

The Other Side of Denver

Written by Allison Young



Get ready for an avalanche of food and the finer things.



There's no rule that says you have to ski in Denver. Or drink IPAs. Or revel in the red rocks. Or even cheer for the Broncos. Sure, the mile-high city has easy access to slopes and trails and more craft breweries per capita than any other city in America (or so the locals brag), but there's more to the Colorado Capital than the usual suspects. Brewing beneath the rustic exterior (and beanies and man buns) is a refined urban retreat that serves up culture and cuisine—and did we mention modern art? So fly into Denver International Airport (it's less than two hours from Sky Harbor) and take the city by storm... and we don't mean snow storm. Here, the ultimate guide to the other side of Denver.

1) Come for the sun, not the snow Denver has 300 days of sunshine. Yes, you read that right. And come spring, just when the snowy peaks of the Rocky Mountains are melting, Denver comes alive with festivals (like the free [Denver Day of Rock](#)) and patio weather.

2) Forget cow town, think foodie town Get the thought of gravy-topped ski food, chili to warm you up, and steak—lots of steak—out of your head. Sure, Denver still peddles prime cuts of steer, but the cow town has more to offer than... well cows. [Cart-Driver](#), in Denver's hipster RiNo hood, turns out blistering-crustured wood-fired pizzas topped with things like sausage, kale and mozza (they have Prosecco on tap!). Cap the evening at [Central Market](#), a nearby food emporium for an ice cream flight at [High Point Creamery](#). At [The Source](#), another under-one-roof artisanal marketplace, there's [Acorn](#) for seasonal contemporary cuisine and [Crooked Stave](#) for sour beer. We suggest them both.

3) Forget skiing, bike it! While Denver might seem synonymous with skis, Denver's bike sharing program, [B-cycle](#), was the first of its kind in the country. Grab a cruiser and take a trip down Cherry Creek Bike Path, a 40-mile route that rolls past flowering cherry blossoms come springtime—or any of the city's 85+ miles of paved trails.



4) Go bitters over brewskies There's no shortage of brag-worthy craft beers in this hoppin' town (get it, hops!), but beyond the red ales and IPAs, a bitter movement—as in small batch cocktail bitters—is taking root. Our faves: [Strongwater](#) (pictured) "Wildflower" bitters handcrafted from native flowers and [Dram](#) Wild Mountain Sage Cocktail Bitters made with wild Colorado herbs. Sip a bitter-spiked cocktail at Union Station's [Terminal Bar](#) or [The Way Back](#) in the Berkeley neighborhood or pick them up at [The Proper Pour](#).

5) Opt for a hip hotel Yes, Denver has its fair share of stately stays dating back to the 1890s, but to really dream in Technicolor, [the ART, a hotel](#) (pictured at top) has the historic beat. The 165-room uber contemporary crash pad is high on art, from Leo Villarea's 22,000 LED art installation to Frank Gehry's Fish Lamp, plus wow-worthy triptychs, tapestries and neon lights woven throughout. It's like sleeping over in your own private museum (props to the candy bar, [cocktail bar](#) and free in-room mini bar too). Speaking of avant-garde, [Denver Art Museum](#), [Clyfford Still Museum](#) and Claes Oldenburg's Big Sweep are a stone's throw away.