Oakland, California

Ranked by the New York Times as the #5 city in the world to visit in 2012 – the highest ranking city in North America.

The city’s top civic and business leaders speak out on Oakland, a world-class city.

“Oakland is fortunate to have an ideal Mediterranean climate, a revitalized Lake Merritt located in the center of the city, and wonderful parks. It has a museum dedicated to telling the story of California, a striking new cathedral, a notable observatory and many historic buildings, but it is really the cultural richness of Oakland – its arts, food and people – that makes this a special city.”

John S. Nelson, Partner
murakami/Nelson
Oakland ranked as the 5th most desirable destination to visit this year in "The 45 Places to Go in 2012." The story appeared in print in The Travel section of The New York Times on Jan. 8, 2012, and was posted online Jan. 6. Oakland placed between #4 London and #6 Tokyo in the coveted list and was the highest ranked North American city.

The New York Times isn’t the only publication to acknowledge Oakland. The following is a short list of some of the additional accolades that have been bestowed on our city:

- #2 – "Can-Do" City – Source: Newsweek, September 2011.
- #2 – Most literate city in California and 11th in the nation – Source: America’s Most Literate Cities, 2011.
- #4 – Strongest industrial market in the U.S. – Source: Cushman & Wakefield Green Building Opportunity Index, November 2011.
- #7 – Most literate city in California, 7th in the nation. – Source: America’s Most Literate Cities 2010, Central Connecticut State University, 2010.

"I think Oakland has a lot to offer visitors. Being ranked #5 as the city to visit in 2012 is a huge honor for residents like me who has lived and worked in Oakland for more than 25 years. Oakland is unique because it is the geographical center of the Bay Area and offers a wide variety of outdoor activities, cultural experiences, and recreational opportunities. With ideal weather and magnificent scenery, Oakland is a great place to visit. Oakland also boasts the Oakland Zoo, one of the top zoological parks in the country."

Dr. Joel Parrott, Executive Director and CEO
Oakland Zoo

"Oakland is a great place to visit for three reasons – the food choices are fabulous, the people are diverse and friendly, and the weather is lovely most of the year. I love living here for all those reasons."

Pat Kernighan
Oakland City Councilmember, District 2

In the News

"Our 134 parks and open spaces, 100 miles of bike-friendly lanes and more than 30 major cultural, music and arts festivals reflecting the over 120 different languages and cuisines of Oakland make Oakland a great destination. We are centrally located to the Bay Area, which is why thousands of people visit Oakland each year. Oakland is hot, hip and hometown to the world."

Jean Quan, Mayor
City of Oakland

"I think Oakland is a great place to visit. Oakland also boasts the Oakland Zoo, one of the top zoological parks in the country."

Dr. Joel Parrott, Executive Director and CEO
Oakland Zoo

"Oakland doesn’t really cater toward tourism but serves the day-to-day needs of everyone in the East Bay. I love watching people as though they have a purpose here, whether it’s shopping, dining or a business meeting. "

Jennie Ong, Executive Director
Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce

"Oakland is a great place to visit for three reasons – the food choices are fabulous, the people are diverse and friendly, and the weather is lovely most of the year. I love living here for all those reasons."

Pat Kernighan
Oakland City Councilmember, District 2

"Let me entertain you. These four words capture the charm, beauty and exuberance of the city that we call Oakland. From street vendors to street performers, elegant restaurants to cafes, your senses won’t be disappointed. Plays, concerts or a romantic stroll around the lake, sun worship or stargazing, Oakland is a playground for everyone."

David Tucker, Municipal Affairs Manager
Waste Management of Alameda County

"My family has been in Oakland for four generations, and that makes Oakland incredibly special for me. What makes Oakland special as a city are grassroots organizations like Oakland Heritage Alliance and the Coalition of Advocates for Lake Merritt. These organizations genuinely care about our environment and our natural resources."

"Oakland doesn’t really cater toward tourism but serves the day-to-day needs of everyone in the East Bay. I love watching people as though they have a purpose here, whether it’s shopping, dining or a business meeting."

Jennie Ong, Executive Director
Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce

FUN FACTS

- Lake Merritt is the largest saltwater lake within an American city and is the oldest officially declared wildlife sanctuary in the country, dating back to 1870.
- Two of the three authentic Italian gondolas in America are in Oakland and are used on Lake Merritt.
- Chabot Space & Science Center has three telescopes that can be used by the public, and has a partnership with the Smithsonian Institute that will enable it to showcase world-class exhibits.
- According to “Dance U.S.A.,” the Oakland Ballet was America’s most widely-toured ballet company over a 10-year period.
- Oakland International Airport was dedicated by Charles Lindbergh in 1927 and it was from that same airport 10 years later that Amelia Earhart departed on her fateful flight around the world.
- Oakland has the highest number of artists per capita in the country.
- Oakland is the largest producer of sourdough bread in California.
- Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks, who grew up in Oakland, was a vendor at the Oakland Coliseum and a bellboy at the Hilton Oakland Airport.
- Debbie Fields, the founder and former chairperson of Mrs. Field’s Cookies, was a foul line ballgirl for the Oakland As.
“Oakland is the heart of one of the most diverse and colorful regions of the world. There’s a realness and authenticity about this city that drew us in and made us want to root our business here.”

Danny Kennedy, Founder and President
Sungevity, Inc.

“As a city, we have a unique blend of cultural, artistic, and retail trailblazers. They make this an exciting city – a city full of opportunities to access the absolute cutting edge in food, clothing, art, and even outdoor experiences.”

Dan Cohen, Principal
Full Court Press Communications

“I was born and raised in Oakland and continue to live here and run my business in this magnificent city. I value the incredible diversity and beauty in landscape, people, business, culture, activities, and food, to just name a few. There are so many nuggets to be discovered and explored.

Shannon Pedder, President
BRAND: CREATIVE

“Oakland is one of the few places, that in close proximity, has so many cultural activities, from movies to theater and from concerts to great restaurants. They’ve made downtown Oakland a very exciting place to visit.

John Protopappas, President & CEO
Madison Park Properties

“I love Oakland for our unparalleled diversity reflected in vibrant and dynamic neighborhoods – each with unique character – that are the heartbeat of the city. It is an American experience like no other – and one that every family can enjoy. My children are especially excited to be living on the Oakland waterfront.”

Deanna Santana, City Administrator
City of Oakland

“The ambiance around Jack London Square and its people is inspiring. Oakland has a very responsive community, so the combination of its location and its people makes Oakland very special.”

Greg Schuyler, Owner
Celebrations on the Bay

“The people, the community, the creativity, and the entrepreneurial spirit are what make Oakland special to me. This is why I love Oakland.”

Steve Snider, District Manager
Downtown Oakland Association
Lake Merritt Uptown District Association

Produced and sponsored by the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
Photos courtesy of Visit Oakland