

Doing Denver

Dropping In To The Mile-High City

by Michael Sudmeier

For nearly 2,000 years, travelers from around the globe have encountered a familiar platitude: When in Rome, do as the Romans do. With that kind of longevity, we assumed there must be some validity to the statement. We caught up with the local shreds who have the Mile-High City on lock, to have you dialed like an insider the minute you step off the plane.



Dining, Drinking, And More



BREAKFAST

1. SNOOZE

If you swing by Snooze on the weekends, don't be alarmed by the line. Instead, grab a cup of free coffee by the door and relax knowing that good things are worth a wait. When it's time to sit down, consider the pancake of the day or Juan's breakfast tacos.

2. ROOT DOWN

From its home in a converted 1950s garage, Root Down offers excellent cocktails and plenty of dishes with locally sourced ingredients. "It's a great brunch place with really good drinks," offers Never Summer sales rep and team and media manager Micah Cook. "My wife loves it." That's a solid stamp of approval.

3. PETE'S KITCHEN

In the midst of enjoying the nightlife on Colfax, you just might get hungry. Luckily, Pete's is open 24 hours and serves breakfast all day. Grab a stool at this classic diner and enjoy some of the best breakfast in town.



DINNER

4. TOM'S

HOME COOKIN' Thanks to Tom's Home Cookin', you can enjoy staples like fried chicken, sweat tea, collard greens, and cobbler without traveling south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Sam Schuman, owner of 303

Boards, is quick to claim Tom's as his favorite spot for Southern comfort food. Just remember, Tom's only takes cash.

5. TOCABE

For dinner, try something different. Heed the advice of DBO, district manager for BC Surf And Sport, and hit up Tocabé. The restaurant offers authentic American-Indian cuisine with a modern twist. And, as David "DBO" Baker notes, they have "amazing fry bread tacos."

6. APPALOOSA GRILL

For some local flavor, "make sure you go to Appaloosa Grill on 16th Street. It's delicious," pro shred Ian Smith offers. "They support local farmers and have live music every night. The price is good, and it's worth checking out."

COMIDA MEXICANA

Denver has no shortage of top-notch Mexican restaurants. As Cook offers, "Go down to **Benny's (7)**—one of my favorite Mexican joints." Schuman recommends La Abeja, while DBO suggests **Santiago's (8)** for "the best green chile in Denver. Start mild or half-and-half—the hot takes fools down." TS Boardshop owner Kendra Rostvedt reveals, "**El Diablo (9)** is probably one of my favorite restaurants." In addition to excellent food, El

Diablo offers award-winning margaritas and the city's longest list of tequilas.

10. MARCO'S COAL-FIRED PIZZA

"Marco's Pizza is a solid go-to spot downtown," pro shred Ryan Cruze suggests. "They have a strong selection of cold beer on tap, a great lunch special, and the best coal-fired pizza in town."



NIGHTLIFE

11. THE DIVE INN

Set sail for The Dive Inn. As DBO explains, "The Dive Inn has a boat where you can sit and drink with your homeys in the middle of the bar. It also has tons of bar games and activities."

12. THE 1UP

The 1Up allows you to tap into your inner child while still getting your drink on—and even 40 ounces at a time. The iconic bar offers 45 classic arcade games, life-sized Jenga, and—as Smith is quick to point out—Skee-Ball for only a quarter.

13. SHAG LOUNGE

While at SIA, be sure to make your way to the Shag Lounge. As a classic industry hangout, it's the perfect place to mix business with pleasure.

CLUB LOVE

"As for clubs, check out **Beta (14.)** and the **Church (15.)**," Smith offers. "These clubs can be a blast if you feel like getting wild." Beta has an especially strong reputation for solid sound.

Alternate Adventures

CATCH A GAME

When it's time to escape the trade floor, be sure to catch a game. "All of the major sporting attractions take place in downtown Denver," Satellite co-owner Raul Pinto explains. "And all within walking distance from the major hotels." There are even discount tickets available Wednesday and Friday during the show.

ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE EARS

From laid-back shows to ear-bleeding noise, Denver's got you covered. Standout venues include The Bluebird, Larimer Lounge, The Ogden, Hi-Dive, The Meadowlark Bar, The Fillmore, and Summit Music Hall. "Summit Music Hall is a great new venue on 19th and Blake," Cruze says. "It may be in LoDo, which has the reputation of being more like a downtown frat-house party, but this place offers something different. They have been hosting a majority of this season's snowboard video premieres and setting a different tone for the crowd in the area." To see what's on tap for shows, Rostvedt recommends picking up a copy of the *Westword*, Denver's free arts and entertainment publication.

BREWERIES

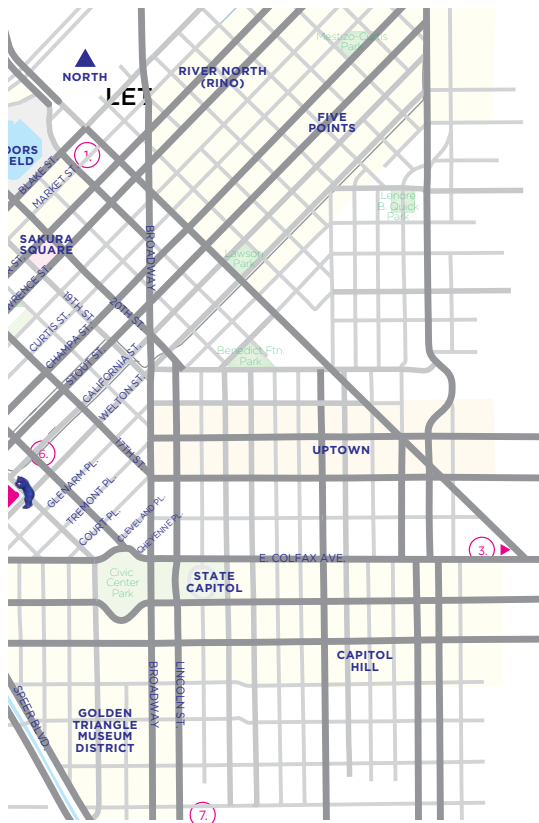
A trip to Denver wouldn't be complete without touring some of its signature breweries. Paik recommends visiting the Wynkoop Brewery for its "great beer and great food." Other favorites include the Denver Beer Co., Strange Brewing Company, Great Divide, Black Shirt Brewing Co., Breckenridge Brewery, and Dry Dock Brewing.

EXPLORING THE OUTDOORS

When it's time for SIA, Denver might be blanketed under snow or enjoying balmy temperatures. Either way, bring some hiking boots. "Make sure you at least head to the foothills for great hikes," Schuman offers. "One of the most beautiful places to visit—that is close by—is Red Rocks Amphitheater," suggests CandyGrind co-founder Brandi Paik. "It's open daily, there are lots of hiking trails, and the scenery just can't be missed."

URBAN ADVENTURES

If the snow is deep and the foothills are out of the question, explore Denver's urban offerings. A stroll down the 16th Street Mall reveals plenty of bizarre attractions and opportunities for people watching. Paik suggests, "Grab a coffee at the Starbucks



in REI and take a walk along the river. The view of Denver is awesome."

TUNES AND TEXTS

If you're looking to snag some tunes—be it new albums or rare LPs—Schuman recommends hitting up Wax Trax! Records and Twist & Shout. To score a good read, be sure to explore Tattered Cover next to Twist & Shout. As DBO adds, both are "worth a dig, as you can always find something amazing at those shops."

GET SMART

"All the museums downtown are worth a day's adventure," DBO mentions. Consider hitting up the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, the Denver Art Museum, and the History Colorado

Center. "Also, the library downtown is amazing and in the middle of the Museum District," DBO adds. Consider visiting the Denver Zoo and the Downtown Aquarium as well.

ART ATTACK

"If you stick around town for the first Friday of the month, there is always a huge art festival on Santa Fe Street," Smith offers. "There are street vendors and wonderful art from all kinds of people. South Santa Fe has tons of art galleries and if that is your thing, it is worth going to hang at that end of town any day."

SPEAKEASY CINEMA

For a mellow evening, enjoy a movie. "Check out The Mayan Movie Theatre on Broadway," Smith suggests. "This place is a small, speakeasy theater, and you can order beer while watching a movie."

TRAVEL TIPS

KEEP AN EYE ON THE MOUNTAINS
With all of its breweries and legendary nightlife, Denver can be disorienting. Fortunately, it's easy to get back your bearings. "As a general rule of thumb," DBO provides, "the mountains are to the west."

