

## Instructions

Pick your favorite talking points and share them with friends, family, colleagues and visitors. Incorporate these phrases where you can:

**City-meets-nature**  
**Year-round amenities**  
**High-value lifestyle**

**Manageable urban environment**  
**Authentic and accessible**

Don't forget to champion Columbia by adding your own spin! Customize all of these talking points with your favorite features.

## City meets nature in a year-round, high-value lifestyle

*Nurture your soul year-round with a diverse array of world-class amenities.*

- Between Lake Murray and our three rivers, the Columbia region boasts more than 650 miles of freshwater shoreline, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the U.S., world-class bass fishing, three rivers with natural whitewater rapids, 50+ miles of walkable shoreline, and a year-round climate. You can enjoy a resort lifestyle minutes from downtown.
- The Columbia region boasts one of the top 10 national parks in the country and the only one in South Carolina. With the shortest drive time from a metropolitan area of any national park in the country, Congaree offers an incredible ecosystem with dozens of champion trees, the Southeast's largest intact old-growth bottomland hardwood forest and its annual display of synchronous fireflies. Additionally, Harbison State Forest - another hidden gem just beyond downtown - is the largest urban green space within any city limits in the Eastern US.
- Riverbanks Zoo and Garden - a top 10 zoo in the country - welcomes millions of visitors each year with over 2,000 animals in natural habitat and numerous family fun opportunities.
- The Midlands is home to the University of South Carolina Gamecocks, which compete in the Southeastern Conference, the highest level of athletics competition in major college sports. Fan support for the University's 21 athletics teams is among the best in the nation, ranking in the Top 25 in attendance in many sports.
- Whether spring, summer, fall or winter, sports fans in the Midlands can attend a variety of sporting events, including college and high school sports, minor league baseball and other major sporting events such as the NCAA Championships, professional fishing tournaments and semi-pro soccer.
- Columbia is the birthplace of the pimento cheeseburger and expertly serves other southern staples at year-round, outdoor, farm-to-table events at places like City Roots - SC's first urban farm. Renowned chefs from NYC, DC, Charleston and more are flocking here to be a part of our heirloom-inspired food scene.
- The Columbia region has more than 140 pieces of public art that delight all who experience them, along with one of the Southeast's fastest-growing arts and cultural scenes.

### Bottom Line

*Columbia is uniquely positioned with 650 miles of freshwater shoreline just minutes from a thriving capital city center. Residents enjoy robust water recreation, year-round spectator sports, a nationally recognized zoo, 17+ entertainment districts, and chef-driven dining - all within minutes of home.*

# South Carolina's smartest city provides lifelong learning

*The low cost of living and abundance of higher education options provide lifelong learning for all ages.*

- Columbia is proud to be South Carolina's smartest city with the highest percentage of residents holding a graduate or professional degree - the highest in the state.
- With 12 institutions of higher education - including one of the oldest public institutions in the county - and over 50,000 students, you may come to Columbia to earn a degree, but with a thriving technology industry and an emerging entrepreneurial community, you can graduate right into a promising career.
- Our city harbors some of the best museums and libraries in the country with three national medal winners from Institute of Museum and Library Services - the Richland Library in 2017, the Columbia Museum of Art in 2016 and EdVenture Children's Museum in 2011.
- Columbia fuses small-town hospitality with international culture and presence. We are a city that speaks 90 languages from almost all of the recognized nations around the world.

## Bottom Line

*With 12 higher education institutions, the National Advocacy Center, a critical military training center in Fort Jackson, a plethora of museums, a world-class library and more, Columbia offers stimulating lifelong-learning for all ages.*

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## The perfect combination of economic stability, entrepreneurship and livability

*With our accessible culture and strong economic foundation, you can do more than make an incredible life - you can make your mark.*

- We're South Carolina's most racially diverse major city with the highest percentages of Black, Asian, and Hispanic residents - part of what makes this region an ideal home for people from every background.
- When you cross a capital city with the state's largest university, you get big ideas, vitality and a creative culture that's palpable. Columbia is a vibrant city-region with a thriving cultural scene, a diverse network of neighborhoods, walkable districts, historic charm, a lush riverfront and abundant outdoor recreation.
- Our strong public sector provides economic stability while our entrepreneurial spirit means continuous innovation, and that makes Columbia the perfect place to build a business, grow a career or nurture a new skill.
- The entrepreneurial success rate in Columbia is one of the strongest in the nation because of the low cost of living, abundance of resources and qualified workforce. That's why we weren't surprised when we were named one of the "50 Best U.S. Cities for Starting a Business in 2020" by Inc. Magazine's Surge Cities list.
- You can literally build a life in Columbia - our city has been ranked by Forbes as one of the most affordable places to own a home.
- Thanks to business leaders who are approachable and accessible, community movements that are open to all, and young professional groups who are engaged and welcoming, anyone can have a hand in shaping our future.

