

Veteran Best Job Locations

Top 10 Cities as of Sep 2012

For most active-duty military personnel, where to call home is a decision largely left up to their branch of service. Though troops' desires about where they'd like to be based are taken into account, the needs of the mission are paramount in determining where military employees are based.

When they decide to separate, for many veterans it will be first time they have to seriously consider where they'd like to live and work. That can be a daunting process, especially if they are looking for a city where costs are relatively low, and still offers plenty of employment opportunities.

With these considerations in mind as well as a dozen other criteria, including climate, number of veteran-owned businesses and military pension taxes, USAA and Military.com recently compiled a list of the 10 Best Places for Military Retirement, presented in the gallery below. The list has been updated to include more current unemployment rates for each city, based on June 2012 unemployment rate data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics list of 372 cities at <http://www.bls.gov/web/metro/laummtrk.htm>.

- **1. Oklahoma City**

Oklahoma City excelled in numerous categories to earn its top spot on the list. The area is home to a high number of jobs that require skill-sets learned in the military and boasts one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country at only 5 percent. Oklahoma City also is home to a large number of veteran-owned businesses and numerous federal jobs. In addition, many companies in the area recently have been awarded large defense contracts. Military retirees can take advantage of the excellent amenities offered at the four military bases in the Oklahoma City area, along with a local VA medical center. While the area offers affordable living and housing, one drawback is that the state of Oklahoma does tax military pensions.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	1,228,100
Median Home Price	\$119,000
Unemployment Rate	5 percent

Federal Pension Taxed	Yes
Military Base Proximity	Local
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Government Medical Aviation

- **2. Norfolk, Va.**

The Norfolk area boasts high scores in all of the military-specific employment categories. This area has a large number of federal jobs as well as a high number of employment opportunities in other industries seeking military skills. The Norfolk area also stands out for a significant number of defense contract awards. Military retirees can enjoy local access to quality base amenities and a VA hospital. The relatively milder climate and affordable housing options also make Norfolk an attractive place to live and work. Compared to other top places in our study, however, the area has a slightly higher unemployment rate and does tax military pensions.

Category	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	1,672,800
Median Home Price	\$204,700
Unemployment Rate	6.7 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	Yes
Military Base Proximity	Local
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Defense Engineering Aviation

- **3. Richmond, Va.**

Richmond's No. 3 spot on the list can be attributed to its high scores for federal employment opportunities and a substantial number of military skill-based jobs, in addition to a significant number of defense contractors. Military retirees also have access to a local VA medical center and military base amenities that are top-notch. As an added bonus, Richmond boasts a low sales tax, which helps retirees make their dollars go further. The state, however, does tax military pensions. Keeping Richmond just shy of the top spot on our list is its relatively low score in our small business category, meaning that it may be more difficult for retirees to start their own small business.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	1,243,400

Median Home Price	\$195,400
Unemployment Rate	6.6 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	Yes
Military Base Proximity	21 miles
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Government Defense Protective/Emergency Services

- **4. Austin, Texas**

Located in the heart of Texas, Austin boasts very high scores for federal employment, defense-contract awards and military skill-based jobs, though the area has lower rates of small and veteran-owned businesses. Even with a higher-than-average sales tax rate compared to other places on the list, the Austin area still ranks as one of the more affordable due to accessible housing and no state tax on military retirement pay. Military retirees can access high-quality military base amenities within about an hour's drive, though the area does not have a VA medical facility. Residents also can enjoy the recreational, cultural and educational benefits of the University of Texas and typically warm weather for much of the year.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	1,708,100
Median Home Price	\$189,600
Unemployment Rate	6.4 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	No
Military Base Proximity	57 miles
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Engineering Government Defense

