

Mile-Highlights

Our insider's guide to the Mile-High City reveals the upper reaches of dining, shopping, and other diversions. *By Rebecca Landwehr*

PLANNING A STOPOVER? With this list as your pocket tour guide, you'll live like a local even if only for a long weekend. It's true, Denver is one of the nation's healthiest cities, but don't think for a minute that its inhabitants live by Pilates and early-morning bike rides alone. They also crave the "spendorphin" release that can be found at the city's exquisite shops, world-class restaurants, and tucked-away boites.



Brown Palace.

DINING

Sure this town loves a steak, but there's more to Denver than big beef. The city is teeming with creative chefs.

Rioja: As tempting as the fresh bread offerings may be (we love the gonzola biscuits), save room in your carb budget for chef Jennifer Jasinski's creative Mediterranean fare, especially her homemade pastas. This Wolfgang Puck protégé has won Denver's hearts and stomachs with her innovative cooking served in a pleasingly contemporary setting. *1431 Larimer Street, 303-820-2282; riojadenver.com.*

Mizuna: If there's no room at this jewel of a restaurant featuring New American delights by Frank Bonanno, one of Denver's favorite chefs, try its Italian cousin (also owned by Bonanno), Luca D'Italia, next door. Best bet: Visit Mizuna on Friday and Luca on Saturday, and you won't have to choose. *Mizuna, 225 East Seventh Avenue, 303-832-4778; mizunadenver.com. Luca D'Italia, 711 Grant Street, 303-832-6600; lucadenver.com.*



Zengo.

Zengo: By Richard Sandoval (he has three restaurants in Denver), this gorgeous spot features an innovative Latin-Asian menu. Don't miss the cucumber mojitos and the grilled lamb chops with a spicy adobo barbecue sauce. *1610 Little Raven Street, Riverfront Park, 720-904-0695; modernmexican.com/zengodenver.*

LODGING

Whatever your vacation personality, Denver has the perfect room in which to rest your head in style.

The Culture Hound: Dying to experience the acoustic genius of the new Ellie Caulkins Opera House? Reserve a room at the **Hotel Teatro**, across the street from the Denver Performing Arts Complex. The well-appointed rooms and complimentary Cadillac Escalade car service make the Teatro the perfect home away from home. *1100 14th Street, 303-228-1100 or 888-727-1200; hotelteatro.com.*

The Classic Aficionado: Looking for old-time elegance but unwilling to sacrifice modern amenities? **The Brown Palace Hotel and Spa** won't disappoint. In the more than 100 years since the Brown opened its doors, presidents, royalty, and even the Beatles have checked into this grand dame. Take time to enjoy a perfectly crafted martini in the opulent atrium while a local maestro tickles the ivories nearby. *321 17th Street, 303-297-3111 or 800-321-2599; brownpalace.com.*

The Super Shopaholic: If you've come to shop, the Cherry Creek North district is the place for you. The **JW Marriott at Cherry Creek** is just steps away from some choice boutiques. The central location and excellent service make this a prime spot to drop off the shopping bags before heading out for a night on the town. *150 Clayton Lane, 303-316-2700; marriott.com.*

The Downtown Dynamo: Extending your business trip into a weekend of sightseeing? The **Hotel Monaco**, conveniently situated in the downtown business district is perfect any day of the week. While you're here, be sure to take advantage of Panzano, the hotel restaurant that has locals lining up for its creative Italian fare. *1717 Champa Street, 303-296-1717 or 800-990-1303; monaco-denver.com.*

Denver Art Museum.



ARTS AND CULTURE

While visiting the Mile-High City, be sure to check out its outstanding cultural landmarks.

Denver Art Museum: The contemporary collections housed in the new Frederic C. Hamilton wing (designed by Daniel Libeskind) are in themselves reason enough to visit the city. *100 West 14th Avenue, Parkway, 720-865-5000; denverartmuseum.org.*

Ellie Caulkins Opera House: Home to Opera Colorado and several Colorado Ballet productions, this venue is a must for music aficionados. Flawless acoustics paired with lush interior design make any night at “the Ellie” unforgettable. *Denver Performing Arts Complex, 950 13th Street, 303-357-2787; operacolorado.org.*

SHOPPING

Treat yourself to a heaping helping of high style at these boutiques.

Lawrence Covell: Of course you can wear jeans anywhere in Denver, but after visiting this bastion of fashion you’ll want to step out in style. Contemporary selections for men and women range from Yohji Yamamoto to Etro to Luciano Barbera. *225 Steele Street, 303-320-1023; lawrencecovell.com.*

Andrisen Morton: With two massive locations anchoring each end of the block (one for each sex), Andrisen Morton offers the latest designer clothing and accessories for men and women. Well-heeled ladies should not miss the shoe boutique in the women’s shop. *Women’s, 210 St. Paul Street, 303-321-0404; men’s, 270 St. Paul Street, 303-377-8488; andrisenmorton.com.*

MAX: More than a few Denver women count on Max Martinez’s well-trained eye for their complete wardrobes. See what the fuss is about in his newly expanded space. From Jil Sander to Missoni, Max has you covered. *3039 East Third Avenue, 303-321-4949; maxfashion.com.*

Aera: Home style reaches new heights at this beautiful boutique. Browse the well-edited collection and we’re sure you’ll find more than one “perfect something” you can’t live without. *2817 East Third Avenue, 303-388-2372; aerastudios.com.*

Oster Jewelers: Whether you’re looking for gorgeous gems or fine timepieces, make time to peruse the jaw-dropping offerings at Oster Jewelers. Jeremy and Melissa Oster offer a fine-tuned collection of contemporary jewelry that you’ll wear for a lifetime. And their watch collection simply cannot be missed. *251 Steele Street, 303-572-1111; osterjewelers.com.*

Tiffany & Co.: You don’t need us to tell you why Tiffany is the perfect stop on any shopping trip. Visit this gorgeous outpost at the Cherry Creek Shopping Center. *3000 East First Avenue, 303-322-4747; tiffany.com.*



Aera.

photograph courtesy of the Denver Art Museum (ARTS AND CULTURE)

Slim 7.



NIGHTLIFE

Finally, after all that shopping, dining, and museum hopping, it’s time for a nightcap. Any of these local hot spots is the perfect conclusion to a perfect sunny day at 5,280 feet.

Dazzle Restaurant & Lounge: Drop in for jazz and a dirty martini. *930 Lincoln Street, 303-839-5100; dazzlejazz.com.*

Corridor 44: Melt into the sumptuous surroundings at this chic Champagne bar. *1433 Larimer Square, 303-893-0044; corridor44.com.*

Sketch Food & Wine: Want to stay out late and have a civilized snack with your wine? This is the place. *250 Steele Street, 303-333-1763; sketch-restaurant.com.*

Slim 7: The discreet garden-level location gives this hip nightspot an air of exclusivity. Be sure to glance over the drink list honoring the Seven Deadly Sins. *1443 Larimer Square, 303-359-8273; slim7.com.* 🍷