Public Health Degree has a list of the twenty cities in the world with the cleanest air. (I was pleased to see my prior home Minneapolis on the list — not surprisingly, my current home in the Bay Area didn't qualify.) That got me interested in looking for other listings of high environmental quality.

There are some interesting rankings out there. I found an NRDC ranking of beaches with clean water. New Hampshire was ranked #1, a bit of a surprise since I didn't know that they had beaches there. I'm picturing a lot of people in flannel lounging in the sun.

Another ranking was for safe drinking water — San Francisco did really well on that one. I once heard a story, perhaps apocryphal, about a San Francisco restaurant that offered customers the option of "Filtered Hetch Hetchy Water" — which sounds fancy but of course it really means plain old tap water!

Eventually, I stumbled on a site with comprehensive rankings, covering everything from traffic congestion to waste management. Portland, Seattle, and San Francisco are all show-cased, but perhaps more surprisingly, so were Chicago, New York City, and Boston. At the other end of the list, there's Mesa, Arizona:

> Mesa, Arizona just might be the biggest city you've never heard of. Founded by Mormon pioneers in 1878, and with more people in it than Cleveland, Miami or Minneapolis, the desert city has one of the best natural disaster risk factors in the country; that is, nature's wrath is least likely to get you in Mesa. But what might take you down is the city's polluted air—it ranks 46th out of 50 in our survey. You might also be disappointed if you're looking for fresh, local produce; Mesa scores 46th here too.

Mesa sounds like a great place to visit, so long as you don't have to eat or breathe!