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2019 EDITION

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COLORADO

2019 EDITION

GROUP TOUR PLANNER

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ON THE COVER

Horse Mountain
overlooking
Grand Valley vineyard
(Photo courtesy Visit Grand Junction)



12



Welcome to Colorado

Every season in Colorado is packed with something to do or see. Bring your tour groups to cheer one of our professional sports teams – Go Broncos!, watch a spectacular sunrise from the majestic Grand Mesa or step into the boots of our historical Wild West days. Your groups will love it all.

Colorado is known for its national landmarks, open spaces, soaring mountains, historic trains and wildlife. Whether your tour includes visiting our national parks, riding our trains, or traveling through the beautiful Colorado Rockies, you'll find towns and cities in every corner of our state with farm-to-table restaurants, art galleries, unique museums and one-of-a-kind shopping. We invite you to visit Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs, Canon City, Durango, Cortez, Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, Greeley, Boulder, or Denver where you will find artists, antique shops, outdoor cafes, food trucks, brewpubs, distillers and a wide variety of activities.

Sit back, put your feet up and take a moment to explore our *Colorado Group Tour Planner*, which we've designed to spark new itinerary ideas, such as our featured stories highlighting **Fun Experiences, Scenic Beauty in Northern Colorado's Front Range** and **Discovering All There is to See & Do in Grand Junction**.

As always, thank you for bringing your groups to Colorado. We will see you on the road.

Carrie Whitley
Director, Tour Colorado

Tour Colorado is a Proud Partner with the Colorado Tourism Office and Proud Member of NTA, ABA and TAP
www.tourcolorado.org



DENVER, COLORADO

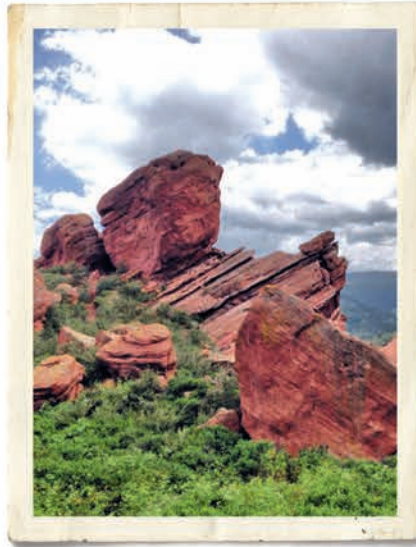
Check out five of the top reasons to visit Denver!



1

RED ROCKS PARK & AMPHITHEATRE.

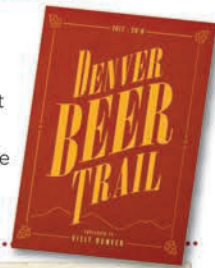
No music lover's bucket list is complete without experiencing a concert under the stars at the world-famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre; and, by day, visitors hike the park's scenic trails amidst ancient, giant boulders.



2

DENVER BEER TRAIL.

Sip one of the 200 craft beers brewed in Denver daily, and let the Denver Beer Trail be your guide to 35 of Denver's creative breweries, most located in the city's walkable downtown.



3



LARIMER SQUARE & DENVER UNION STATION.

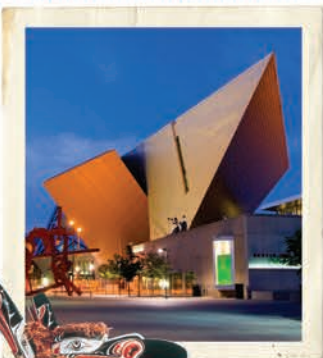
Denver's dining scene is heating up in places like Larimer Square where Victorian buildings are now home to boutique shops, wine bars and restaurants, or in historic Denver Union Station which has become a hotspot for innovative cuisine and old-fashioned elegance.



4

ROCKMOUNT RANCH WEAR.

Shop for authentic Western shirts, boots and hats at this iconic store in downtown Denver, just like rock stars do. Learn about Papa Jack, grandfather of Rockmount's current owner, who invented the snap-button cowboy shirt.



5

GOLDEN TRIANGLE CREATIVE DISTRICT.

Visit Denver Art Museum, home to famous Western and American Indian art collections, enjoy interactive exhibits about the Rocky Mountain West at History Colorado Center and see works of Colorado artists and international design at the Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art.



DENVER

The Mile High City

Find all this and more at VISITDENVER.com



Getting here is easy.

Colorado Welcome Centers

Ten Official Colorado Welcome Centers are located throughout the state and easily accessible from every major highway entering the state. Services provided by dedicated volunteer Colorado experts are free. More information is available at colorado.com/official-colorado-welcome-centers.

Front Range Region

Colorado Welcome Center at Fort Collins

3745 E. Prospect Rd., Suite 105
Fort Collins, CO 80525
970-491-4775
Cheryl.Glanz@state.co.us

Northeast Region

Colorado Welcome Center at Burlington

48265 I-70
Burlington, CO 80807
719-346-5554
Taren.Mulch@state.co.us

Colorado Welcome Center at Julesburg

20934 County Road 28
Julesburg, CO 80737
970-474-2054
Sue.Carter@state.co.us

Northwest Region

Colorado Welcome Center at Dinosaur

101 E. Stegosaurus St.
Dinosaur, CO 81610
970-374-2205
Cheryl.Mcdonald@state.co.us

Colorado Welcome Center at Fruita

340 Hwy. 340
Fruita, CO 81521
970-858-9335
Orilee.Will@state.co.us

Colorado Welcome Center at Silverthorne

246-V Rainbow Dr.
Silverthorne, CO 80498
970-468-0353

South Central Region

Colorado Welcome Center at Alamosa

610 State St.
Alamosa, CO 81101
800-258-7597
719-589-9396
Kale/Mortensen@state.co.us

Southeast Region

Colorado Welcome Center at Lamar

109 E. Beech St.
Lamar, CO 81052
719-336-3483
Leslie.Stagner@state.co.us

Colorado Welcome Center at Trinidad

309 Nevada Ave.
Trinidad, CO 81082
719-846-9512
Jennifer.Collins@trinidad.co.gov

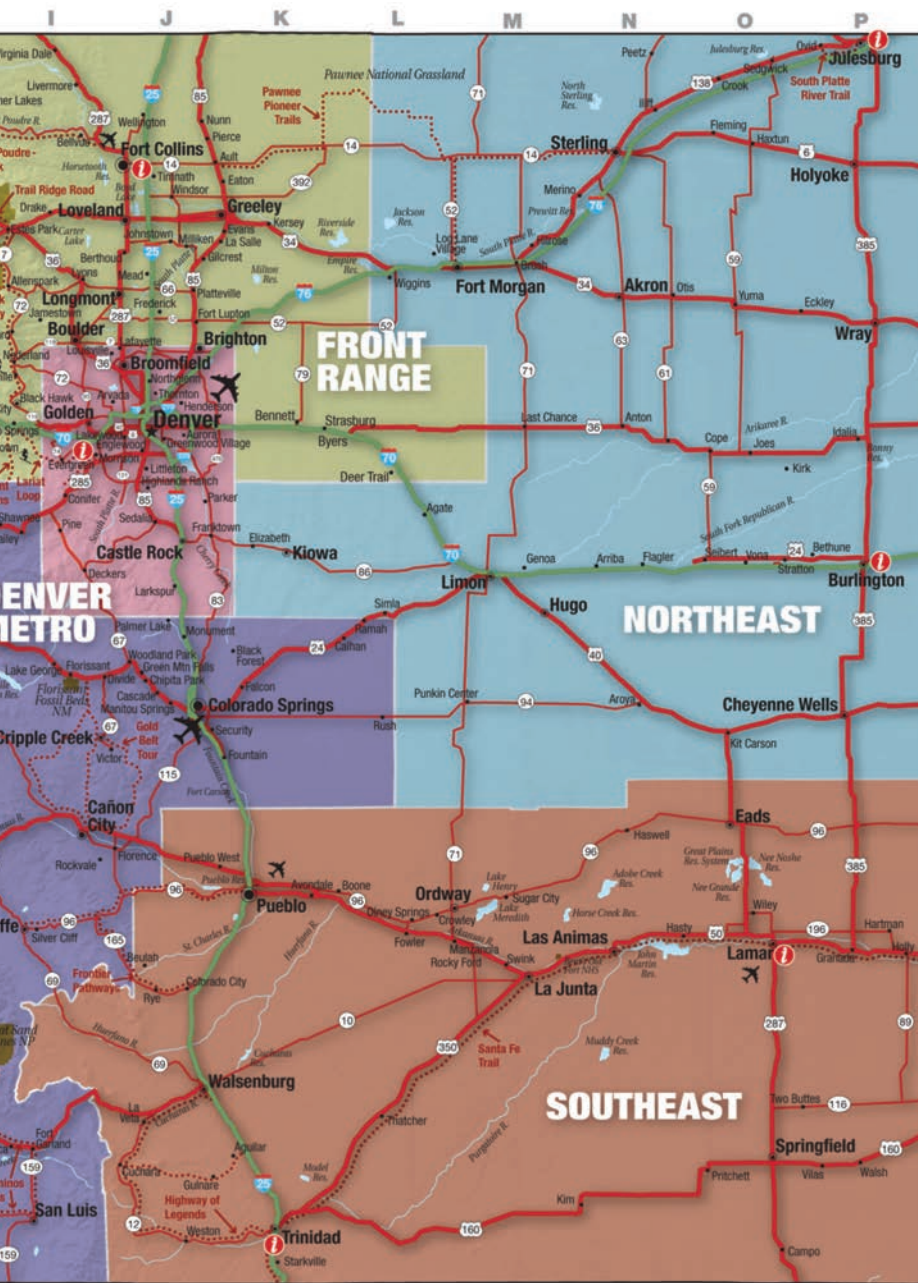
Southwest Region

Colorado Welcome Center at Cortez

928 E. Main St.
Cortez, CO 81321
970-565-4048
Noel.Coolley@state.co.us



Getting around is easier.



