

SmarterTravel.com names KC one of five destinations to watch in 2009

Kansas City is one of five international “Destinations to Watch in 2009,” according to SmarterTravel.com. The popular travel Web site recently unveiled to *USA Today* its top picks for travel in 2009, and Kansas City was the *only place in the United States to make the list*.

Other destinations to make the cut were Vancouver, Canada; Peru; Riviera Nayarit in Mexico; and Vilnius, Lithuania.

“Our top picks for destinations to watch in 2009 are bursting with up-and-coming, you’ve-gotta-see-this attitude,” the Web site says. “Not only are these destinations on the rise, but each offers good value to travelers looking to vacation affordably in the coming year.”

Here’s an excerpt from the Kansas City section of the article:

"Never considered Kansas City as a vacation destination before? Over the past few years, the city has been working hard to make itself a destination worth the trip. And the effort is paying off big time during 2009 when more than \$9 billion in major improvements will be reinvigorating its downtown area and lending major credibility to its arts and dining scenes.

Recent developments include the new nine-block Power & Light District, downtown’s newest mixed-use neighborhood packed with restaurants, shops, and entertainment and performance venues. There’s also an outdoor stage featuring live entertainment more than 150 days a year. The Crossroads Arts District hosts one of the largest art walks in the nation from 7 to 9 p.m. on the first Friday of every month. Downtown, there’s also the new Sprint Center, which hosts large concerts and special events, and the College Basketball Experience, a giant entertainment facility with interactive exhibits and the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame.

Beyond downtown, revitalized and expanded attractions draw crowds as well. The well-known Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art just finished an expansion last year. Already ranked among the top art museums in the country, the new expansion increases the museum’s exhibition space by one third, and makes more

room for the museum’s collections of modern and contemporary art, African art, and photography. And just in time for its 100th anniversary, the Kansas City Zoo has also undergone a major renovation.

As if that isn’t enough, Kansas City is expanding its culinary reputation. Long known as a mecca for barbecue, a number of Kansas City chefs and their fine dining establishments—including Bluestem, American Restaurant, and Michael Smith—have recently received national recognition as well.

Even better (especially this year), Kansas City is one of the country’s most affordable major cities to visit. It’s well-served by airlines including American, Continental, Delta, Frontier, Southwest, and United. So much service means prices tend to stay competitive. Hotels, dining, and attraction costs tend to be less expensive than in many other cities around the country as well. In fact, **Hotwire.com recently ranked Kansas City as one of the top value-priced destinations in the U.S. based on airfare, accommodations, and entertainment prices in 50 U.S. cities.**

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