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# 10 Bargain Retirement Spots

2007 ANNUAL GUIDE

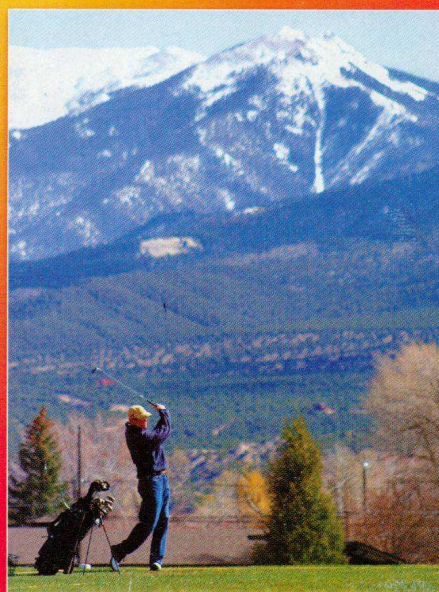
Great places to enjoy life without breaking the bank

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DAVID BUTOW—REDFUX FOR USNEWS



## Yucca Valley, California

Open spaces and starry nights make the desert bloom

**N**ow here's a retirement haven where the remedy for old-age aches and pains grows right outside your door. The yucca plant is a home remedy for arthritis—good news for retirees in Yucca Valley, where the plants are so prolific that the town is named for them. "Some parts of the desert are pretty bare, and you don't see a lot but rocks and sand, and that's not the case in Yucca Valley," Mayor Bill Neeb says. "We're in a part of the desert where we get a little more water."

Maybe, but no one is ever going to mis-

take this arid desert community, where many homes are accessible only by dirt roads, for soppy Seattle. "It gets hot, but we don't have the smog and the humidity

**Population:** 18,837  
**Median home value:** \$190,500  
**Age 65 or over:** 21 percent  
**Cost of living:** 1.7 percent above the U.S. average  
**Maximum state income tax:** 9.3 percent  
**State sales tax:** 7.25 percent

CALIFORNIA

Yucca Valley

most of the time," says Bob Connors, 78, who left Claremont, Calif., for Yucca Valley. His wife, Charlyne, has grown to love the desert. And as soon as the sun goes down, there's a pleasant drop in temperature. Even in July, the average low is in the 60s.

"Yucca Valley is a place that most people wouldn't have thought about or have seen," says Andrew Schiller, president and founder of the real-estate website NeighborhoodScout. "It combines a very reasonable [housing] price, especially by California standards, with a high proportion of senior amenities."

The Connors upgraded to a larger stucco house with a tile roof when they moved to Yucca Valley, only about a half-hour drive from pricey Palm Springs. "People can cash out their homes from places down in the city and buy something that is probably nicer and bigger and probably still have some money left over," says Neeb, who lauds Yucca Valley's 1.3 percent property tax rate. "To own an acre or several acres is not impossible here."

And when you're not strolling around your spread, you can take in the wide, open spaces at the nearby Joshua Tree National Park or San Bernardino Mountains.

Says Neeb: "People who want to sit on their porch in the evening and see the starry nights—this is the place to do that."