Amtrak Services Colorado

Two Amtrak passenger train routes travel through Colorado. The **California Zephyr** connects San Francisco and Chicago with regular stops in the newly renovated Union Station Denver, Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, Winter Park and Fort Morgan. The **Southwest Chief** connects Los Angeles and Chicago with stops in Trinidad, La Junta and Lamar, Colorado. (amtrak.com/west-train-routes)

In January 2017 Amtrak introduced the **Winter Park Express** seasonal route linking Denver and Winter Park Resort. Developed for ride-in/ride-out skiing, the Express operates Saturdays, Sundays and holiday Mondays through late March. An option for groups chartering their own car is in the works. (winterparkresort.com/plan-your-trip/getting-here/winter-park-express)



Take Flight to Colorado

Denver International Airport is serviced by 24 airlines providing direct non-stop service from 186 destinations, including 23 international destinations. DEN is the sixth busiest airport in the United States, 18th busiest in the world and, with more than 58 million passengers, one of the busiest airline hubs in the world. It features more than 140 restaurants, shops and services.

Air Canada, American Airlines, Delta Airlines and United Airlines service **Eagle County Airport** in Gypsum, Colorado. United Express, United Airlines and American Airlines provide commercial service to the **Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport**, Gunnison. Non-stop daily service to Dallas-Fort Worth, Phoenix and Denver is available at the **Durango-La Plata County Airport**. The **Northern Colorado Regional Airport** in Loveland anticipates commercial service in the third quarter 2018. Alaska, Allegiant, American, Delta, Frontier and United airlines service **Colorado Springs Airport** with non-stop service to more than 17 destinations. **Yampa Valley Regional Airport** in Hayden, Colorado features 12 non-stop destinations serviced by Alaska, American, Delta and United airlines. **Grand Junction Regional Airport** receives flights from Denver, Salt Lake City, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Dallas-Fort Worth. (colorado.com/getting-here/airports)

Colorado Driving Distances At a glance, this handy chart shows distances in miles between popular tourist cities.

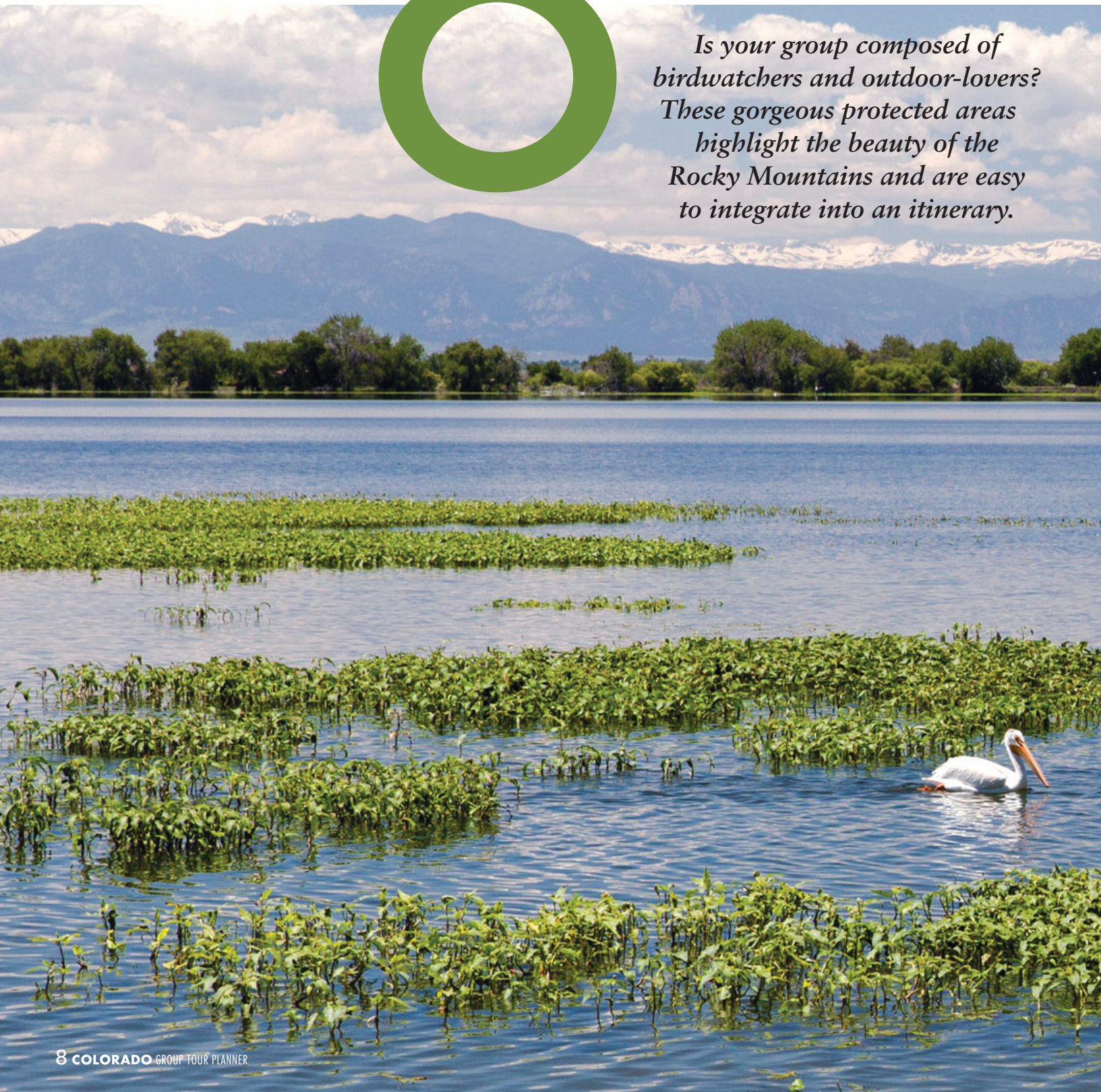
	Aspen/Snowmass	Boulder	Glenwood Springs	Colorado Springs	Cortez	Denver	Durango	Estes Park	Fort Collins	Georgetown	Golden	Grand Junction	Greeley	Ignacio	Leadville	Sterling
Aspen/Snowmass	0	165	42	156	270	159	242	208	219	115	151	128	218	272	59	282
Boulder	165	0	163	97	393	29	348	37	67	57	20	255	57	339	112	142
Glenwood Springs	42	163	0	222	312	157	246	206	217	113	149	87	216	270	88	280
Colorado Springs	156	97	222	0	358	70	314	133	133	111	81	309	124	304	128	197
Cortez	270	393	312	358	0	381	46	430	441	354	372	227	440	68	297	504
Denver	159	29	157	70	381	0	336	65	67	45	15	243	56	327	100	128
Durango	242	348	246	314	46	336	0	385	397	310	328	167	396	32	253	459
Estes Park	208	37	206	133	430	65	385	0	42	88	56	288	49	374	143	155
Fort Collins	219	67	217	133	441	67	397	42	0	105	73	303	42	388	161	102
Georgetown	115	57	113	111	354	45	310	88	105	0	37	200	101	300	57	168
Golden	151	20	149	81	372	15	328	56	73	37	0	234	63	318	92	135
Grand Junction	128	255	87	309	227	243	167	288	303	200	234	0	302	191	174	366
Greeley	218	57	216	124	440	56	396	49	42	101	63	302	0	386	159	100
Ignacio	272	339	270	304	68	327	32	374	388	300	318	191	386	0	244	450
Leadville	59	112	88	128	297	100	253	143	161	57	92	174	159	244	0	223
Sterling	282	142	280	197	504	128	459	155	102	168	135	366	100	450	223	0

FLOCK TO THESE

8

COLORADO STATE PARKS

*Is your group composed of
birdwatchers and outdoor-lovers?
These gorgeous protected areas
highlight the beauty of the
Rocky Mountains and are easy
to integrate into an itinerary.*



T

he dramatic mountainsides and crystal-clear lakes throughout the Centennial State are protected by an expansive state park system. Not only are these 43 locations frequented by avid campers and boaters, they're visited annually by hundreds of migratory bird and mammal species. This variety of animal life makes the park system one of the most biodiverse destinations in the world, particularly for birdwatchers. Many of these parks are close to major Colorado

cities, making them ideal day-trip destinations to add to an itinerary, and most feature visitor centers and friendly staffs eager to showcase the local beauty. No matter your group's preference, the state park system features trails, staff members and amenities for operators to tailor to any taste. The Migratory Bird Act of 1918 is celebrating its 100th anniversary, so what better way to continue the legacy of protecting these beautiful species than with a visit to Colorado's welcoming state parks? Consider these eight options when crafting your next Colorado tour.



