

The simple truth of the matter is that if there actually is a major crisis or disaster that leads to a prolonged societal collapse in the US, there really isn't going to be a "Good Place" to be. So, what we are looking for is the highest level of least bad we can achieve, and with careful planning and attention to certain factors it is possible to achieve a situation which is not only "survivable" but actually livable in even the worst case scenario. Obviously, where you choose to live will have an impact on your preparedness plans, so always keep that in mind.

First, you want to pick a place that allows you to maintain a normal, mainstream life before life as we know it comes crashing down. A lot of us are of the mindset that something catastrophic is inevitable, and history teaches us that this is indeed the case. I am becoming increasingly convinced that this is a sooner rather than a later probability, however it could conceivably still be years away. So in the meantime, you want to have reasonably convenient access to things like employment, education, cultural and extracurricular activities for your kids, modern medical facilities, shopping, and all the trappings of modern life. It is not yet time to run off and live in a cave isolated from the world (If that is your mindset, it doesn't make you "Wrong". But it doesn't make you a prepper either. It makes you a hermit!).

Related: [What's The Closest Natural Nuclear Bunker to Your Home?](#)

Ozark_fall_foliage_underHowever, when the fall arrives, large population centers are going to be rather dangerous on a number of levels. So it is wise to remove yourself from large cities. My suggestion in order to be able to have the best of both worlds is to choose a location in a rural setting between 70 and 100 miles from a small to mid-sized city. This distance allows you access to all the luxuries and conveniences, is within' a manageable commuting distance if you are tied to a professional career, but it also provides a fairly substantial degree of insulation from the worst of the Urban Dangers that will crop up quickly once the balloon goes up.

You also want to choose an area where food is produced, and where you can start making food producing improvements to your property. In short, you want good soil and enough water to grow gardens and water live stock. You want an area where livestock is produced and sustained on natural grazing and not in feed lots. You also want to be absolutely certain that there is plenty of easily accessible water for your drinking, cooking, and sanitary needs. There are many isolated areas in deserts and high mountains, but there is a reason these places were never settled extensively. That reason is that it is hard to come up with enough water to grow things, and the climate in many cases is too extreme to live in comfortably year-round. In a prolonged survival situation, you don't want to be dependent on cisterns and extremely deep wells, or on technology dependant delivery systems.

You will want to find an area where like-minded people live. This isn't as hard as it sounds. Most rural areas still have core values of self sufficiency. They are also pockets of old school knowledge that has been lost in the larger world. In an area like this, if you have something to contribute it will be much easier to find a group to band together with for mutual defense and support when the time comes. You will also find that in such areas there is a strong gun culture, and you will neither stand out nor be the sole armed protector should the need arise, and you won't be saddled with a bunch of suddenly armed newbies that don't have a clue, country boys and girls know how to use their guns!

Another consideration is proximity to nuclear power plants, proximity to military installations, distance from potential targets in a nuclear attack, and things of this nature. As concerns the power plants, all I'm going to say is Fukushima. As to military installations, the concern is always martial law, confiscations, conscriptions and so on, all the FEMA camp nightmares we have envisioned and

theorized about. I am not particularly concerned about nuclear war in the classic sense, and feel that EMP type weapons are a far more likely and devastating possibility, but terrorism is always a consideration and those guys are nuckin' futs and very hard to anticipate, so being too close to potential targets detracts from an areas desirability.

Related: Do You Live in the Death Zone? US Nuclear Target Map.

So, where are the best places to be?

1. My personal favorite is the Ozarks region of Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. This region provides many areas that are about the right distance from cities, have a good water supply, strong rural and conservative traditions, agricultural activity in the form of farming and ranching, and a history of subsistence farming. I wound up in the Ozarks almost by mistake, but have found much to love about the region, and many positive attributes from a prepper's perspective. There are a lot of preppers here, so finding likeminded folks to bond with is not difficult.

The Ozarks region

The Ozarks region, in green, is my top pick. Some of that is just personal preference, but there is much to commend the Ozarks from a prepper's standpoint.

