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### Madison, pshaw; Cd'A is a real walking town

Posted: Thursday, Mar 08, 2007 - 11:12:54 pm PST  
 By DAVE TURNER  
 Staff writer



JEROME A. POLLOS/Press  
 Juli Barton enjoys a lunch-hour stroll Thursday along the boardwalk in downtown Coeur d'Alene. "When I know I can't get to the gym, I head out for a walk," Barton said. "It's a good way to clear your head and relax for a half hour or so."

#### COEUR D'ALENE -- Madison, Wis., was recently named tops in the nation for walking in a recent survey of the country's 100 most populated cities. Coeur d'Alene didn't make that list.

But that might not be for long.

"We actually have some stats and we're in the process of gathering more data to update our parks and rec master plan," said Doug Eastwood, Coeur d'Alene Parks and Recreation director. "Once the master plan is updated, it will tell us what we have to do to accomplish it. Then maybe we can be more recognizable."

Madison, with a population of about 250,000, received top honors in a survey published by Prevention magazine. It named the Wisconsin capitol -- 1,300 miles north of sunny Miami -- as the most walkable of the country's 100 most populated cities. The list was commissioned by the American Podiatric Medical Association based on certain criteria. It ran in editions of the magazine released this week.

Madison beat out the likes of Austin, Texas (No. 2), San Francisco (No. 3) and Miami, which barely cracked the list at No. 98.

Factors contributing to the ranking were air quality, the percentage of people who walk to work, access to parks, number of athletic shoes sold and weather.

Number of beaches versus frozen lakes apparently was not a factor. Crime rate, unfortunately for Miami, was.

Idaho's capitol, Boise, was the state's only city to make the list at 17.

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Rating or not, North Idaho residents pound the pavement at city parks in large numbers, rain or shine.

"It's just so beautiful," said Sandy Ray, who, along with her husband, Tom, drove down from Hayden to walk along City Park on a blustery Thursday afternoon.

The Rays said they come to City Park about three times a week and walk from The Coeur d'Alene Resort to the Stimson mill and back, about 3 miles round trip.

"We love to come out in the winter," she said, noting that some days, they have the walkway mostly to themselves. "We like coming down here in the summer, too."

They also like to watch children at the playground, people having picnics in the park and summertime concerts in the Rotary Lakeside Bandshell.

"I wish there were trails around Hayden Lake, but there aren't," Tom said.

For others, being a Coeur d'Alene streetwalker is a routine.

"It's a very good walking city because you can walk safely anywhere," 1st District Magistrate Judge Eugene Marano said. "The sidewalks and the roads are well-maintained."

The scenery's not bad, either.

"You can put your head up and see the mountains and the sky," said Marano, 62, who walks five miles a day to work and back "unless it's real cold or the wind's blowing so that my umbrella won't keep the rain off me."

Marano said not only does he walk for the exercise, it also is "to clear my mind."

"When you do what I do, you try to forget about it before you get home," he said, "and vice versa."

Eastwood said Coeur d'Alene, a destination resort town that hosts international-level events like the Ford Ironman competition each June, has the potential to join the list of top walking cities.

"We have incredible walkways and pathways on one of the most beautiful lakes in the world," he said. "We have a wonderful two-mile trail on Tubbs Hill and the sidewalk at City Park is one of the most heaviest-used pedestrian corridors in this region."

He also pointed out the Centennial Trail, which runs through town, and Coeur d'Alene Lake Drive along the lake's east shoreline to Higgins Point. "There are some nice amenities here," he said.

"Even downtown is nice," he said, with wide sidewalks, clean streets and artwork along the way. "It's an enjoyable place to walk."

He said even dog walkers are considerate, for the most part.

"You see a pile here or there," he said.

The Prevention list said characteristics that make a city "fitness walker friendly" are safe streets, beautiful places to walk, mild weather and good air quality.

The evaluators considered the percentage of the population that walks for exercise or work; the use of mass transit; the number of parks and other points of interest per square mile; and the average winter and summer temperatures.

Eastwood said data continues to be collected online and through mail-out surveys.

"We should have that master plan completed in another six or eight months," he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this story. Dave Turner can be reached at (208) 664-8176, Ext. 2009 or at [dturner@cdapress.com](mailto:dturner@cdapress.com).



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