American white pelicans swim along the shore in Barr Lake State Park, which offers stunning Front Range views and birdwatching opportunities 30 minutes from downtown Denver.

■ BARR LAKE STATE PARK

Over 350 species of migratory and resident birds converge in the marshland and cottonwood groves that surround Barr Lake, a 1,900-acre reservoir that has attracted sportsmen and naturalists since the 1880s. A mecca for birdwatchers, the park is consistently one of the most frequented state parks for naturalists in the Rocky Mountains and carries a large staff that will happily show your group members banding stations and secluded areas to watch flocks that have migrated here for centuries. Conveniently located 30 minutes northeast of downtown Denver, the park features hiking trails that circle the lake and includes prime viewing stations and boardwalks in boating-free zones. Your group can witness thousands of egrets, ospreys and hawks that nest here every spring, while numerous gazebos are ideal mealtime retreats.



Orchard Oriole

■ HIGHLINE LAKE STATE PARK

Located 30 minutes from Grand Junction, this oasis attracts hundreds of bird species and visitors alike seeking water and respite from the high-desert environment of western Colorado. Nearly 200 species can be observed within the park's borders, including vermilion flycatchers, loons and loggerhead shrike. Migrating blue herons, golden eagles and snowy egret can be spotted in different seasons, while the placid waters of the park's Mack Mesa Lake is a rich home for grebes, loons and shorebirds. If your group plans on exploring the area during winter, bald and golden eagles are common in the leafless trees along the water and can be seen hunting fish above the lake. Nearby Grand Junction also offers several affordable hotel options along with easy access to attractions such as Colorado National Monument.

■ CHATFIELD STATE PARK

The horseshoe-shaped Chatfield Reservoir boasts numerous picnic pavilions, but its signature feature is the 345 bird species that nest in the park's many glens and waterways. Set alongside the South Platte River, Plum Creek and the crucial wildlife corridor that surrounds them, this park is so rich in biodiversity it was granted a field office by the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. Staffers can equip your group with binoculars and field guides before showcasing the area's ornithological residents, which include bald eagles, white pelicans and the elusive burrowing owl in Owl Grove. Groups embarking on a day-trip venture and eyeing the park's stunning Front Range views can access nearly all trails from the main parking lot.

■ STEAMBOAT LAKE STATE PARK

Created by crystal-clear snow runoff from nearby Hahns Peak, this high-altitude state park is most beautiful in the early autumn when the aspen trees turn a brilliant gold. However, Steamboat Lake is a recreation destination year-round, and visitors have numerous opportunities to hike along pristine trails, birdwatch in the summer and relax at the numerous picnic pavilions. Birdwatchers in your group will want to seek out the sandhill cranes and savannah sparrows that nest along the rich treeline of the lake perimeter and listen for the song of the mountain bluebird. Nearby Steamboat Springs resorts and hotels offer lodging with convenient access to more hiking trails and golf courses.

■ MANCOS STATE PARK

Conveniently located off the San Juan Skyway, 12 miles from Mesa Verde National Park and less than an hour from Durango, this beautiful park surrounding Jackson Gulch Reservoir was inhabited by the Ancestral Puebloans before being converted into a thriving nature preserve. Groups seeking a cozy retreat can lodge in the park's famous all-season yurts—circular cabins—while history buffs will enjoy the prehistoric Anasazi Indian ruins at the nearby Anasazi Heritage Center. Birdwatchers can explore the park's five-mile nature trails that surround Jackson Gulch Reservoir's shoreline and spot a vivid indigo bunting or migrating Canada geese, and the park is also home to several hummingbirds, including the black-chinned and broad-tailed varieties.

■ MUELLER STATE PARK

These spring-fed meadows in the shadow of Pikes Peak were once hunting grounds for the Ute people and grazing areas for 19th century homesteaders before being converted into a 5,000-acre nature preserve. Less than an hour from Colorado Springs, the park is an ideal day-trip for groups looking to hike through 55 miles of backcountry trails or use the thick conifer forests for an evening campfire. The area's dramatic rock outcroppings and dense wildflower meadows also make for ideal birdwatching locations, especially for groups aiming to spot the rare dusky grouse. These drab-colored ground-dwellers conceal their nests under logs and shrubbery, but rangers are on-hand to point them out in addition to more colorful park residents such as the red-naped sapsucker and golden eagle. Other options for groups include ranger-led hikes along the Meadows Nature Trail and naturalist amphitheater programs offered throughout the summer.



Roxborough State Park

■ LAKE PUEBLO STATE PARK

Southern Colorado's premier recreation location boasts 60 miles of shoreline and beautiful views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range, but it's also notable as one of the most diverse birds of prey populations in the American West. The park's piñon-juniper woodland and lush riparian ecosystems are mating grounds for majestic bald eagles and red-tail hawks, while ospreys nest in designated boxes on the western edge of the park for visitors to discreetly view. Your group can also spot turkey vultures, kestrels and prairie falcons hunting for prey along the lake's shore, while more docile species like flycatchers and nuthatches take residence in the riparian zone surrounding the lake's tributary: the Arkansas River. Operators can also consider a visit to the nearby Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo, a raptor rehabilitation facility staffed by dedicated ornithologists happy to lead group tours.

■ ROXBOROUGH STATE PARK

Dominated by dramatic views of the Colorado Front Range's panoramic hogback formations, this park includes rocky cliffs, mountain shrubland and open prairies teeming with rare species. Miles of hiking trails through the park's sandstone crevices offer views of canyon wren, rock wren and a variety of raptor species, while the mixed-grass prairies support horned lark, western meadowlark and lark sparrow. If your group is particularly adventurous, venture the strenuous trail to Carpenter Peak, a 1,000-foot outcropping with stunning views of Waterton Canyon. ●

Groups interested in a birdwatching excursion should consider a guided tour in the Breckenridge area (left) or a self-guided hike through Roxborough State Park (right).

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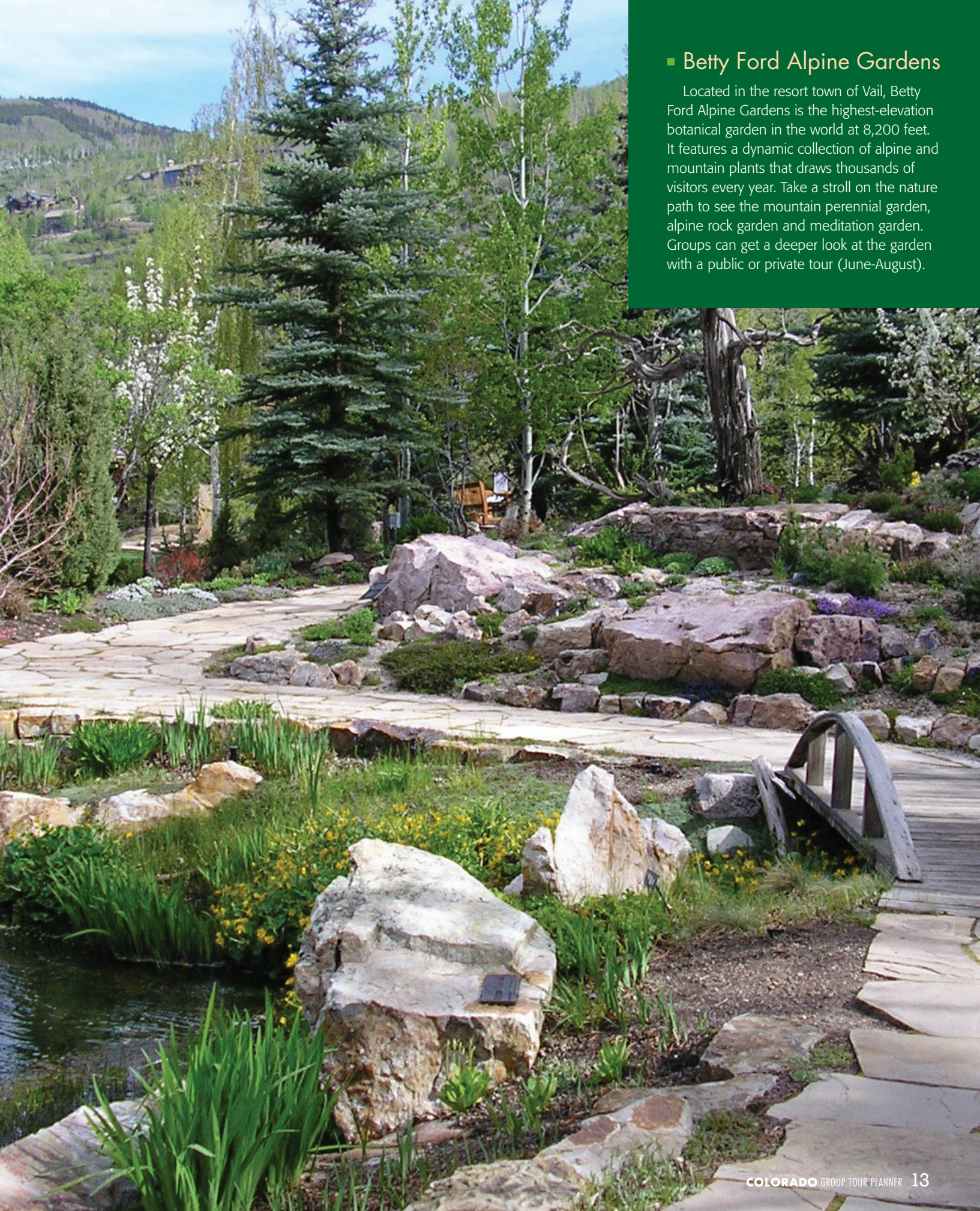
Scott Dressel-Martin/Denver Botanic Gardens



