

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

This U.S. City Has Been Overlooked for Years—but It's Home to World-class Museums, Luxury Hotels, and Award-winning Restaurants

Oklahoma City is officially coming into its own.

By [Anne Roderique-Jones](#) | Published on May 24, 2025



Oklahoma City is not Paris. It is not New York City. And it is not Rome.

But here's the thing: That's actually what makes it so great. OKC is a hidden gem. The area feels wildly overlooked by travelers—and because of that, tourist sites are never choked with lines, owners and chefs can be found behind the counters of their establishments, and even the most haute of cuisine is affordable. Those are just a few reasons why it landed a spot on [Travel + Leisure's 50 best places to travel in 2020](#).

But first, a bit of history, and one that's impressive right out of the gate. While Rome wasn't built in a day, Oklahoma City is considered to have been settled in a single afternoon, during the [historic land run of 1889](#). In a matter of hours, what was once just a lone railroad station and three buildings was suddenly home to thousands of people.

Today, OKC is the largest city in the state and one of the [fastest-growing cities in the U.S.](#) While visiting, you'll see plenty of juxtapositions here, like large swaths of land and red dirt, punctuated by towering, shining buildings.

With world-class museums, strong Indigenous roots, a robust queer scene, and a cowboy soul at the heart of it all, Oklahoma City is nothing if not surprising—and, of course, unrelentingly friendly.

Here's everything you need to know before visiting Oklahoma City.

Best Hotels & Resorts

Okana Resort & Waterpark

If you were skeptical about Oklahoma City's sheer size and sprawl, picture this: there's a [nearly 40-acre resort](#) near the city's downtown in the Horizons District. [OKANA Resort & Indoor Waterpark](#), which is owned by the Chickasaw Nation, is a \$400 million tourist destination that derives its name from the Chickasaw words for water (“oka”) and friend (“inkana”). The massive 11-story, 404-room resort has a 100,000-square-foot indoor waterpark and a 4.5-acre outdoor lagoon with sandy beaches—that's in addition to a conference center, family entertainment center, an amphitheater and event lawn, as well as retail shops.