## Bottom Line

*Columbia is the place where you can transform your "to do's" into "ta-da's" — all without making a move.*

# BONUS BRAGS

Share these brags, boasts and best-ofs with everyone you know.

## 2020

- **#1** - Columbia was named the **Cooldest Up-and-Coming City** by United Airlines' Hemispheres Magazine
- **#1** - Columbia is the **smartest city in SC** - 12.1% of residents hold a graduate or professional degree, the highest in the state.
- **#1** - Led by its nationally recognized freshman seminar University 101, The University of South Carolina earned the **No. 1 spot among public universities for first-year experience**. (U.S. News & World, 2020).
- **#1** - Congaree National Park is the **closest National Park to a metro area** in the U.S., with just a 20-25 minute drive from downtown
- **#1** - The University of South Carolina's **online graduate nursing program and online graduate nursing program for veterans** are both ranked as the best in the nation among public universities. Several other program offerings were also highly ranked. (College of Education's online graduate program #22 among public universities and #17 for its online educational administration program). (U.S. News and World Report, 2020)
- **#1** - The University of South Carolina is the **nation's oldest continually operating public university**.
- **#5** - Ranked as one of Realtor.com's **top five markets for real estate in 2020**, expected to see substantial home sales and price growth. (Realtor).
- **Top 3** - Colonial Life Arena makes UofSC one of the **top three colleges for major concerts**, featuring superstar acts like Elton John, Ariana Grande, and Red Hot Chili Peppers
- **#5** - Columbia ranked the fifth best place to **settle down after getting married** based on a recent study by Destify. The study ranked cities based on median household income, median home value, number of newlyweds, the cost of raising a child, and the number of restaurants and dining options. (Ranked #1 In South Carolina, 2020)
- **Top 10** - Lake Murray was named a **Top 10 Place to Boat and Live** for its scenery, cost of living and proximity to downtown Columbia by *Boating Magazine*.
- **#10** - Columbia has been ranked the 10th **best spot for a weekend getaway in the South** by *Country Living*. (2020)
- **#20** - Columbia Metropolitan Airport has been ranked among the **Top 20 small airports globally for on-time departures**. (Cirium, 2020)
- **Top 20** - Lake Murray was featured as one of **"20 Rad Vacation Rentals for 2020"** (USA Today)
- **#22** - A leader in teaching and research excellence, the University of South Carolina ranks as the **No. 22 flagship university** in the nation (U.S. News and World Report, 2020).
- **Top 25** - Congaree National Park's Boardwalk Loop Trail was **named one of the Best Accessible Trails in America** by *Outside* (2020)
- **#34** - Columbia ranked #34 among **America's Best Small Cities** - BestCities.org
- **#42** - **50 Best U.S. Cities for Starting a Business** in 2020 by through Inc. Magazine's Surge Cities list (# 6 for net business creation; #20 for wage growth; #34 for population growth)
- **#56** - US News and World Report ranked the Columbia #56 on list of **Best Places to Live**
- **10,000** - The National Advocacy Center **welcomes over 10,000 attorneys and staff** from the U.S. Department of Justice's Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys each year
- In 2020, Columbia and Lake Murray will play **host to the USA Bass World Championships**, with thousands of attendees from 39 countries.