BOTANICAL BEAUTY

Colorado's horticultural showplaces add a splash of color to group itineraries

Colorado is known for its natural splendor and abundance of wildflowers. While taking a hike in the mountains is a great way to experience Colorado's budding beauties, there are other places your tour group can take in nature in all its grandeur. Colorado has award-winning botanical gardens all across the state. No matter what kind of flora you love, each of these horticultural attractions features hundreds of local and exotic species. There's truly something for everyone. Here's a quick look at some of the most beautiful gardens in Colorado.



■ Betty Ford Alpine Gardens

Located in the resort town of Vail, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is the highest-elevation botanical garden in the world at 8,200 feet. It features a dynamic collection of alpine and mountain plants that draws thousands of visitors every year. Take a stroll on the nature path to see the mountain perennial garden, alpine rock garden and meditation garden. Groups can get a deeper look at the garden with a public or private tour (June-August).

■ Chatfield Farms

A branch of the Denver Botanic Gardens, Chatfield Farms is a 700-acre plant refuge just south of Denver. It pays homage to traditional cultivated gardens and early agriculture in Colorado. Guests can explore vegetable and herb gardens, orchards, pumpkin patches and corn mazes.

■ Hudson Gardens & Event Center

Located near historic downtown Littleton, Hudson Gardens is an escape from the hustle of the city. It features miles of walking trails, vibrant gardens, soaring trees, art installations and colorful wetlands. It's the perfect place for groups to practice their photography skills, do some birdwatching or learn some new gardening techniques.

■ Montrose Botanic Gardens

This inspiring garden is located in the high-desert environment of Montrose. Hundreds of people visit here to learn how to create a stunning, blooming landscape in the dry, harsh Colorado conditions. Tour planners should allow plenty of time to stroll through collections like the rock garden, the cactus and succulent garden, and the valley garden, to see how native and non-native plants can thrive in this ecosystem.

■ Western Colorado Botanical Gardens

Over in Grand Junction, this 15-acre site not only showcases Colorado flora but also a plethora of exotic plants. There are over 600 tropical plants from around the world located in the greenhouse and around the grounds. Connect with our fluttering friends at the Butterfly House, and keep your eyes peeled for toads, turtles and several native birds in the gardens.



■ Denver Botanic Gardens

Located on York Street in the Congress Park neighborhood of Denver, these feature a wide collection spread across 24 acres. Some of the most distinctive gardens are dedicated to Western varieties that are unique to high-altitude climates and geography. There are 17 gardens showcasing plants that thrive in Colorado as well as internationally inspired and ornamental gardens honoring flora from all over the world.



Before you throw on a sun hat and grab your camera, here are some tips that will help you prepare for your garden visit:

Dress Properly

Most, if not all, botanical gardens are outside and feature acres upon acres of beautiful plants to explore. Groups can expect to walk and stand, a lot. Wear comfortable shoes that can handle a few miles of walking and can stand to get a little dirty. It's smart to dress in layers, no matter what time of year. Colorado weather can be unpredictable at times, and it's not uncommon to have a 70-degree day in winter or a crisp 50-degree morning in summer.



Scott Dressel-Martin/Denver Botanic Gardens

Respect the Rules of the Garden

Every garden has some visitor guidelines that everyone should familiarize themselves with before they visit. They will vary from garden to garden, but some rules are universal:

- Treat plants kindly and don't pick the flowers.
- Stay on the designated trails.
- Don't feed or touch wild animals that may live in the gardens.
- Throw garbage in trash cans or recycling bins.

Pack Appropriately

A day at the gardens is not just a walk in the park. To get the most out of your visit, there are a few supplies your group travelers should bring along. Many gardens are pretty expansive, so bring a full water bottle to stay hydrated. This is especially important in the Colorado thin air. And speaking of high altitude, be sure to apply sunscreen and bring some along for reapplication. The sun's rays are much stronger here. If you're really into flowers and plants, bring along an identification guide or pick one up in the welcome center so you can get the most of your visit. And be sure to bring along a camera or your phone to capture every gorgeous moment. ●

Left: Guests at Denver Botanic Gardens enjoy a wide range of plantings. The popular Romantic Garden (below) is a prime wedding venue.

Scott Dressel-Martin/Denver Botanic Gardens



VISIONS — of the — WEST

RIP-ROARING EXAMPLES OF
COWBOY CULTURE
CAPTIVATE GROUPS TOURING
COLORADO



The Buffalo Bill Grave
and Museum, on Lookout
Mountain near Denver,
honors the famous showman
and buffalo hunter.

O

riginating in Mexico in the 1500s, cowboys played an important role during the era of U.S. westward expansion. By the 1800s, the American cowboy had created a reputation and iconic lifestyle that was glamorized in countless books, with movies and television shows following in the 20th century. It was a hard life, and while over the years the number of working cowboys has declined, Western culture remains alive and well throughout Colorado

in its attractions, museums, ranches, entertainment and special events, cuisine, craftsmanship and, of course, rodeo.

Rodeo is to the American cowboy what soccer is to most of the world. Colorado's Western spirit thrives at rodeos across the state, from January's **National Western Stock Show** in Denver to July's **Cattlemen's Days** in Gunnison. They feature the pros in such events

Cowboy poetry festivals are popular and take place throughout the state. Performances and stories portray the colorful culture and strong heritage that define the true American cowboy.

The chuckwagon is a symbol of the rugged individualism and pioneer spirit of the American frontier. This romantic image of the West can be found at chuckwagon dinner experiences throughout Colorado. Each one is unique, but family-friendly entertainment and plenty of delicious food are constants throughout.

The **M Lazy C** at Lake George, west of Colorado Springs, delights groups with a delicious grill-cooked dinner and a Western music show. Also enjoy a hayride and a campfire under the star-studded Colorado sky.

Durango's favorite family entertainment venue since 1969, **Bar D Chuckwagon**, features wholesome food and lively cowboy music. Groups should arrive early as there is plenty more to enjoy, including



Rodeos throughout Colorado, such as July's **Cattlemen's Days** in Gunnison, feature events like steer wrestling, bronc riding and barrel racing.

as bronc riding, steer wrestling, team roping, barrel racing and bull riding. Concerts by top-notch country entertainers add musical magic to the competitions.

Colorado's premier summer Western celebration is the **Greeley Stampede**, which observes its 100th year in 2021. The 10-day festival leading up to the Fourth of July attracts more than 250,000 people. Besides rodeo action, the jam-packed schedule includes carnival rides, a demolition derby, Western art show and Independence Day Parade. Concert headliners have included Blake Shelton, Diamond Rio, Lady Antebellum, Darius Rucker and Sawyer Brown.

Take a step back in time and experience the Wild West at **Buffalo Bill Days** in Golden, Colorado. Activities include everything from mutton busting to a parade, all in honor of Buffalo Bill. While in Golden, check out the historic downtown area, which dates back to the early 1850s when the first settlers came looking for gold.

the Bar D Train, a shooting gallery, hayrides, gold panning, horse shoes, nature trails, roping, a leather shop, blacksmith shop, the Gift Gallery, Chocolate Shop and Bunkhouse Ice Cream and Java.