- **5. San Antonio**

Also known as "Military City, U.S.A.," this large Texas metro stands out as a great place for military retirees to begin their second careers in a warm climate. Though the San Antonio metro area has relatively fewer federal jobs than Austin, it scores even higher for defense contract awards and jobs that are a good fit for military skills. Living up to its nickname, San Antonio boasts high-quality military base amenities and offers a local VA hospital. The area also has solid affordability scores and helps military retirees' pay go farther because of no state tax on their military retirement pay, despite the relatively higher sales tax.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
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Population	2,091,800
Median Home Price	\$151,000
Unemployment Rate	7.3 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	No
Military Base Proximity	Local
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Defense Government Aviation

- **6. Madison, Wis.**

Madison's rank on the overall Top 10 list can be partly attributed to its low unemployment rate and overall affordability with low sales tax, lack of state tax on military retirement pay and lower housing costs. The area scored much better than average for the number of federal jobs, as well as having an economy that includes a large number of jobs requiring skills former military men and women can provide. Madison also has a local VA medical center, though the closest military base is an hour and a half away. Relative to many of the other Top 10 places, Madison has a harsher climate in terms of weather and small business opportunities.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	564,100
Median Home Price	\$223,500
Unemployment Rate	5.5 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	No
Military Base Proximity	91 miles
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Government Engineering Medical

- **7. Philadelphia**

The City of Brotherly Love stood out in the overall Top 10 list for federal employment, defense contract awards and military skill jobs, making it a haven for military retirees who want a civilian job even though the unemployment rate is higher than other places. The area also offers military retirees local access to a VA medical center and a nearby military base for commissary and post exchange amenities. While the area boasts zero state tax on military retirement pay, Philadelphia is generally less affordable than many of the other top places and offers fewer opportunities for the aspiring small business owner given its lower scores in the small business and veteran-owned business categories.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	3,949,400
Median Home Price	\$205,200
Unemployment Rate	8.9 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	No
Military Base Proximity	Local
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Government Defense Medical

- **8. Raleigh, N.C.**

For those seeking pleasant weather to enjoy when not at work, Raleigh stands out for its temperate climate in addition to a very large number of jobs in industries relating to military skills. The area also received top marks for affordability, though there is some taxation on military retirement pay. Raleigh retirees have access to quality base amenities with relatively short drive and a nearby VA medical center. While the area has a lot to offer the military retiree, Raleigh does have a slightly higher unemployment rate when compared to other places on the list and ranks near average for the number of small businesses and veteran-owned businesses operating in the area.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	1,144,300
Median Home Price	\$177,600
Unemployment Rate	8 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	Partly
Military Base Proximity	46 miles
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Engineering Aviation Protective/Emergency Services

- **9. Omaha, Neb.**

Omaha offers many employment opportunities for military retirees seeking a second career. Many military contracts are awarded to businesses in Omaha, and former military men and women are likely to find a market that appreciates their skills. In addition, Omaha has the lowest unemployment rates on the list at 4.4 percent and scores high when it comes to affordability, though military pensions are taxed. Though Omaha has comparatively less access to a VA medical hospital and a harsher climate than many

other cities, it earns top marks for local base amenities and for the number of veteran-owned businesses operating in the area.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	851,000
Median Home Price	\$132,800
Unemployment Rate	4.4 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	Yes
Military Base Proximity	Local
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Government Defense Medical

- **10. Manchester, N.H.**

Manchester outshines many other places in the USAA/Military.com study with high scores for defense contract awards and an extremely low unemployment rate, though there may be fewer jobs in sectors related to military skills than other cities in the Top 10 ranking. There also are comparatively fewer small or veteran-owned businesses. However, this metro helps military retirees' wallets with no state tax on military retirement pay, very low or no sales tax, and affordable housing options. Military retirees also benefit from a local VA medical center and military base amenities are about a half-hour drive away.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Metro Statistics</u>
Population	402,100
Median Home Price	\$229,000
Unemployment Rate	5.4 percent
Federal Pension Taxed	No
Military Base Proximity	32 miles
Primary Job Sectors (In order of importance)	Engineering Defense Government

[Source: <http://jobs.aol.com/articles/category/homepage-for-heroes> David Schepp | 10 Sep 2012 ++]