## 2019

- **#1** - Benedict College was named HBCU Digest's 2019 HBCU of the year. (HBCU.com)
- **#1** - The South Carolina Honors College is ranked as the nation's best public honors college
- **#1** - Undergraduate International Business program for 20 consecutive years; #1 Graduate International Business program; #1 Graduate International MBA - in the top 3 overall for 29 consecutive years. (U.S. News & World Report)
- **#1** - UofSC has **47 nationally ranked academic programs**, more than any other university in the state (U.S. News 2019).
- **#4** - Columbia is #4 among the **Top 10 Cities Where Millennials are Moving**, according to SmartAsset.
- **#5** - Columbia's ranking amongst **up-and-coming US tech cities**, according to CBRE research.
- **#7** - The Riverbanks Zoo was named #7 **best zoos in the country** by USA TODAY Readers' Choice ranking. (May 2019)
- **#25** - UofSC is the #25 **flagship university** in the U.S. News rankings (2019 U.S. News rankings of College Board designated flagships).
- **Top 35** - The Brookings Institute identified Columbia as one of **thirty-five metropolitan areas ripe with potential for growth and innovation** (Brookings Institute).
- **#68** - Ranked as a **top city for economic advancement** in the next decade by LendEdu
- National Geographic Travel named Columbia one of the **Best Small Cities in the U.S.**
- **Top 1%** - UofSC is in the top 1% globally of **patenting universities**
- U.S. News named UofSC a **"Best Value School"** in the 2019 rankings (No. 145).
- **\$278,600,000** - University of South Carolina's **record-breaking sponsored award total**.
- **143,000+** - the number of comic books housed at UofSC's Thomas Cooper Library, making them home to the **largest comic book collection in the world**. The collection is valued at ~\$2.5 million. (comicbook.com)

## 2018

- **#1** - Smithsonian Magazine named Congaree National Park the **Best Place in North America to See Synchronous Fireflies** (2018)
- **#1** - The South Carolina Honors College is ranked as the **nation's best public honors college** (Public University Press, 2018)
- **Top 5** - The 5 **Best (and Most Affordable) Places to Travel** (2018 PureWow)
- **#7** - Columbia named the #7 **best places in the country to start a career** by WalletHub.com based on factors such as entry-level jobs, starting salaries, job growth rate, economic mobility, job security, etc. (May 2018).
- **Top 8** - Thrillist named Columbia as one of **8 American Cities Making Big Improvements** in 2018 for BullStreet
- **#11** - Business Insider named Columbia #11 in the 13 **best cities in the US to find a job** (2018 by Business Insider)
- **Top 25** - Fodors - **America's 25 Cutest Main Streets** in Small(er) Towns (2018)
- **#67** - One of "America's Best Employers," the university is ranked in the top 100 of Forbes' America's Best Employers (#67) and is the 9th best university to work for in the nation and the 2nd best flagship university. UofSC is the only higher education institution in South Carolina in Forbes' top 100 employers, and the only other entity in South Carolina on the top 100 list is Michelin. (2018)
- **Top 3%** - Diverse magazine places UofSC in the top 3% of universities for graduating African-American students

## 2017

- **Top 8** - In 2017, Thrillist named Columbia one of eight “under-the-radar” American cities to visit “before they’re too popular.”
- **#24** - The University of South Carolina is a hub for collaborative and impactful research, with the Brookings Institution recognizing UofSC as one of the **best universities in the U.S. for generating knowledge** (No. 24, 2017)
- Recognized by Forbes magazine as one of the **“Best Value Colleges: 300 Schools Worth the Investment”** (No. 216 out of 300 -- August 2017) and one of the country’s **“Top Colleges”** (No. 208 -- August 2017).
- Thrillist named Columbia one of their **“Great American Cities Where You Can Still Buy a House on a \$50K Salary.”** (2017)
- The University of South Carolina is an engine of economic and social progress, ranking among the **top U.S. universities for providing upward mobility to its students.** (Brookings Institute, 2017)
- More than **1 million** traveled in South Carolina to view the total solar eclipse, with a **\$269 million economic impact**

## 2016

- **#1** - Expedia **Top Destination to Travel in the U.S.** in the month of April (for festivals)
- The Columbia region welcomed **14.7 million visitors** in 2016, making tourism a \$2.1 billion industry for this community
- Total Solar Eclipse - More than 1 million **traveled in South Carolina to view the eclipse**, leaving \$269 million impact
- **#3** - Columbia was ranked the **number 3 college town** in the United States by livability.com. (2016).
- **#4** - In 2016, Columbia was **ranked 4th lowest in startup costs in the nation** at \$232,541 – lower than Charleston by 5.3 percent
- **#4** - UofSC is the 4th **fastest growing flagship university in the nation**, as noted by the Washington Post (2016).

[www.engenuitysc.com/champion-columbia](http://www.engenuitysc.com/champion-columbia)