Museums attest to Colorado's proud cowboy heritage. In the Gunnison-Crested Butte Valley, visit historic schoolhouses and rail yards at the **Gunnison Pioneer Museum**. Go back in time to the days of Tony's Conoco, a hardware store and gas station located in downtown Crested Butte from 1883-1996. Exhibits include information about early miners who made Crested Butte their home, a model train and a feature on the history of skiing in the Gunnison Valley.

The **ProRodeo Hall of Fame & Museum of the American Cowboy** in Colorado Springs pays tribute to cowboys (men and women) participating in the professional sport of rodeo. Live rodeo animals are part of the museum.

Located in the Pikes Peak Region, the **Ghost Town Museum** was

created in 1954 to preserve a piece of Colorado's Wild West heritage. It is housed inside a historic stone structure and offers hands-on activities, such as cranking a butter churn and operating an old-time arcade or nickelodeon. A short film on the gold mining era is followed by panning for real gold in the seasonal panning areas.

One of the most famous cowboys in history, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody epitomized the Old West. Upon his request he was buried atop Lookout Mountain, just a short drive from Denver, in 1917. The **Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum** opened in 1921 and offers a look into life in the Old West, with exhibits on Cody's life, the Wild West shows, Indian artifacts including Sitting Bull's bows and arrows, Western art and firearms. Every February the museum hosts a Buffalo Bill Birthday Celebration featuring costumed volunteers discussing the Native Americans, cowboys and buffalo that were such a vital part of Buffalo Bill's life.

All of this and much more throughout Colorado provide a glimpse of a strong, independent and romantic Western heritage. Have your group discover for themselves and along the way experience the downhome hospitality and natural beauty that make Colorado so appealing. ●



It's all about horses, cowboys and cowgirls, and vestiges of the true West at annual events like Cattlemen's Days in Gunnison.



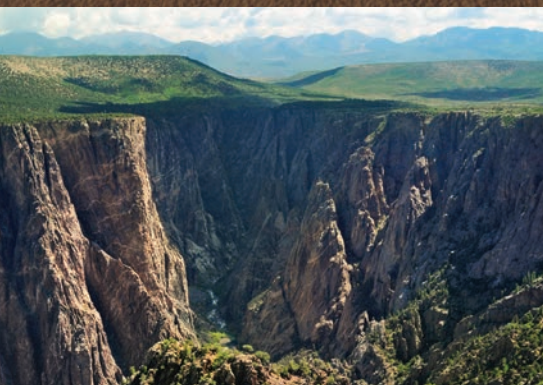
TAKE PEOPLE BEYOND WHAT THEY KNOW

Some states aren't as lucky to even have one. Colorado has four national parks, each renowned for their beauty and recognized for their attractions. Stumble upon ancient cliff dwellings or the tallest sand dunes in the country. Tour through unmistakable black canyons and the unforgettable Rocky Mountains in all their glory.

[TOURS.COLORADO.COM](https://tours.colorado.com)



COLORADO
COME TO LIFE



SAVVY TOUR OPERATORS ARE ENHANCING THE TRAVELER'S EXPERIENCE WITH A RANGE OF OPTIONS

The days of the pre-packaged itinerary are slowly disappearing. Many operators planning tours are now providing their clients multiple tour tracks in select destinations allowing them to choose what interests them from a range of activities and attractions.



olorado's extensive list of attractions and activities cannot be squeezed into one tour package. While there are several operators offering comprehensive itineraries throughout the state, it's hard to find one that meets every traveler's budget and needs. Some prefer historic sites and museum visits, while others are more adventurous and crave the outdoors, and others like a little of both. Here is a sampling of Colorado destinations and activities where planners will discover a variety of options.

■ DENVER

The Mile High City is buzzing with activity. This former cowtown has seen immense growth over the last few years, and, as a result, massive revivals and renovations to its popular attractions.

Experience Art & Culture

For an art option you'll head over to the hip River North (RiNo) neighborhood for a **Denver Graffiti Tour**. This two-hour guided walk explores the murals and other street art of the RiNo Art District. You'll learn about the artists, how the art was created and the evolution of the area over the years. The tour ends at **Denver Central Market**, a gourmet marketplace and food hall where you can grab a bite to eat before embarking on your next adventure.

Discover History

Discover the historic and quirky things that make Colorado what it is at the **History Colorado Center**. Opened in 2012 in the Golden Triangle Museum District, this award-winning establishment features core and rotating exhibits that showcase the state's distant past and more recent stories. Take a couple hours to explore the exhibits. **Union Station**, once a rundown stop for Amtrak trains, has been revitalized into a vibrant social hangout with restaurants, bars, shops and a hotel. It also serves as the main hub of the city's transportation system. You can't visit Denver without taking a photo in front of this iconic downtown building.

Left: Garden of the Gods is an itinerary highlight in the Colorado Springs area. Shown here is Kissing Camels. Bottom: Shoppers take a break at Old Colorado City, a fun retail destination.

■ COLORADO SPRINGS

There's no shortage of things to do and see in the state's second-largest city.

Discover History

The **Western Museum of Mining & Industry** is where the history of mining comes to life. The museum features several interactive exhibits where you can learn to pan for gold, see what rocks you eat and watch a 37-ton Corliss Steam Engine operate. You can even visit with some of the local donkeys.

For Shoppers & Foodies

Add a shopping track with a visit to **Old Colorado City**, or OCC as it's lovingly called. Located on the west side of Colorado Springs, this charming town is brimming with cute shops, boutiques and galleries.

Pick up a memento from your visit, browse some local art and reflect on your day at one of the tasty OCC restaurants.

Explore the Outdoors & Nature

Garden of the Gods, a National Natural Landmark, is a true paradise of towering sandstone formations set against a mountainous backdrop. Active visitors can explore 15 miles of trails that wind through the park, taking in the stunning views of the Rocky Mountains. For a more informative look at the park, join a free guided nature walk led by a knowledgeable volunteer (10 a.m. and 2 p.m. daily). Don't leave without making a stop at the Visitor & Nature Center to learn how the red rocks formed through the new Geo-Trekker theater experience.

Re-energize with a leisurely lunch at the glassed-in cafe at the Red Rocks Visitor Center while enjoying stunning views of the park. Head downtown where you can choose from over 75 eateries.



■ DURANGO

Nestled in the southwest corner of Colorado, Durango is the perfect base to explore Old West heritage, national parks and monuments, and outdoor recreation.

Explore the Outdoors & Nature

Mesa Verde National Park is located about 35 miles west of Durango. This ancient Native American dwelling place gives guests a glimpse into the lives of the Pueblo people who called it home for more than 700 years. The park protects some 5,000 archeological sites, including 600 cliff dwellings. One of the best ways to experience Mesa Verde is with a one-hour, ranger-led tour, which gives guests exclusive access to Cliff Palace or Balcony House. Step inside the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum to view exhibits and dioramas that trace the lives of the Pueblo people.

Discover History

Spend the day with a ride on the **Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad**. This steam train will take you to the historic town of Silverton, offering plenty of photo ops and sights you can't see from the road. Grab a bite to eat in Silverton before heading back to explore **Historic Downtown Durango**. Take a walk down Main Street and admire the architecture of the rustic buildings, including The Strater and General Palmer hotels. Finish off the day with a delicious meal at one of downtown Durango's restaurants, with cuisine ranging from traditional Mexican to classic Italian.

■ GRAND JUNCTION

Where the Rockies meet the Grand Mesa, Grand Junction has all the outdoor activities one could possibly want. Enjoy a day of ruggedness on the high desert, or get in touch with your sophisticated side at one of the many local wineries.

Explore the Outdoors & Nature

Colorado National Monument is a 20,500-acre paradise of red-rock monoliths, cliffs and unparalleled views. A windshield tour along the 23-mile Rim Rock Drive winds from one entrance to the other, offering you a glimpse of the beautiful scenery and great views of the city below. For those who are a little more active, you can take a hike along a scenic trail, like Serpents Trail and Devils Kitchen.

Discover History

For the tour's history buffs, make your way over to **Dinosaur Journey**. This cherished attraction, home to Colorado's best robotic dinosaurs, lets visitors examine real dinosaur fossils, experience a simulated earthquake and witness a working paleontology laboratory. For a taste of the Wild West, visit the **Museum of the West**. Discover the artifacts of the Fremont Indians, check out firearms used by old-time outlaws and take an interactive ride on a stagecoach.

Regardless of the tour options clients choose, end the day with a visit to one of Grand Junction's vineyards, where you can taste all kinds of varietals, from fruit-forward wines to bold Cabernets and Merlots.

Colorado has an endless selection of things to do, no matter which city you choose to visit. Hopefully these recommendations will give you some inspiration for your next trip to Colorado.

Durango & Silverton
Narrow Gauge Railroad



Colorado National Monument



■ GREELEY/FORT COLLINS

A playground of outdoor adventure, history, culture and food is waiting in Northern Colorado. Fort Collins and Greeley offer the amenities of metropolitan cities while maintaining that small-town feel.

