

Denver - The Mile High City

Located on high plains at the base of the snowcapped Rocky Mountains, Denver is a booming metropolis, surrounded by spectacular natural beauty. A combination of great recreation opportunities and a mild, year-round climate with 300 days of sunshine (more annual hours of sun than San Diego or Miami Beach) have caused Denver's population to soar. In 2009, the Pew Research Institute declared Denver the **"No. 1 U.S. city in which people want to live."** In the past decade alone, this young city has grown by as many as a thousand new residents a week, climbing to nearly three million people.



Despite the growth, Denver is still a city of wide open spaces with the largest city park system in the U.S., 90 golf courses and more than 850 miles (1,367 km) of paved, off-street bike trails. The city's active, outdoors-oriented population consistently ranks as the healthiest and thinnest in the U.S.

Downtown Denver was recently selected as America's fourth most walkable city. The heart of downtown is the 16th Street Mall, a mile-long (1.6 km) pedestrian promenade lined with 28 outdoor cafes. Free hybrid shuttle buses leave either end of the Mall every few minutes and stop on every corner, making everything in downtown easy to reach.

At the southern end of the Mall is beautiful Civic Center Park and the city's museum district. Some of Denver's great architectural treasures are here, including Daniel Libeskind's new Hamilton Building at the Denver Art Museum. Inside, the museum has a renowned Western art and Native American art collection and world-class touring shows such as the "King Tut" exhibit that will be on display from July 2010-January 2011.

The colorful history of the gold miners, cattle ranchers and Native peoples who have called Colorado home comes to life at the Colorado History Museum. Nearby at the U.S. Mint, you can learn how to make money. More than 50 million coins are stamped here every day. Or stand exactly one mile high (1609 meters) on the steps of the State Capitol Building. State law prohibits any structure from blocking the view of mountains from the capitol. From the gold dome, you can see 200 named peaks - a mountain panorama more than 120 miles (193 km) long.

At the other end of the 16th Street Mall is LoDo, Denver's hip historic district where Victorian brick warehouses have been turned into more than 90 bars, brewpubs, rooftop cafes and music clubs, many of them surrounding Coors Field - the 50,000-seat home of Denver's baseball team, the Colorado Rockies.

Denver has a record eight professional sports teams playing in six new sports stadiums, one reason why it was recently picked as America's No. 1 sports city.



But Denver is also experiencing a cultural renaissance. The Denver Performing Arts Complex is the second largest in the United States with a new opera house recently opened and a new symphony hall on the way. The 10 theaters here can seat 10,000 people for Broadway theater, dance, opera and symphony. Metro Denver collects more public money for the arts per capita than any other American city. The recently opened Museum of Contemporary Art | Denver was designed by David Adjaye, and the city recently broke ground on a new art museum celebrating the works of Clyfford Still.

In Denver, you are never far from nature. The Denver Zoo has more than 4,000 animals on lovely grounds in City Park. Nearby, the massive Denver Museum of Nature & Science is the fourth largest museum in the United States, a sprawling complex with everything from dinosaurs to the world's most advanced digital planetarium. The Denver Botanic Gardens is ranked as one of the top five botanic gardens in the U.S., while the Downtown Aquarium has sharks, sting rays and thousands of colorful fish.

For a “green” experience, the National Renewable Energy Center is the principal research center in the U.S. studying renewable energy and has a fascinating museum, while the National Center for Atmospheric Research in nearby Boulder is the primary U.S. facility for the study of global warming and it too has an museum with interactive exhibits.

Shoppers head to the Cherry Creek Shopping District, where 500 stores make this the largest and most varied shopping experience between St. Louis and San Francisco. Located just three miles from downtown, Cherry Creek offers everything from Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus to one-of-a-kind boutiques, galleries and jewelry stores, all in a deluxe upscale mall or on pleasant tree-lined streets.



After dark, Denver’s growing restaurant scene has been earning accolades from publications such as the New York Times and Food & Wine Magazine. Located in the heart of ranching country, Denver has always been known for outstanding steaks of both beef and buffalo. Buffalo is the leanest of red meats with fewer calories than chicken and is a Denver specialty. Today, Denver is also known as a center for American Southwest cooking, South American, pan Asian and contemporary dishes. And Denver is the largest beer brewing city in America. More than one hundred different beers are brewed in Denver every day; the world’s largest single brewery is located here (Coors Brewery), and the city’s annual Great American Beer Festival is the largest on the planet with more than 2,400 beers available for tasting.

Denver’s early history comes alive in the nearby foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Learn about the “Old West” at the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave, high atop Lookout Mountain, it celebrates the famous scout who brought his Wild West Show to Europe. You can ride a narrow gauge steam locomotive over high trestles at the Georgetown Loop, or visit old gold mining towns that now offer gambling in more than 20 casinos that are open 24-hours a day.

Denver is also a gateway to adventure. Within an hour or so of downtown you can hike through valleys of wildflowers and waterfalls in Rocky Mountain National Park, ride the highest cog railroad in the world to the top of Pikes Peak, raft the raging Clear Creek River through a towering canyon or ride horses at a nearby ranch.

The city is served by award-winning Denver International Airport (DEN), the fifth busiest airport in the U.S. and 10th busiest in the world 1,500 daily flights, including non-stop service to 160 worldwide destinations. DEN was selected by Business Traveler Magazine as the best airport in North America in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

A young, sophisticated city surrounded by the rugged splendor of the Colorado Rocky Mountains, Denver is truly, a mile high - and climbing.

Photos: Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau

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Date: 2010-02-22

Article link:

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