

Discover Denver

A desktop travelogue

by Ellen Greenblatt



Thanks to the wizardry of the Internet, we can now explore conference venues long before we step off the plane. Begin your discovery of Denver by using the suggested

sites below as points of departure on your travels through cyberspace. But first, a little context before we plunge in . . .

Although many people think Denver is located in the Rocky Mountains, it is actually located on high, rolling plains near the foothills, and is surprisingly one of the flattest of all U.S. cities; it is also one of the highest. Several landmarks proudly proclaim Denver's status as the "Mile High City," including the State Capitol Building (tradition claims the 15th step on the west side to be exactly 5,280 feet above sea level!) and Coors Field, our baseball stadium (an entire row of seats is painted purple to indicate that they, too, are a mile above sea-level).

Denver's climate is dry and mild, with only about 8 to 15 inches of precipitation per year, and more than 300 days of sunshine (more annual hours, in fact, than Miami Beach!). While it does snow here, snowfalls are usually fairly light and rarely linger more than a day.

Since the days of the "Pikes Peak or Bust" gold rush, Denver has been a favorite destination. Currently, the population of Denver proper is slightly over a half million while the six-county metro area tallies in at just below 2.5 million and counting—our population

has increased 23% in the last ten years. Our booming economy and mild climate are strong draws for folks wishing to relocate, making Colorado one of the fastest growing states in country. And speaking of booming, did you know that Denver has the distinction of being the "baby boomer capital" of the United

States? Fully one third of our population is between the ages of 35 and 54.

So as you can see, Denver is certainly a vital, "happening kind of place." Its status as

Credit: Denver Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau



Denver's spectacular skyline lies at the base of the Rocky Mountains.

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a major urban area ensures that there are plenty of cosmopolitan activities and attractions to entice visitors, while its unique location near the Rocky Mountains makes it a wonderful gateway to all types of outdoor recreation—no matter what the season.

And now on to the cybertour.

Getting a feel for Denver

About Denver, <http://www.denvergov.com/AboutDenver/aboutdenver.htm>. One of the best places to start your journey is by visiting this fascinating multimedia site chock-full of “facts, lore and legend” about Denver. Hosted by the City and County of Denver and compiled by resident expert Thomas J. Noel, a history professor at the University of Colorado at Denver (whose latest book is *Colorado: A Liquid History and Tavern Guide to the Highest State*). About Denver provides both historical and contemporary insights into the “Mile High City.” Read about colorful Denver characters from Chief Little Raven to former mayor Federico Peña. Visit some of Denver’s historical landmarks. Take a walking tour through Denver’s historic Civic Center. Learn about Denver’s diverse cultural heritage. Root for our five professional sports teams. Checkout the “Photo Album” (my favorite section) in which contemporary photographer John Fielder revisits the locales captured by photographer William Henry Jackson in the 1870s to demonstrate the dramatic changes that have taken place over the years. Noel also includes several well-chosen links to other Denver Web sites. Another good site to help you get acquainted with Denver is the one maintained by the **Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau**, <http://www.denver.org/>.

Denver Virtual Tours, <http://www.denvergov.org/virtual.asp>. Here’s a place to get a real feel for Denver without ever leaving your office. Another amazing site hosted by the City and County of Denver, Denver Virtual Tours offers 360-degree panoramic views of various landmarks and hotspots around Denver. You can make vir-



Credit: Denver Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau

Visit the Denver Performing Arts Complex.

tual visits to Denver parks, sports facilities, public art displays, and other venues. Use your mouse to schuss down the slopes in Winter Park, stroll down the 16th Street pedestrian mall, tour the Colorado State Capitol Building, or run for a touchdown at Mile High Stadium—current home of the Denver Broncos.

Colorado Rockies Photo Galleries, http://www.swpark.com/us/travel/colorado/photo_pages.html. Experience the majestic Rocky Mountains throughout Colorado by clicking on this site comprised of more than

150 landscape and nature photographs. By the way, did you know that the mountainous area of Colorado is two times as big as Switzerland and contains more than 1,000 peaks that rise two or more miles above sea level? More than 20,000 acres of this area is maintained by Denver’s Mountain Parks Department, which is also responsible for maintaining the road to Mount Evans, the highest paved road in North America (altitude 14,260 feet—see <http://community.webshots.com/>

[album/171073](http://community.webshots.com/album/171073) for some gorgeous views), as well its own private buffalo herd—all part of the largest city park system in the nation.