For Shoppers & Foodies

Kick off your history and shopping day exploring **Old Town Fort Collins**, which served as inspiration for Disneyland's Main Street USA. Grab a coffee-to-go from one of the local roasters and peruse the boutique shops and galleries. Hear stories of immigrants and gold seekers at historic homes like the **Avery House**, or discover what life was like for workers in the sugar beet industry at the **Museo a de la Tres Colonias**.

Explore the Outdoors & Nature

For a little outdoors adventure, head over to **Horsetooth Reservoir** for an afternoon in nature. You can take a hike or bike ride on the red-stone cliffs that border the lake, or just relax by the water and take in the serene views. If you're visiting in the winter, you can visit **Roosevelt National Forest** for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. Before turning in for the evening, stop at one of the craft breweries for a true taste of Fort Collins.

Discover History

Be sure to make a visit to Greeley's **Centennial Village** part of the history track. This eight-acre living history museum features historic buildings and costumed guides that showcase how early pioneers lived in the high plains. Continue the history lesson with a visit to the

Meeker Home Museum, home of Greeley's founding family, and the **Greeley History Museum**, where you can get an extensive look at Greeley's past and notable community members.

Experience Art & Culture

It may come as a surprise, but Greeley has an incredible performing arts scene. If you have the chance, try to catch a show by the **Stampede Troupe**, Greeley's oldest community theater organization. Or check out a student performance at the **University of Northern Colorado**, which puts on a range of music, visual arts and dance shows. ●



A vertical advertisement for Durango, Colorado. The top half features a steam locomotive (number 481) pulling a train through a mountainous, forested landscape under a blue sky with clouds. The text "Historic. Vibrant. Authentic. Unforgettable." is overlaid on the sky. Below the train, the text reads "Durango offers the best of Colorado coupled with the distinctive spirit of the American Southwest." At the bottom, it says "VISIT DURANGO COLORADO" and "Discover What Awaits | durango.org | groups@durango.org".

A vertical advertisement for Sky Ute Casino Resort. The top half shows a large, modern building with a curved roof and stone accents, illuminated at dusk. The text "EAT. PLAY. STAY. WIN" is prominently displayed in white. Below the building, three small images show a couple dancing, a plate of food, and a slot machine. At the bottom, the text reads "Sky Ute Casino RESORT" and "Owned & operated by the Southern Ute Indian Tribe". The contact information "IGNACIO, COLORADO • 888.842.4180 • SKYUTECASINO.COM" is at the very bottom.

Fun Experiences, Scenic Beauty in Northern Colorado's Front Range

From dramatic sunsets to unique museums to specialty art, your Front Range tour is packed with memories

The historic Old Town neighborhood is the heart of Fort Collins' vibrant downtown.

Tim O'Hara/Visit Fort Collins

5 UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

- Centennial Village ■ Colorado Model Railroad Museum
 - Tour of Historic Fort Collins ■ Big Thompson Canyon
 - Rocky Mountain National Park
- Duration:** Four Days/Four Nights
Available: Spring/Summer/Fall
This itinerary is ideal for: All age groups

DAY 1 • EXPERIENCE FORT COLLINS

Begin your day at the **Silver Grill Cafe** with a hearty breakfast in Northern Colorado's oldest restaurant.

The **Fort Collins Sightseeing and History Bus Tour** by Magic Bus Tours takes visitors on a narrated tour of Old Town Fort Collins, Colorado State University's famous oval, Horsetooth Reservoir and City Park, with surprises and stories along the way.

Lunch at **Mainline Ale House** features their homegrown and homemade menu and handcrafted beers.

The afternoon begins with a visit to the **Fort Collins Museum of Discovery** and its hands-on mixture of science and history. Next, it's the popular guided Private Tour of **New Belgium Brewery**.

Refresh back at the hotel before departure for a cooking demonstration and dinner at **Ginger and Baker**. Explore fun, seasonal recipes and refreshing drinks in the Teaching Kitchen before getting comfortable in The CACHE and enjoying inspired Colorado cuisine.

Overnight at Homewood Suites by Hilton.

DAY 2 • EXPERIENCE GREELEY

Check out and depart Fort Collins for the short drive to Greeley. There you'll have breakfast like a local at **Doug's Diner, Aunt Helen's Coffee House** or **Cranford's Tea Tavern**.

Spend the remainder of your morning at **Centennial Village Museum** at Island Grove Regional Park. This seven-acre living history museum allows visitors to encounter the past as it was over 100 years ago. More than two dozen historic structures and lush historic gardens await your exploration. Visit the Village where grand houses, businesses and animals from the past make their home. It opened in 1976 during the nation's bicentennial and Colorado's centennial. Each part of Centennial Village tells a story, from westward expansion to the immigrant story to town living in the early 20th century.

Enjoy lunch at the **Greeley Chop House** for fine dining, **The Rio** for seriously good Mexican or **Stuff a Burger Bar** for a custom burger. Each is located in historic Downtown Greeley.

Get ready to be amazed at the **Colorado Model Railroad Museum**. This world-class model railroad is the finest in the world, and features stunning landscapes and realistic trains. Watch the trains close-up as they roll through busy towns, wind their way along river valleys and cross high trestles. Volunteers are on hand to tell the story to groups.

Check in to one of Greeley's group-friendly hotels and refresh before dinner. Your options include **Meeker's a Colorado Kitchen & Bar**, a premier farm-to-fork experience. **Lucky Fins Seafood Grill** features original, great tasting seafood dishes and meats. **Pelligrini's Ristorante Italiano-Bar** is Greeley's truly authentic Italian restaurant.



New Belgium Brewery

Richard Haro/Visit Fort Collins

DAY 3 • EXPERIENCE ESTES PARK, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Breakfast at your hotel before departing for the scenic drive on US 34 through **Big Thompson Canyon's** unique granite walls to Estes Park.

Stop at the new **Estes Park Visitor Center** before a morning of strolling and shopping. Estes Park has more than 300 shops with a variety of goods from handcrafted Southwestern arts to giftware to fine apparel. It's a Northern Colorado shopping destination.

For lunch, **Mama Rose's Restaurant** on the Riverwalk offers views of the Big Thompson River with traditional Italian favorites. **Poppy's Pizza & Grill** downtown on the Riverwalk is a favorite for specialty pizzas, burgers and sandwiches.

Travel Trail Ridge Road from Estes Park into **Rocky Mountain National Park** and experience a change from a forest of ponderosa pine and aspen to one of fir and spruce to wind-battered, stunted trees to the alpine tundra. Despite its harshness, Trail Ridge Road visitors witness vibrant life and vivid colors. Arrive at the Alpine Visitor Center and marvel at extraordinary views of the alpine tundra. A bookstore, gift shop, snack bar and restrooms are available. Rangers are ready to lead walks in the "Land Above the Trees."

Return to Estes Park for dinner at **Hunters Chop House**. A casual steakhouse in hunting lodge-style surroundings, they're serving beef, pork, poultry and elk. Going to your Greeley hotel, witness a sunset as you travel through Big Thompson Canyon.