2. My second Choice is the Appalachian region with a strong preference for the Great Smoky Mountains of North and South Carolina, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. These regions offer up similar benefits to the Ozarks region, and offer up a lot of good choices to live a nice life today and weather the potential coming bad times. Again, be sure that a given location meets the other criteria, particularly the distance from major population centers. The portions of the Appalachians passing through the North East may be a less desirable idea due to proximity to many larger cities, but even here pockets of desirable location can be found

When SHTF most experienced preppers know it's important to prepare to hunker down in place or get the jump on the masses and head for their bug out retreat that has been well prepared in advance. But for anyone still in the planning stages of strategic relocation, how do you decide where to relocate or where to buy your bug out retreat? In this article we'll talk about the criteria that are key to a good prepper location as well as how to ferret out the best small towns for preppers to live in.

Recommended Must Have Criteria for a Good Property Location

Everyone has their own idea of what their little piece of heaven should look like. For most preppers there are some recommended must have criteria. The more of these criteria your property has, the better you will be able to build a sustainable life before, during, and after SHTF.

Plenty of fresh water sources available on property and nearby areas

Good soil and accessibility to water for growing food and raising livestock

A moderate climate or one that you are fully prepared to live in without power.

Several hundred miles away from potential targets, nuclear power plants, and military installations

Property or at least a region where livestock can graze naturally

Land that is free of restrictions that might prevent you from living off-grid prior to or following SHTF such as state and local zoning, easements, HOA rules, etc.

What Makes the Best Small Town for Preppers?

Okay, we all know that most people cannot live in a vacuum and the lone wolf prepper mentality isn't going to cut it for most of us. This means we are going to need our neighbors during and after a SHTF event if we're going to survive long-term. It makes sense to include those people living in the small town around your ideal prepper property in your network. So, in addition to the above criteria for your property, what kinds of qualities make the best small towns for preppers to live in?

A town where you can live a relative normal life until SHTF

Relative proximity to conveniences such as medical treatment, employment, and other amenities.

Away from large cities and urban centers (the average person can travel up to 25-30 miles in 3 days)

Reasonably close enough if you need to commute

Look for a community of like-minded people

Values that are aligned or at least tolerant of your own values, morals, behaviors

Free of mining, drilling, commercial farms, factories, or other types of industries that could pollute the air, water, or ground.

Choosing the Best Town

Okay, so now that we know what we're looking for in a property and in the best small towns for preppers, below are some recommendations. Keep in mind that choosing a strategic location is a very personal decision and often times means prioritizing between desirable factors based on what your own needs are at the time.

This means someone with health problems that require continued maintenance may need to live closer to town than is suggested simply to have easier access to medical treatment prior to a SHTF event. If you aren't able to get further away from cities and urban centers or must stay close for one reason or another, you may need to ramp up security and defensive measures to balance things out.

For those who are more experienced and skilled with living off-grid, you can risk being further isolated. If your skills are still limited, you'll need to depend more on neighbors and small-town amenities before and after SHTF, so you'll want to stay closer.

The list of top 12 best small towns for preppers to live in given below is simply intended as a guideline to get you thinking about the areas and towns you may want to consider. It is definitely not a definitive list of best small towns for preppers to live in, nor is does it come close to including all the small towns you should consider for your strategic relocation. Your personal situation may lead you to remove or add other small towns from our list.

How to Narrow Down Your List of Small Towns

The first thing to do when you start your strategic relocation research is to narrow your search to the areas or regions that are the best for preppers to consider and suit your own lifestyle needs. To do this, you may want to ponder over several factors in addition to the ones mentioned above including:

Water Rights and Laws

Crime Rates

Climate and Weather

Population Density

Government Level of Intrusion

Gun Laws

Home Schooling Laws

Employment Opportunities
Alternative Energy Regulations
Political Climate
Business License Regulations
Health Code Laws (septic/sewer)
Disposal of Hazardous Materials and Untreated Waste Laws

Some of the issues above may be more important to you than others. Several of the issues will matter more in the months and years leading up to a SHTF and not as much after a SHTF event.

