Columbia combines modern, metropolitan diversity and quaint, traditional offerings. It is a beautiful and affordable place to live that offers one-of-a-kind architecture, natural scenic beauty, amazing dining options, shopping and everything in between.

Columbia enjoys a typical Southern, subtropical climate with short, mild winters that make measurable snowfall a treat every few years. Located in the center of the state, Columbia is equally close to the mountains and the beach. Historic Charleston and the island resorts of Hilton Head and Kiawah are about a two-hour drive; Myrtle Beach and the beaches of the Grand Strand are approximately three hours away, as are the Blue Ridge Mountains. Interstates 20, 26 and 77 converge here, and Interstates 85 and 95 are nearby, putting most East Coast and many Midwest cities within a day’s drive. Charlotte can be reached in one hour, and Atlanta is about a three-hour drive.

Housing prices in Columbia are well below the national average, making home ownership very affordable. Those who aren’t ready to buy a home will find no shortage of rental homes or apartment complexes. Big-city variety and local offerings characterize the shopping here. Columbia features intimate shopping villages, entertainment districts and several malls.

Cultural activities abound in the capital city. A lively arts community supports everything from folk and performing arts to city-wide public art projects and artisanal craft fairs. The Koger Center for the Performing Arts, Township Auditorium, the Colonial Life Arena and other venues attract national theatrical, ballet and musical productions. The South Carolina State Museum, on the banks of the Congaree River, is the largest museum in the South, and the Columbia Museum of Art houses touring and permanent collections of art from around the world.

Five Points is a thriving village of shops, night life, dining and residences, and the Congaree Vista is a revitalized historic downtown that is home to an eclectic mix of restaurants, night clubs, antique shops and art galleries. These hot spots are home to street festivals and live music concerts geared toward young adults.

Columbia is the place to be for sports. Collegiate-level competition draws loyal fans year-round as USC Gamecock football, baseball, soccer and basketball games commence. Golfers have their pick of dozens of area courses, with many public sites rivaling the beauty and challenge of private clubs. Spirit Communications Park is the home ballpark for the Columbia Fireflies, the Class-A affiliate of the New York Mets. Designed for baseball, concerts, soccer, football and a host of other activities, the venue seats approximately 9,000 for sporting events and up to 15,000 for major outdoor concerts. Columbia’s moderate climate is ideal for outdoor enthusiasts, so rollerblading, biking and running can be enjoyed comfortably year-round. There also are local and regional league teams for disc golf, bowling, softball, tennis, adult kickball and volleyball.

Columbia’s three major rivers serve as a natural playground for all ages. Walking trails and parks line the banks of the Saluda, Broad and Congaree Rivers downtown, and the gentle flow of their waters offers numerous opportunities to float, paddle, boat and fish. Nearby Lake Murray provides access to a recreational paradise where you can walk across the dam, cast a line, rent a boat or just take a swim.

For those with children, Columbia boasts a large selection of playgrounds and city parks. The Columbia Marionette Theatre, EdVenture Children’s Museum, Frankie’s Fun Park and the Plex offer opportunities for fun, learning, and physical activity. Columbia also is home to the nationally renowned Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, which is consistently ranked as one of the top 20 zoos in the country and one of the best regional attractions in the South.