



QUICK GUIDE

Online Gazetteers

Want to learn more about where your family came from? Consult a gazetteer—that is, a dictionary of place names—to unearth a wealth of local data, such as physical features, population data, latitude and longitude, place type (river, village, hill), even weather conditions. Gazetteers are invaluable for genealogy researchers who want to locate ancestral towns. Another fun use is to search gazetteers for unusual ancestral surnames—you never know where you might find a hamlet or stream of the same name. Below are seven of our favorite free online gazetteers.

» Nancy Hendrickson

Website	Geographic Coverage	Data Included	Special Features	Tips
Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/tgn	worldwide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1.12 million names ■ place types ■ latitude and longitude ■ descriptive notes 	Displays hierarchical relationships: place name, county, state, country, continent.	Notes may tell when the place was named; for example, Christmas Island on Christmas Day 1643.
Global Gazetteer www.fallingrain.com/world	worldwide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ latitude and longitude ■ elevation ■ population ■ satellite and map views 	Links to Wikipedia pages that reference places close to the one you choose.	Click on the country, and then an alphabetical list to find your place of interest.
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html	worldwide, excluding the United States; 8,900 names in the undersea database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ latitude and longitude ■ feature type ■ alternate names 	You can specify the feature type (roads, rivers, lakes) in searches.	This tool is intended primarily for input into geographic information systems, rather than consumer use.
Place Names www.placenames.com	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ latitude and longitude ■ elevation ■ population ■ geographic features ■ nearby locations 	Covers current and historical place names. Links to street, topographic, satellite and aerial maps.	You may specify the type of place you're trying to locate, such as a cemetery.
ShtetlSeeker www.jewishgen.org/communities	populated places in 31 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet republics and Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ native name ■ latitude and longitude ■ links to maps ■ links to places within a 10 mile radius 	Includes places that no longer exist. Search by name, country or longitude and latitude.	You can view places on maps from MapQuest, Expedia, MultiMap and Google Maps. Once a map is on screen, you have zoom control.
US Board of Geographic Names geonames.usgs.gov	United States, associated areas and Antarctica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ latitude and longitude ■ geographic features ■ alternate names ■ historical and descriptive information 	Covers current and historical place names.	Choose Search Domestic Names. To download results, click "Save as pipe delimited file."
World Gazetteer world-gazetteer.com	worldwide (but doesn't have as many small US places or feature types as other gazetteers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ latitude and longitude ■ population data 	You can control how much data is displayed, and view data in English, Spanish, French or German.	You may use the information on your website for free, as long as you follow the stated copyright rules.