Top 12 Best Small Towns for Preppers to Live In

Pikeville Tennessee
#1. Pikeville, Tennessee

Pros

Approximately 2,000 residents
Low taxes, low property costs
Rainwater collection permitted
Longer growing season (260 days)
Great natural resources for off-grid living
Tennessee River area
Plenty of seclusion
Located in Sequatchie Valley-bonus

Cons

Less than 40 miles from Sequoyah Nuclear plant

Cedar City Utah
#2. Cedar City, Utah

Population 25-30,000 people
Great mountain views
Independent attitude

Thayer or Alton Missouri
#3. Thayer or Alton Missouri

Pros

About 2,000 residents
Southern Missouri location
Good fishing and hunting areas
Very gun friendly state

Most counties allow you to live in any type of home you wish outside city
Missouri encourages off-grid living; one of the best for off-grid living

Cons

Rocky soil may necessitate raised bed or alternative gardening methods

Sierra Blanca Texas

#4. Sierra Blanca, Texas

Pros

Land at less than \$1K per acre
Abundant solar exposure
Away from large cities
No building codes or DIY project restrictions

Corvallis Oregon

#5. Corvallis, Oregon

Pros

Oregon names one of the safest places to avoid natural disasters
One of better states for off grid living
Home to several off-grid communities (see below)

Cons

Tougher building and zoning codes in some counties (Osage is building friendly)
Recent reports indicate some Oregon counties fine residents for using rain barrels
May be too “yuppie” for some preppers
Gun laws can be restrictive

Hettinger North Dakota

#6. Hettinger, North Dakota

Pros

Only home to around 1,000 people
Southwest part of the state
Reasonably priced land

Cons

Colder winters; more snow

Carlin Nevada
#7. Carlin, Nevada

Pros

Around 2,000 people
Cheap land

Cons

Hot high desert

Pennsboro West Virginia
#8. Pennsboro, West Virginia

Pros

Less than 1,200 residents
Railroad history and 100-year-old tunnels
Friendly townsfolk
Good area for trapping and hunting
Land as low as 1K per acre

Cons

Zoning restrictions can vary significantly by town-do your research

West Liberty Kentucky
#9. West Liberty, Kentucky

Pros

Population about 3,000 residents
Eastern part of state
Some large tracts of land as low as \$500/acre

Mountain Home Arkansas
#10. Mountain Home, Arkansas

About 13,000 residents
In the Ozark Mountains

Red Oak Oklahoma
#11. Red Oak, Oklahoma

Around 500 people
Southeastern part of state
Land at less than 1K per acre

Olympic Peninsula Washington State
#12. Olympic Peninsula in Washington State

Pros

Gets cold in winter but survivable
Lots of fishing and wild game for food
Edible mushrooms and vegetation

Cons

Washington State has stricter building codes and laws.
Not as gun friendly as other states
Crime rates and drug activity high in some areas of state

Best Regions or General Areas to Consider

If you don't care for any of the best small towns for preppers to live in list we've chosen, below are some wider areas and regions you can consider.

The Appalachian Area

Near the mountains in Tennessee, Kentucky or West Virginia

Pros

Good opportunity for growing crops
Moderate weather climate all year
Good water availability
Stay west of the mountains to protect against the masses who may migrate from the east coast.
(Roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ of the population of the United States is in the eastern half of the country)

Cons

This is a popular area for preppers, so it may get more populated in coming years

The Ozarks Region

Oklahoma, Missouri, and Northwest Arkansas

Pros

- Good water availability (freshwater springs in Southern Missouri)
- Agricultural area
- Popular area for preppers

Cons

- Risk of drought
- Summers can be very hot

Low Population Areas of Florida

Pros

- Endless small lakes
- year round growing
- no winter weather worries
- large elderly population won't be able to flee
- The Gulf coast north of Tampa is less populated

Cons

Stay away from Orlando and right along the east coast, also South of Tampa to Everglades is densely populated.

Population density from south Florida will flee north so choose out of the path of looters and members of the golden horde

- Building an underground shelter is unlikely due to high water table

- Bugs and Insects are prevalent

In recent cases courts have ruled living off grid even with solar power and rainwater catchments violates the International Property Maintenance Code.

Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia

- Balance of affordable, defensible, self-sustainable properties
- Reasonable commute to D.C., far enough to not be targeted
- Government of West Virginia is very hands off
- Less oppressive regulatory government
- Slightly higher taxes
- Likeminded neighbors (freedom, individualism, self-sustaining lifestyles)
- Friendly firearm state

Southern States from Eastern Texas to Georgia

Pros

- Moderate weather and decent growing season
- Most areas friendlier regarding firearms laws
- East side of North Georgia mountains low taxes and few restrictions

Cons

- May have stricter laws in some areas regarding septic and water line hookups

South Louisiana

Pros

- Bountiful water supply with high groundwater
- Year-round crops
- Swamp provides access to food

Wisconsin along Lake Michigan

Pros

- Resources are abundant
- Short growing season
- Clean well water
- Inland lakes
- Hunting
- Kettle Moraine Forest has plentiful herbs (wild berries, asparagus, etc.)
- Organic dairy farmers for cheese, milk, etc.
- Excellent spring water

Cons

- Land isn't cheap

Consider Established Off-Grid Communities

Intentional Living Communities are not well-suited for everyone and most politically conservative preppers will want to steer clear of these areas simply due to the fact that residents are generally more left-leaning politically and some may even prohibit use of guns.

Keep in mind these communities are often “ruled” by a committee of residents so there may be rules or regulations you must agree to abide by in order to move in. But if are looking for a likeminded community in exchange for giving up control over your own property, then one of these may be a consideration for you.

Earthaven

- North Carolina Mountains, outside of Asheville

sustainable focused planned community
solar and hydro power
320 acres with more than 60 residents

Three Rivers Recreation Area in Central Oregon

more than 600 off grid homeowners
4,000-acre community
solar power electric, satellite TV, high speed internet
variety of price ranges for homes

Breitenbush

more than 50 permanent residents
off grid community
heated by geothermal wells

Taos, New Mexico

Greater World Community
1st Earthship division
solar powered
eco-friendly buildings of adobe or recycled tires
634 acres of green space

Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage

Northeast Missouri
More than 40 residents
sustainable living focus
simple living, renewable energy, homes from reclaimed materials

So, the best way to choose the best small towns for preppers to live in is to make a list of all the issues and criteria that are important for your family and the lifestyle you want to create and then narrow your list down to three or four areas or regions.

Once you have that shortlist, explore the areas to find the best small towns for preppers in those areas. Be sure to consider state and local zoning regulations and building codes to avoid buying property in an area with restrictions that will keep you from living as you wish prior to a SHTF event.
Ozark Mountains (MO, AR, OK)

Maybe it is because I grew up in this area, but I feel that it has everything you could need for a bug-out location. This hilly area is thick with white pine and oak trees, and the woods are teeming with wildlife. I hunt in this area every year and I have yet to go a single day without seeing at least one deer.

The streams have trout, bass, and catfish along with all kinds of other wildlife. Natural springs are plentiful and there is an extensive array of limestone caves. The soil is fairly rich and the climate is mild. You can have cold winters and hot summers, but nothing unbearable. The land is also inexpensive and sparsely populated.

The Ozarks do not have any major cities that would be targeted. These hills, forests, and caves make it easy to disappear. You can hide your camp where nobody would find it, and the caves and bluffs can make it easy to defend if needed. There are several areas that are miles from the closest road or trail. Also the gun and building permit laws are fairly loose in these areas.

There are only three minor downsides. The Ozark Mountains are somewhat close to the New Madrid fault line, but they are far enough away that damage would be minor. There are some military bases in central Missouri, but they are far enough that they should not be major concern. You will occasionally get tornados in this area, but they typically damage an isolated area.

Appalachian Mountains (GA, TN, KY, VA, NC, WV)

These mountain areas are ideal for many of the same reasons that the Ozarks are ideal. This area consists of plenty of bluffs, caves, and springs. It is heavily wooded and has an abundance of game in the forest and countless fish in the streams. Also the soil is typically rich and fertile.

