

# HEADING WEST

A Denver local shares her favorite places in her constantly evolving hometown

BY MONICA PARPAL STOCKBRIDGE

For us Denverites, fall in the city is a time for reflection. After an active summer of barbecues, patio sessions, and volleyball in Washington Park, we look forward to cooler days, golden aspen leaves, and pulling that Patagonia puffy out from storage.

Being a born-and-raised Colorado “native” still living in Denver has become a rare thing, and it’s a role I cherish. Growing up near Parker just outside the city has given me a deep knowledge of what makes this place so very special. It has to do with the sunshine, of course – they say we

get 300 days of sun every year – and we have that magnificent view of the Rockies. It’s part of the allure that has drawn people here ever since Colorado’s gold rush in the late 1850s, although the region was home to Native American tribes long before that.

## AN EVER-EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

Things have changed a lot since I was a kid. In fact, Denver’s population has increased by more than 100,000 in the past decade, many drawn by the appeal of tech start-up jobs and proximity to endless outdoor recreation in the Rocky Mountains. Award-winning restaurants and chefs are finding a place here, enhancing Mile High dining standards. Musicians and artists are amplifying historic venues and beautifying the alleyways. Of course, the city’s craft beer collection continues to tempt the taste buds.

As I think about how Denver has evolved, I reflect on what those early Colorado settlers must have felt. On August 28, 1858, the Kansas City’s *Journal of Commerce* lauded the region as “THE NEW ELDORADO!!!” Not even multiple exclamation points could convey the thrill that gold had been discovered in Cherry Creek – which still flows through present-day Denver – and which escalated to the Gold Rush of 1859. Yet, Colorado wouldn’t become a state until 1876, 100 years after the Declaration of Independence. So, at the time, the region was still wild and unknown – a rocky, sunlit horizon brightened by the promise of prosperity.

This mystique persists today. There’s something about Colorado that still feels wild and raw. ▷

Downtown Denver sits between tree-lined neighborhood parks and the Rocky Mountains. Opposite: The 40-ft-high blue bear at the Colorado Convention Center



GETTY/AVL





There's a power in nature that rouses our senses and awakens our inner adventurer. Take the 26 ski resorts where we gleefully glide down slopes once too rugged to access. Consider the Colorado River – it supplies water to millions, and also fuels recreation in the form of whitewater rafting and fly fishing. Look at Red Rocks Amphitheatre, with its ancient sandstone monoliths creating a natural acoustic setting that has drawn world-class musicians and their fans for decades.

While there isn't much left that's still undiscovered, there's an energy in Denver and in the Centennial State that continues to draw pioneering travelers and migrants from the world over.

When friends and family come to visit, I take them to Union Station, Denver's rejuvenated transportation hub in Lower Downtown (LoDo). Dubbed "Denver's Living Room," it's the perfect place to perch on a tufted armchair for people-watching or picking up a paperback at the satellite version of Denver's most historic bookstore, the Tattered Cover (the original store is just a short walk away). For sustenance, we might order a charcuterie board at Mercantile

Clockwise from above: Denver's Union Station at sunset; Colorado State Capitol Building; historic Larimer Square is ideal for dining, shopping, and nightlife; fly fishing in Colorado; skiing at one of the area's 26 resorts; Red Rocks Amphitheatre has dramatic acoustics



**Look at Red Rocks Amphitheatre, with its ancient sandstone monoliths creating a natural acoustic setting**

Dining & Provision, or head to the lively nearby Tavernetta for its Italian-inspired happy hour.

Denver has deservedly gained a reputation as a foodie city in recent years, thanks in part to its excellent food halls and markets. A former curio and craft emporium, renovated The Denver Central Market sells everything from gourmet chocolates and fresh produce to roasted chicken. Also making waves is the Dairy Block, a historic former city dairy that now houses an eclectic food hall called Milk Market. Not too far away, The Source is a sophisticated market hall, which recently expanded to include a hotel. I love riding the elevator to The Source Hotel's rooftop for a killer view of the city skyline and a pint of whatever New Belgium is brewing.

