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How Fast is Ocala, Florida Growing?

Ocala, Florida, is experiencing significant growth, attracting new residents with its blend of affordability, safety, and unique local culture. The **Ocala Metropolitan Statistical Area is projected to increase by 10% in population within just three years**, reflecting a  pace of expansion. This surge is driven by various factors, including people seeking respite from coastal flooding, lower living costs, and the area's charming small-town feel combined with ongoing economic development. Projections indicate the population will likely reach **400,000 within the next few years**, showcasing a substantial shift in the region's demographic landscape. This growth, however, raises important questions about the city's infrastructure, resources, and overall appeal.

Understanding Ocala's Growth Trajectory

Ocala isn't just growing; it's transforming. The area's population jumped from 60,021 in 2020 to 62,351 in 2021, representing a **3.88% increase in a single year**. This rapid growth is attracting national attention, with U.S. News & World Report ranking Ocala as the **sixth fastest-growing metro area in the nation** in 2023. The city's appeal is multifaceted, attracting a diverse range of individuals, from retirees to young families looking for a more affordable and secure lifestyle.

Economic Factors Fueling Growth

The primary drivers behind Ocala's impressive population increase are largely economic. Compared to many other Florida cities, Ocala offers a **lower cost of living**. Housing costs are notably cheaper, with housing being **12% less expensive than the U.S. average**, and utility costs about 10% less. This affordability, combined with Florida's lack of state income tax and Ocala's lower sales tax rate, makes it an appealing alternative for those seeking to stretch their budgets further.

Safety and Lifestyle Attract New Residents

Beyond affordability, Ocala's safety is a significant draw. It's frequently highlighted as one of the safest places to live in the U.S., consistently ranking in the top 10. This safety, along with Ocala's **small-town feel and warm weather**, create an attractive living environment. Additionally, many people are drawn to the area because of its lower risk of coastal flooding and relative safety from hurricanes, unlike many coastal Florida areas.



Investment Opportunities and Economic Development

Ocala is not just experiencing a population boom but also significant economic development. The city is seeing investments in new projects, such as the construction of the **Hilton Garden Inn downtown** and the **state-of-the-art World Equestrian Center**. These developments not only provide employment opportunities but also enhance Ocala's appeal as a modern, vibrant city, attracting further growth. The strong equine industry also plays a huge role, solidifying Ocala as the **"Horse Capital of the World®."** The city's growing economy and

affordable living costs make it an attractive destination for real estate investors, with opportunities ranging from single-family homes to commercial properties.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Ocala's Growth

1. Why are so many people moving to Ocala, FL?

People are moving to Ocala for various reasons, including its **lower cost of living**, relative **safety from hurricanes**, and strong sense of community. It offers a **small-town feel with big-city growth**, making it attractive to families and retirees alike. The growing economy and numerous job opportunities are also significant draws.

2. Is Ocala the fastest-growing city in Florida?

While not the single fastest-growing city, Ocala ranks among the fastest-growing areas in Florida. U.S. News & World Report ranked it the **sixth fastest-growing metro** in the nation in 2023. This growth rate is substantial and highlights the city's increasing popularity.

3. What is the cost of living in Ocala, FL?

The cost of living in Ocala is notably lower than both the state and national averages. Housing is **12% cheaper than the U.S average**, and the overall cost of living is about **8% lower** than the Florida average and 8% lower than the national average.

4. Is Ocala a safe place to live?



Yes, Ocala is considered a very safe place to live. It frequently ranks highly on national safety lists, with U.S. News & World Report placing it as the **4th-safest place to live in the United States**.

5. Does Ocala experience hurricanes?

Ocala is inland and not on the coast, making it relatively safe from hurricanes. It has **never been directly hit by a hurricane** and has the **lowest risk of coastal flooding in Florida**.

6. What industries are prominent in Ocala?

While Ocala is known as the “Horse Capital of the World®”, it also supports a diverse economy. Key industries include **manufacturing, distribution, healthcare, and service industries**. The manufacturing sector’s employment rate is almost double the state average.

7. What is the median income in Ocala?

In 2021, the median household income in Ocala was **\$46,841**. This represents a significant 10.6% increase from the \$42,361 median household income in 2020.


8. What are some attractions in Ocala?

Ocala boasts a variety of attractions, including the **Ocala National Forest, Silver Springs State Park, Rainbow Springs State Park**, and the **World Equestrian Center**. These natural and recreational amenities contribute to the area’s appeal.

9. How is Ocala’s housing market?

Ocala’s housing market is quite affordable compared to other areas in Florida and the U.S. Housing costs are 12% lower than the national average, making it an attractive option for new residents and investors.

10. Does Ocala have a homeless problem?

Like many cities, Ocala does have a homeless population. According to a 2022 Point In Time count, there were 488 people in shelters and 188 people unsheltered in Marion County. 

11. What is the meaning of the name “Ocala”?

Ocala’s name comes from the extinct Timucuan tribe who called their village Ocali, commonly thought to mean “**Big Hammock**.” The area’s history is reflected in many street names with Native American and Spanish origins.

12. What are the pros and cons of living in Ocala?

Pros include a **low cost of living, small-town feel, warm weather, convenient location,** and **lots of fun things to do.** Cons include limited big-city amenities, the risk of tornadoes, and potentially limited job opportunities compared to larger cities.

13. Is Ocala a good place to invest in real estate?


Yes, Ocala is considered a good place to invest in real estate due to its **strategic location, affordability, and economic growth.** The area offers various investment opportunities, including both residential and commercial properties.

14. How does Ocala compare to other Florida cities in terms of cost?

Ocala is significantly more affordable than many other Florida cities. For instance, **Orlando and Tampa are approximately 23% and 23.5% more expensive to live in,** respectively.

15. How many millionaires live in Ocala?

While exact numbers are not widely reported, Ocala is home to a number of affluent individuals, including those involved in the prominent equine industry. To date, **a dozen Florida-bred “millionaires” currently reside in Ocala,** including those at Charlotte Weber’s Live Oak Stud.

Ocala’s rapid growth is a testament to its appealing blend of affordability, safety, and community spirit. As the city continues to develop, it’s poised to become an even more significant hub in Florida, offering a unique balance of small-town charm and big-city opportunity. Whether you’re considering moving or investing, Ocala presents a compelling case with its numerous ben  and continuous growth trajectory.

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Peter Briggs is a member of the writing team at NCESC Geographic FAQ. [NCESC Geographic FAQ](#), where a world of information awaits you! Delve into our comprehensive collection of frequently asked questions, spanning continents, ecosystems, and cultural phenomena.

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