Most of these states are lax on gun laws and building permits. However, certain parts of the Appalachians are close to large cities. You need to be selective about which sections of this mountain chain you consider. If you are far enough into the wilderness, the land is cheap and easy to defend. It is also incredibly easy to stay hidden. The weather is similar to the Ozarks, but the Appalachians have a greater potential for heavy snow as you move to higher elevations.

There are a few downsides to this area. The proximity to major cities could mean issues with foreign attacks or looters invading your property. The potential for heavy snow makes it a bit more difficult to get around. Certain parts of this area are close to the New Madrid fault line. The key to bugging out in the Appalachian Mountains is to find the right spot. The more remote, the better.

Rocky Mountains (CO, WY, MT)

The Rockies may be the most remote location in the lower 48 states. There are areas that are so remote that they have never been explored. You can travel dozens of miles in the Rockies without crossing any roads or trails. There is also a heavy population of elk, so you have the potential to feed your family for months with one hunt.

This area is pristine and has plenty of game animals and fish. Huge salmon and trout can be caught in the streams and provide a great food source. There are an abundance of springs and clean rivers. In lower elevations the soil is rich, but it gets rocky as you increase in elevation. The weather is ideal except for during the winter.

In this area the land is inexpensive. The laws on guns and building permits are pretty flexible. The jagged mountains and dense forests make it easy to vanish and also easy to defend your location. There are not many major cities to worry about in this area. Just steer clear of Denver and you are fine.

There are some major issues with this location. The winter weather is horrible. It is not uncommon for people hunting at high elevation to get stranded by unexpected snow storms. The temperatures are low and the snow can come down by the foot. Also there are some military installments in the area that could be targeted. Finally, predators can be a concern in certain portions of these mountains. Bears, wolves, and mountain lions mean that you are not at the top of the food chain.

Pacific Northwest (ID, WA, OR)

If you want to vanish off the face of the earth, what better spot than bigfoot country? In the lush rainforests of the Pacific Northwest you will find an abundance of wildlife and rich black soil. There is an ample supply of clean drinking water year round.

If you need to keep your camp hidden, the dense forests of this area are ideal. Some parts of this region are hilly and easy to defend, while others are flat and harder to defend. There are also several large cities in this area, so staying hidden is even more important.

Aside from the dense population in certain areas, there are other issues with this location. In parts of the Pacific Northwest it rains constantly. In others you will find a desert like climate that gets almost no rain. The snowfall in winter can get pretty intense and the temperature drops well below a comfortable point. You would also be very close to the Yellowstone Caldera, so the entire area could be wiped out at some point.

Probably the two biggest concerns are the laws and the land cost. Land can be very expensive in this region, so you will have to try to find a deal. In addition, this area has become flooded by liberal politicians in recent years. They are making prepping and survival much more difficult with the laws they have passed.

Swampland (AL, MS, LA)

The swamps are notorious for being an excellent place to dump a body. This also makes it a good location for bugging out. There is plenty of cheap, uninhabited land. You can easily stay hidden and can easily defend a camp if you choose the right location. The swamps are full of game and fish. You should have no problem finding dead trees for firewood, but finding dry wood could be an issue.

There are problems with this location as well. The heat and mosquitoes are very intense. There is also great risk of hurricanes and flooding, so you almost have to build a home or shelter on stilts. The weather also makes growing any crops very difficult, and clean water is hard to come by. There are also a few major cities that could be targeted.

Honorable Mention

The Dakotas could be considered a good area, but the winters are rough and the land is flat. It can be hard to hide or defend a camp. There are also several military installments that could be targeted.

Central Alaska is a survivalist's dream location, but it is so remote and harsh that most people would not survive. Between the negative temperatures and the bears, this area is awfully dangerous for a bugout spot.

Northern Maine is a great location. There are dense forests filled with Moose and other wildlife, but it is fairly close to Boston, NYC, and other major cities. That whole area could be targeted by another country.

Texas has areas that could make for a good bug-out location, but most of it is dry and flat making it hard to defend. It also borders Mexico which brings along its own challenges.