**DISCOVERING DENVER**

Denver is made up of neighborhoods each with its own character and history. Five Points neighborhood, once known as the "Harlem of the West," has a diverse commercial and music scene, hosting legends such as Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk. Today, the once-industrial part of the area is known as RiNo, or the River North Art District. RiNo has become famous for its lively and ever-evolving art scene. Spend an afternoon here in search of the distinctive street art, which decorates alleyways, garage doors, and building exteriors throughout the district. For an insider's look behind the art, and other historic areas around town, book a Rebel Tours walking tour





Above: Culture Meat & Cheese – one of the vendors inside The Denver Central Market

## CRAFT BEER HEAVEN

Colorado has become famous for its craft beer scene, with more than 400 breweries in the state. In the fall, suds lovers make a pilgrimage to the Mile High City for the country's favorite beer gathering: the **Great American Beer Festival (GABF)**. Hosted at the Colorado Convention Center, GABF hosts hundreds of the country's best craft brewers for a respected competition and raucous tasting. Every October, join the throngs for one-ounce pours of thousands of different beers. Be prepared to buy tickets for the festival immediately when they become available, as they've been known to sell out in mere minutes.



GETTY

or get some pedal power with GoodTurn Cycles' downtown e-bike tour, the latter of which starts and ends at a brewery.

Indeed, craft beer has become inextricably blended into Denver's character (see box, left). According to a recent exhibition at the History Colorado Center, the state's early beer brewers were primarily German immigrants who arrived to make their fortune in mining. In the latter half of the 1800s, miners and migrants enjoyed beer in saloons, which were said to have "accepted pinches of gold dust in exchange for glasses of whiskey or beer." In 1873, Coors Brewing Company launched in Golden, Colorado, and survived Prohibition to become one of Denver's most successful original breweries in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

While I tend to take out-of-towners to one of the many contemporary craft breweries for an IPA, there's plenty for other tastes. RiNo newcomer Noble Riot is boosting the local wine bar scene with its menu of small-production wines from biodynamic and organic vineyards. ▶





Denver Art Museum contains more than 70,000 works of art

***The Denver Art Museum, with its distinctive Daniel Libeskind-designed wing, is hosting a major Monet exhibition starting in October***

Distilleries like Leopold Bros. and The Block Distilling Co. are making names in the spirits world. Furthermore, New York's much-lauded Death & Co. recently landed in Denver, a nod to the city's up-and-coming cocktail scene. There is no shortage of places to enjoy a drink or snack with a friend, new or old.

Cultural opportunities extend beyond the fermentation tank, of course, as there's plenty of world-class art to drink up. The Denver Art Museum, with its distinctive Daniel Libeskind-designed wing, is hosting a major Monet exhibition starting in October. Just across the street, the Clyfford Still Museum is dedicated to works by the eponymous artist. If you have an hour to spare, join the free walking tour and marvel at the artist's abstract works.

If I've learned one thing about Denver in all my years here, it's that the city is constantly evolving – and always has been. Our state capitol is busier than ever, and it still attracts people who seek adventure, camaraderie . . . and maybe even their own fortune, whatever that means to them. With its mix of long-time locals and energetic newcomers, Denver continues to rediscover its past and look hopefully toward the future. Come and see what Denver is all about.

→ **WHERE TO STAY / DENVER AND SURROUNDING AREA**



**THE ART, A HOTEL**

This spectacular boutique hotel is located in Denver's culture-rich Golden Triangle. From its striking mirrored exterior and bold use of color to the original artwork that adorns every wall, it's fair to say that this urban retreat is a work of art itself. FIRE restaurant serves ingenious American-inspired masterpieces to delight every palate.



**THE SOURCE HOTEL**

Housed in a former iron foundry in the city's edgy RiNo District, this modern hotel is home to a market hall with 25 artisanal food and retail vendors, two breweries, and an art gallery. The spectacular rooftop restaurant and beer garden, The Woods, offers panoramic views of the Denver skyline and the Rocky Mountains.



**THE LASZLO, PARKER**

Opening in fall 2019, elegant The Laszlo invites guests to enjoy the glamour of the 1940s paired with 21st-century luxury. Guestrooms are sophisticated with oversized bathrooms, plush linens, and vintage touches. Dining options include Rick's Prime Steak & Seafood, and Martini's on the Half Shell, an oyster and piano bar with spectacular views.



**ST JULIEN HOTEL & SPA, BOULDER**

From its prime position at the foothills of the Rockies, this downtown Boulder hotel offers 201 spacious guestrooms, many with striking mountain views. The award-winning spa includes a lap pool, fitness center, and deluxe therapy rooms with a range of handcrafted treatments. Jill's Restaurant serves organic American fare with a French twist.

→ For a full list of properties in Colorado, please see **page 100**. For information and reservations, please visit [PreferredHotels.com](http://PreferredHotels.com)