DAY 4 • EXPERIENCE LOVELAND

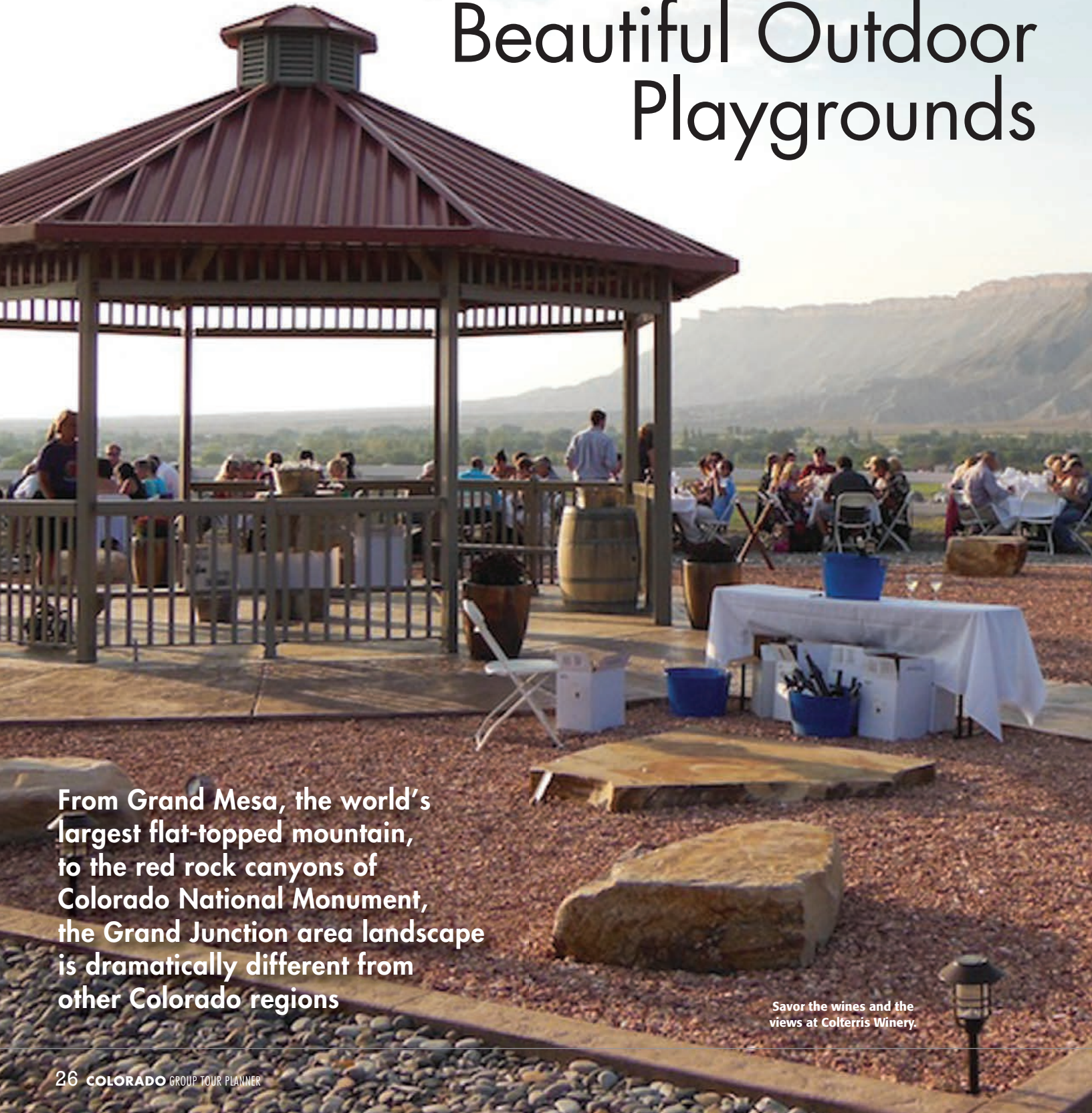
Begin your day with breakfast and hotel checkout before traveling to Loveland and the **Loveland Visitor Center**. Take a moment to browse merchandise from more than 25 Loveland artisans and manufacturers. Adjacent to the Visitor Center, **McWhinney-Hahn Sculpture Park** has a walking path that is handicap-accessible.

Loveland is a vibrant, thriving art community with bronze casting at the forefront. Your morning will be completed with a tour of **Bronze Services of Loveland, Inc.** Nearby **Benson Sculpture Garden** has 158 pieces on permanent display by world-renowned artists.

For lunch, the buffet and reserved seating await hungry travelers at the Loveland **Pizza Ranch**.

Close by is **Johnstown and Scheels**, Colorado's largest selection of sports, fashion and footwear. Here's the last chance to shop for that perfect item. Depart Northern Colorado's Front Range with memories that will last forever.

Discover One of America's Most Beautiful Outdoor Playgrounds



From Grand Mesa, the world's largest flat-topped mountain, to the red rock canyons of Colorado National Monument, the Grand Junction area landscape is dramatically different from other Colorado regions

Savor the wines and the views at Colteris Winery.

5 UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

- Colorado National Monument
- Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
- Grand Mesa ■ Colorado's Wine Country
- Downtown Grand Junction with Art on the Corner

Duration: Three Days

Available: Year-round

This itinerary is ideal for: Adults



Grand Mesa

DAY 1

Arrive in Colorado's Wine Country, with 23 wineries, and begin your visit with a tour of award-winning **Grande River Vineyards** followed by one of the area's most popular attractions, **Suncrest Orchard Alpacas and Fiberworks**. Enjoy a spectacular view of the valley and award-winning wine at **Colterris at the Overlook Tasting Room**. The next stop will be one of the area's beautiful lavender farms, **Sprigs and Sprouts**, where you will learn about lavender and the many beneficial products that can be made from the plant.

Check in to one of Grand Junction's group-friendly hotels before departing for the evening to savor a "Taste of Grand Junction" at a Winemakers Dinner at **Varaison Vineyards and Winery** or **The Chateau at Two Rivers Winery**.

DAY 2

Get ready for a fun-filled day to include Colorado National Monument, Downtown Grand Junction and a float trip. The red-rock canyons, buttes, spires and sandstone formations of **Colorado National Monument**, ranked fourth on National Geographic's list of the Top Underappreciated Parks, can be easily seen from Rim Rock Drive, a 23-mile national historic drive, located just a few minutes from I-70. Enjoy "Breakfast on the Monument" with a stunning view of the majestic canyons that are often referred to as a mini Grand Canyon.

The next stop will be historic **Downtown Grand Junction**, a tree-lined walking zone with its many shops, galleries and restaurants. Discover Art on the Corner, a collection of over 100 art sculptures that line beautiful Main Street. Enjoy lunch at one of the many privately owned restaurants featuring locally sourced fruits, vegetables, meats and beverages. End your day with a relaxing float trip on the Colorado River through **Rim Rock Adventures**. You will see majestic views of Colorado National Monument, the **Grand Mesa** and the **Bookcliff Mountains**. The river corridor is a paradise for birds, such as bald eagles, hawks, canyon wren and blue heron.

Savor a tasty buffalo brisket dinner by the river before calling it a day and heading back to the hotel.

GRAND JUNCTION IS VERY ACCOMMODATING

Visit Grand Junction has more than 30 hotel and motel members.

The Grand Vista Hotel and Clarion Hotel of Grand Junction are Tour Colorado members and welcome groups.

DAY 3

Begin your morning with a drive to **Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park**. Big enough to be overwhelming, still intimate enough to feel the pulse of time, Black Canyon of the Gunnison exposes you to some of the steepest cliffs, oldest rock and craggiest spires in North America. With two million years to work, the Gunnison River, along with the forces of weathering, has sculpted this vertical wilderness of rock, water and sky.

Your next stop is **Pioneer Town**, where you will literally step into the past to see an outstanding museum of 24 historic buildings with displays, most of which contain actual artifacts from the late 1800s through the early and mid-1900s. After a breathtaking drive up to **Grand Mesa**, the largest flat-topped mountain in the world and a nationally designated scenic byway, enjoy lunch at **Mesa Lakes Lodge**. With over 300 stream-fed lakes, Grand Mesa offers a stunning alpine environment with views of some of Colorado's and Utah's most majestic mountain ranges.

End your Grand Junction adventure with dinner on the rooftop terrace of the historic **Avalon Theater** in downtown Grand Junction. Originally constructed in 1923, this performing arts center includes a new addition crowned with a beautiful rooftop terrace affording tremendous valley views.

DAY 4

Breakfast at your hotel before departing Grand Junction having experienced a truly memorable adventure.

EXTEND YOUR TOUR

Take an extra day of touring to visit Glenwood Springs and Glenwood Springs Hot Springs and Resort.



Matt Incley/Wiles

Tour Colorado comprises group-friendly attractions, hotels, destination marketing organizations, tour operators and service providers that are eager to work with you to make your next visit to Colorado a memorable one.

Start and finish your Colorado tour planning with the following members.



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Holiday Inn Denver-Cherry Creek

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Sky Ute Casino Resort

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Ignacio, CO 81137
Jeff Lyman

www.skyutecasino.com
jeff.lyman@skyutecasino.com
800-876-7017

Located amidst the rugged beauty and scenic landscapes of the diverse Four Corners region, Sky Ute Casino Resort is the perfect hub from which to explore the endless recreational options that are available.



Strater Hotel

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Tori Ossola

[tossola@strater.com](http://www.strater.com)
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GJ GRAND JUNCTION COLORADO
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Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau

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 Colorado Springs, CO 80903
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www.visitcos.com
 floy@visitcos.com
 719-685-7635

Discover Colorado Springs' inspired scenery at places like Garden of the Gods Park and the purple mountain majesty of Pikes Peak all in one day.



Durango Area Tourism Office

802 Main Ave.
 Durango, CO 81301
www.durango.org
 sales@durango.org
 970-247-3500

The Durango Area Tourism Office is an independent non-profit organization operating with the mission to promote Durango and La Plata County's multitude of tourism attractions, events and services.



Logan County Visitors Center

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Visit Denver

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 Denver, CO 80202
 Jenna VanOort
www.visitdenver.com
 jvanoort@visitdenver.com
 303-571-9446

Visit Denver staff can assist with finding a hotel room block, itinerary assistance, unique tours and activities and group dining options.



Visit Fort Collins

19 Old Town Square, Suite 137
 Fort Collins, CO 80524
 Lindsey Rohrbaugh
www.visitftcollins.com
 lindsey@ftcollins.com
 800-274-3678

Fort Collins' ideal proximity to Rocky Mountain National Park, Denver and DIA make it a perfect location to bring your tour group. Fort Collins is known for its craft beer scene and all-American downtown.