Ski the Rockies

For many of us, winter in Colorado is synonymous with skiing. **GoSki Colorado** (<http://www.goski.com/colorado.htm>) offers information on snow conditions and ski resorts and provides expert guides and a chatroom. To get a virtual taste of downhill skiing, view the Flash animation on the **Blue Sky Basin** (Vail) Web page (<http://www.blueskybasin.com/index.html>). If cross-country skiing is more your style, be sure to checkout the **Colorado Cross Country Ski Association’s** page (<http://www.coloradoxc.org/indexa.htm>). For the ultimate in cross-country skiing, visit the **10th Mountain Division Hut System** page (<http://www.huts.org/index.html>). Modeled after the European custom of hut-to-hut travel, this system offers more than 300 miles of trails in the

mountains between Vail, Leadville, and Aspen.

The great indoors

Those of us more inclined to indoor pursuits need not feel left out. Denver has lots of alternative entertainment and recreational opportunities. For example, there are more than 30 theaters and more than 100 cinemas throughout the metro area. Foremost among these is the **Denver Performing Arts Complex** (DPAC) (<http://www.denvercenter.org>). Covering a four-square block in downtown Denver and containing eight theaters with a combined total of more than 10,000 seats, DPAC is the second largest performing arts center in the United States (after Lincoln Center in New York City). DPAC offers a variety of entertainment, including symphony concerts, touring Broadway shows, and local productions. One of DPAC's divisions, the Denver Center Theatre Company, was the recipient of the 1998 Tony Award for "Outstanding Regional Theatre."

Just a few blocks away is the **Pepsi Center** (<http://www.pepsicenter.com/>), home to two of Denver's professional sports teams—the Colorado Avalanche (hockey) and the Denver Nuggets (basketball)—as well as a prime location for concerts, ice shows, circuses, and other events.

Those of us who are "born to shop" can take advantage of Denver's reputation as the "Shopping Capital of the Rocky Mountain West" and use the **Insider's Guide to Denver Shopping** (<http://www.insiders.com/denver/main-shopping.htm>) as a guide to help plot shopping expeditions to major shopping malls, such as Cherry Creek or the Pavilions. There's something for every shopper here—from swanky malls to antique dealers to flea markets. Denver has lots to offer book lovers in particular, most notably the **Tattered Cover Bookstore** (<http://www.tatteredcover.com/>), the largest independent bookstore in the United States; the **Hue-Man Experience Bookstore**, the nation's largest African American bookstore; **Cultural Legacy Bookstore**, one of the country's top Latino bookstores; and the **Denver Book Mall** (<http://dimensional.com/~bkmall/>), headquarters to more than 30 antiquarian, used, and specialty book dealers.



Called the Maroon Bells, this range of snowcapped peaks near Aspen is one of the most photographed spots in Colorado. Colorado has more than 1,000 peaks that are over two miles high.

And for the gourmets among us, Denver boasts more than 2,000 restaurants. Local specialties include Mexican and Southwestern food, micro-brew pubs, and, for the you carnivores out there—buffalo and other exotic meats. (Ever tried rattlesnake or ostrich? Prairie oysters?)

To find out more about Denver's cultural scene, point your browser to **Westword Online** (<http://westword.com/>), the Web version of Denver's most popular alternative weekly newspaper. Along with arts, music, movie, and restaurant reviews, the site provides a searchable calendar. There is also a "Best of Denver" section, here you can identify such gems as the "best restaurant when someone else is paying," "best quick ski fix," and the "best politically correct tourist greeting."

The suggestions above should help you prepare for your visit to the Mile High City next March. There's just one more contingency you may need to plan for . . .

Note

1. While the marker was carved into the steps in 1947, 20 years later some students discovered that the measurement was in error and a geodetic survey marker was placed in the correct spot, three steps above the original marker. ■

Reserve your space

Registration for ACRL's National Conference begins in September 2000. Watch the conference Web site for more information at www.ala.org/acrl/denver.html.



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