STREET SMARTS

If you're braving the streets, "Park Avenue and 15th Street will both get you pretty much anywhere," Schuman notes. A few simple tips will also keep you out of trouble. "Stay away from I-25 in the city from seven to nine in the morning and four to six p.m. weekdays—it gets plugged up," Cook offers. Lastly, "Don't turn down 16th Street—it's a huge fine," Smith warns. "There are also lots of one-way streets, so be aware."

PONY UP TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT

"If you want to get around easily without bringing a car into the budget, Denver B-cycle is one of many great public transportation options, along with the Light Rail and plenty of taxi services," Cruze offers. To keep things simple and capitalize on these resources, Pinto recommends staying in Denver proper. He notes, "Denver is one of the better US cities from a transit standpoint and is very centralized."

JUST ASK

If you do get lost, you're never far from help. "Most people in Denver are friendly, so don't be shy to ask for directions," Smith offers. "I still do this every time I'm in the city."



GET YOUR SHRED ON

"Pack stuff for a trip to the mountains. Why come to the Rockies if you are just going to hang in the city?"



It seems silly that I need to remind people, but go snowboarding. There are a ton of resorts. If you're a hot dogger, go to one of the five mega mountain parks or ride a more local resort like Monarch or Eldora. And if you're too cool for groomers, go get bucked at Silverton and ride the real Rocky Mountains."

Raul Pinto, Co-owner, Satellite and Installation

BREAK THE FAST

"Hit up the Butcher Block Café on Washington Avenue in North Denver—hands down the best breakfast spot in Denver. The food has heart, the restaurant has character, the prices are great, and the people there get to know you by your name. You will most likely catch the owner, Mickey, in the kitchen, but he always finds time to make his rounds and greet his guests."



Brandi Paik, Co-founder, CandyGrind

BE PREPARED

"There's so much variation in the weather. It could be dumping snow one day and the next day you're able to skate at the skatepark."



Kendra Rostved, Owner, TS Board Shop

COME THIRSTY

"Be ready to drink!!!"

Sam Schuman, Owner, 303 Boards



SOAK IT UP

"Denver is the best city hands down. You have everything you need in one place to have fun, play hard, and eat well." **Micah Cook, Team Manager and Sales Rep, Never Summer Media**



LIVE LIKE A LOCAL

"El Camino—in the Highlands neighborhood at 32nd and Lowell—has a great community atmosphere. They have some killer margaritas, and taco Tuesday is always good. Every Sunday is Noche de Industry, honoring the hard-working local shreds with video and drink specials. Also, this season they are organizing a Shred Bus to get all the Denver folks up to different ski resorts throughout the winter—with breakfast burritos and beers for those going." **Ryan Cruze, Pro Shred**



DROP IN

"Denver has an amazing skatepark on 20th and I-25. There are also tons of world-class parks in the surrounding areas. Lafayette, Broomfield, Arvada, Aurora, and many other suburbs of Denver have phenomenal skateparks." **Ian Smith, Pro Shred and Founder, nowsnowboarding.com**



ACCLIMATE

"Acclimate to the altitude. I always thought it was just a myth, or something you told people from out of town town, but it proves true. The altitude will work you if you're not paying attention." **David "DBO" Baker, District Manager, B.C. Surf and Sport**



CASA BONITA: THE WHOLE ENCHILADA—AND THEN SOME

For nearly 40 years, **Casa Bonita (16.)** has enchanted patrons with everything but its food. In addition to staples like enchiladas, tacos, and sopapillas, the Mexican restaurant offers stimuli seldom seen outside of hallucinations and Hollywood sets.

While enjoying dinner, patrons can watch flame jugglers or witness cliff divers leap from a waterfall into pools of crystal-blue water. A gunfight, an escaped gorilla, strolling mariachis, or a piñata festival might accompany a meal. As if these spectacles aren't spellbinding enough, Casa Bonita offers magic shows on the weekends. To commemorate their evening, visitors can choose to get their portrait drawn by a caricature artist or recreate historic saloon photos.

Nearly a million people flock to Casa Bonita each year and South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone grew up visiting the restaurant. Consequently, they've featured Casa Bonita in a number of episodes, and even named the building that houses South Park Studios after the restaurant, and it should be on your short list for post-show dinners.