Visit Grand Junction

740 Horizon Drive
 Grand Junction, CO 81506
www.visitgrandjunction.com
 970-244-1480
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Grand Junction is a popular tour destination offering Colorado National Monument, 23 wineries and a variety of mild to wild activities - located four hours from Denver and Salt Lake City and on the most popular Amtrak train route.



Visit Greeley

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 Greeley, CO 80631
 Amy Dugan
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We want to make sure that your event will be a success and allow you time to focus on other details. Visit Greeley offers pre- and post-activities, day trips for spouses, and itineraries.



Visit Longmont

512 4th Ave., #103
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www.arkansasrivertours.com

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 Durango, CO 81301
 Krystal Scarborough
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 970-335-9805

www.bardchuckwagon.com

The Bar D Wranglers perform songs of cowboys and the old west, comedy, and lively instrumentals after supper to entertain the whole family.

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Colorado Model Railroad Museum

680 10th St.
 Greeley, CO 80631
 Michelle Kempema
www.cmr.org
 michelle@cmr.org
 970-392-2934

The Colorado Model Railroad Museum houses America's most scenic model railroad, an immersive experience for all ages. Private hours for groups available.



Cumbres & Toltec Railroad

5234 B Hwy 285
 Antonito, CO 81120
 Corrine Williams
www.cumbrestoltec.com
 cwilliams@cumbrestoltec.com
 877-890-2737

The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad steam trains depart out of Antonito, CO, and Chama, NM daily at 10 a.m. from Memorial Day weekend until mid-October.



Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad

479 Main Ave.
 Durango, CO 81301
 Jaime Golson
 Carrie Whitley
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Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park

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www.glenwoodcaverns.com
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Georgetown Loop Railroad

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Gray Line Pikes Peak Tours

76 S. Sierra Madre St., Unit F
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History Colorado Museums

1200 Broadway
 Denver, CO 80203
 Kelsey Voskamp
 kelsey.voskamp@state.co.us
 303-447-8679

www.historycolorado.org
 History Colorado's mission is to inspire generations to find wonder and meaning in our past and to engage in creating a better Colorado.



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JEFF LYMAN

Sky Ute Casino Resort

Jeff Lyman talks about his work at a top gaming destination and being a member of Tour Colorado



Sky Ute Casino
RESORT
Owned & operated by the Southern Ute Indian Tribe

Europe. Guests can enjoy behind-the-house tours of the archive room, where historic headdresses, beaded vests and leggings are proudly displayed. The museum also houses a collection of Ute beadwork, books on Ute and Native American history, and an archive on local and regional history.

"I moved over to sales over five years ago," said Jeff. "And from the beginning, management really encouraged me to focus on groups. They have been very supportive of my efforts."

Sky Ute Casino Resort attends ABA, NTA

"I moved over to sales over five years ago. And from the beginning, management really encouraged me to focus on groups. They have been very supportive of my efforts."

—Jeff Lyman

and TAP, in addition to its involvement in Tour Colorado and the Grand Circle. Lyman maintains that repetition is key to success in the group sector. "Tour operators need to see you a few times in order to earn their trust."

Jeff knows he is not a one-man show. "Carrie Whitley (Tour Colorado director) is a mentor of mine," he said. "She helped get me started." Collaboration between Tour Colorado members across the state maximizes a collective return on investment. Members network, share leads and co-op booth space, and split travel expenses.

The success of the Sky Ute business notwithstanding, Jeff understands that the fundamental premise of his work is to participate in preserving the sacred traditions of the Southern Ute tribe and using them to expose visitors to their beauty. Needless to say, they are in good hands. ●

The hotel group sales manager of Sky Ute Casino Resort takes pride in helping to preserve the traditions of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.

Jeff Lyman grew up thinking southwestern Colorado was his backyard. "My mom grew up in Ignacio, Colorado, and my aunt and uncle owned 300 acres here." Ten years ago, when the opportunity to return to his childhood stomping grounds came, Jeff jumped at the chance.

That opportunity proved enormously fruitful, as Jeff witnessed the financial and cultural benefits of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe's contributions to the community. The tribe's heritage of pain, beauty and cultural resilience is tied to the land in which expertise in oil and gas production has been converted to economic prosperity. The region has experienced an unprecedented boom in consumer and business spending, benefiting the likes of Sky Ute Casino Resort, Jeff's employer.

Sky Ute Casino Resort is a 140-room hotel, casino and entertainment property sandwiched between the resort town of Durango and the New Mexico border.

Jeff is currently the hotel group sales manager at the casino, a position he has held for five years. His dedication has landed new business for the Southern Ute Tribe from many groups headed to southern Colorado. "Groups like to stay with us two or three nights, play in the casino, tour our museum, and visit Durango and Mesa Verde," Jeff said.

He is quick to point out that gaming is not the only major attraction. The museum, conveniently located walking distance from the Sky Ute Casino Resort, attracts a large volume of visitors, particularly groups from

MICHELLE KEMPEMA

Colorado Model Railroad Museum

Michelle says her museum offers an “experience in model railroading that’s unparalleled on the planet”



Michelle Kempema is executive director of one of Greeley’s top group tour attractions.



Is this your favorite part of Colorado?

I love the Northern Front Range. We have views of the Rocky Mountains every day, 350 days of sunshine a year, and can be in the mountains in under an hour. My family likes to hike, we camp a lot, go in the woods and do lake kayaking. This is the ideal environment for that.

It all goes back to our mission statement, which is to educate, inspire and bring joy to all ages – people find joy here.

—Michelle Kempema

Michelle Kempema grew up in a small town outside of Scottsbluff, Nebraska. She moved to Greeley, Colorado as a teenager and has not looked back. She’s in her seventh year as executive director of the Colorado Model Railroad Museum. She is active in the community and serves on many boards including Tour Colorado, Greeley Creative District, Visit Greeley and National Greeley Art Exhibit. Michelle was a recipient of the 2015 Outstanding Tourism Frontline Worker award from the Colorado Tourism Office and a 2018 Woman of Distinction Award from BizWest magazine.

How did you get started in the travel business?

I started as a volunteer at the Colorado Model Railroad in 2009 while I was still the executive director of an area homeless shelter. I became the executive director of the museum in 2011, and I have loved every moment since. I was the only employee for two years; now we have six on staff.

What do you attribute this growth to?

It all goes back to our mission statement, which is to educate, inspire and bring joy to all ages – people find joy here. The trains, the scenery, the miniature world – it’s impossible not to find joy in this building. It’s a very unique experience and our staff has been super involved in the tourism community.

What do groups enjoy most about the experience?

The museum is the result of one man’s dream – he spent a lifetime dreaming the ultimate railroad model and traveled the world to see how others did it. The result is this immersive experience in model railroading that’s unparalleled on the planet. Groups are amazed at this huge, 5,500-sq.-ft. operating model railroad layout. It’s the most detailed scenic railroad in the country. We use prototypical operations, we use a dispatcher, there’s radio chatter and low plexiglass, plus visitors can walk inside the layout. It’s an interactive experience so close to the real world.


What hidden jewels do you try to get groups to explore when coming to the area?

I love the unique things to do in my region like the model train museum, the Washing Machine Museum and the Wild Animal Sanctuary. I also host some really interesting agriculture tours through the county. Our county is the eighth-largest agriculture-producing county in the nation. Some of the ag facilities tours can be arranged to include organic dairies, onion sorting and my favorite, the baby carrot factory.

Along those lines, what is the benefit of Tour Colorado for the state’s tourism industry?

The biggest benefit for us is the relationships we build with other members. If I have a group here, I’m going to promote the scenic railroads for a better visitor experience. If a tour operator contacts Tour Colorado, we’re going to give them many different itineraries. If they want something crazy, we know who to call! ●

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Colorado Springs is a year-round tour destination boasting mild temperatures, more than 300 days of blue skies and spectacular scenery. Create intriguing tours at unforgettable destinations like Garden of the Gods Park and the U.S. Air Force Academy.



- 1 It's Colorado Springs** With unparalleled natural beauty, clients will be thrilled with the stunning scenery.
- 2 Western Heritage** Discover the deep roots of the Pikes Peak or Bust Gold Rush exploring old and active mines.
- 3 All Aboard** Trek through Cripple Creek and along the Arkansas River in the Royal Gorge on a historic train.
- 4 Cultural Experiences** Soak in the region's multi-faceted culture at museums, historic sites and festivals.
- 5 The Great Outdoors** Adventure is always close by with thousands of miles of trails and open spaces.
- 6 Arts Scene** Enjoy hundreds of public sculptures, galleries, art walks, classes and performances.
- 7 All Seasons** From colorful fall days to spring blooms, the region shines with a year-round mild climate.
- 8 Olympic City USA** See where Team USA dreams are born at the Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center.
- 9 55+** With more than 55 unique attractions, it's easy to plan multi-day itineraries in the Pikes Peak region.
- 10 Easy Access** Located in the center of the country, it's easy to drive or fly straight into COS, 15 minutes from downtown.