

Discover Denver

Host to the 2005 National Junior Angus Show
July 17-23, the Mile High City offers ample
family entertainment options.

by *Kindra Gordon*

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Denver is a city that prides itself on its Western heritage. It hosts the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) and Rodeo each January, and is home to the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). This July, the city will eagerly tip its hat to welcome the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

Although cattle events tend to take center stage when most ranchers visit Denver, be sure to carve out time to discover some of Denver's other attractions.

Take a tour

Settled during the gold rush days of 1859, Denver has always been a hub for gold. Today, the city still dabbles in the precious metal as it stores and protects much of the nation's gold inventory at The United States Mint in downtown Denver. More than 10 billion coins are also made there each year. Free tours of the facility are offered on weekdays and include an overview on the history of money and a chance to see the

making of coins, from stamping and sorting to bagging. For security reasons, a 3-4 week reservation and security clearance are required for tours, so inquire early at (303) 405-4759 or visit www.usmint.gov.

See more glitter at the Colorado State Capitol Building, where the dome is completely covered in pure gold. Free tours of the capitol are given on weekdays, and an observation deck from the rotunda offers a spectacular view of downtown Denver and the Rocky Mountains.

The beverage business is big in the Denver area. Coors Brewery at Golden, Colo., offers free tours of the largest single brewery in the world. For information call (303) 277-2337. An hour north of Denver near Fort Collins, Colo., is the home of Anheuser-Busch, which offers brewery tours and is home to the famous Budweiser Clydesdales. For information call (970) 490-4691. If those locations aren't your cup of tea, visit the Celestial Seasonings Tea Co. in Boulder, Colo. [call (303) 581-1202], where tours include tea tasting and a walk-through of the production area to see how tea is processed and packaged.

Enjoy the scenery

Much of Denver's appeal is in its scenic setting, with the Rocky Mountains as a backdrop. Climate also makes Denver a crowd-pleaser, as it boasts an average of 300 days of sunshine year-round.

Enjoy the outdoors with a visit to the Denver Zoo, which is rated one of the top five zoos in America, with more than 3,000 animals at its picturesque grounds. The Butterfly Pavilion & Insect Center is also a unique outdoor experience with a tropical forest setting filled with 1,600 free-flying butterflies.

Colorado's beauty is breathtaking at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre, a 9,000-seat natural outdoor arena carved out of huge 500-foot (ft.)-high red sandstone cliffs. Located 12 miles west of Denver, the park is open to the public daily (unless there is a scheduled performance) and is a perfect site for hikes and picnics.

Thrill seekers should plan a day at Six Flags Elitch Gardens, Denver's year-round amusement park located close to the downtown area. The facility is actually two parks in one. One side has more than 40 thrill rides, including Mind Eraser, an inverted roller coaster. The other side has a complete water park with tube rides, wave pools and river rafting.

If time allows, catch a Major League Baseball game at Coors Field, home of the Colorado Rockies. Or, if it's not game time, tours of the 50,000-seat facility in downtown



Denver trivia

- ▶ Denver, Colo., truly is one mile high. The 15th step on the west side of the state capitol building is 5,280 feet (ft.) above sea level. The purple row of seats at Coors Field is also exactly one mile above sea level.
- ▶ In 1935, the cheeseburger was born in Denver when Louis Ballast melted a slice of cheese on a hamburger at his Humpty Dumpty drive-in restaurant. He patented his invention and the rest — as they say — is history.
- ▶ Denver has all four major league sports: the National Football League's Denver Broncos, the National Hockey League's Colorado Avalanche, the National Basketball Association's Denver Nuggets and Major League Baseball's Colorado Rockies. Denver also has a professional soccer team, the Colorado Rapids.

History lessons

Denver, Colo., is chock-full of museums from modern art to Western ways. For the history buff, consider visiting these.

- ▶ The Black American West Museum & Heritage Center tells the forgotten story of African American cowboys and the many contributions they made in settling the West.
- ▶ The Denver Art Museum has what is considered to be the world's best collection of American Indian artwork, covering all tribes of North America.
- ▶ The Leavin' Tree Museum of Art (as in the cowboy-themed greeting cards of the same name) has the nation's largest private collection of contemporary Western art. Located in nearby Boulder, Colo., the free museum is open to the public with more

than 300 paintings and 85 bronzes by some of the best known Western artists.

- ▶ Buffalo Bill's Grave and Museum features memorabilia honoring the famous showman and Pony Express rider, including posters from the Wild West Shows.
- ▶ The Colorado History Museum provides exhibits that trace the colorful history of American Indians, explorers, gold miners, cowboys and pioneers who have called Colorado home.
- ▶ The Molly Brown House is the home of "Unsinkable Molly Brown," who made an imprint in history when she survived the Titanic sinking. Costumed guides give tours of her capitol hill mansion, which is filled with mementos from her life.

Denver are worth the stop (call 1-800-388-ROCK).

Also while downtown, be sure to visit the 16th Street Mall, a mile-long pedestrian promenade lined with shops and outdoor cafes, including The Cheesecake Factory. Shuttles on the Mall are free and offer an interesting way to tour downtown.

Catering to youth

Above all, Denver boasts some neat attractions for youth. The Children's Museum of Denver has a 9,000-square-foot (sq. ft.) playground, a child-size supermarket and the famous KidSlope, the

only year-round ski mountain for children.

The Denver Museum of Nature & Science is known for its outstanding collection of dinosaur bones in the massive exhibit called Prehistoric Journey. A special interactive space exhibit and the larger-than-life IMAX theater are also highlights of the museum.

Colorado's Ocean Journey is a world-class aquarium where visitors follow two "rivers at their headwaters in the mountains" on their paths to the "ocean." The experience includes sharks and colorful tropical fish along the way.

Just 30 minutes west of Denver on Hwy. 285, kids will delight in Tiny Town, a kid-

sized village with dozens of "Old West" buildings built at 1/6 scale in a scenic mountain location. Best of all, an authentic toy steam locomotive circles the park, giving children and adults a ride past the miniature town.

For a fond family memory of your visit to Denver, have dinner at Casa Bonita. This 52,000-sq.-ft. restaurant recreates a Mexican village, complete with waterfalls, cliff divers, strolling mariachis and, of course, Mexican food. Enjoy!

For more information visit www.denver.org.

