendezvous point for a.m. caffeine and weekend rides.

THE WORD ON THE STREET: OGDEN

"Don't tell too many people about it."

—JERYL DETMER, SUBSCRIBER