



Halcyon, A Hotel In Cherry Creek, *Photo Credit: Halcyon Hotel*

The population of Denver is growing at a record speed — and it's for a good reason, too. From hot new restaurants to freshly built boutique hotels and an ever-evolving outdoor recreation scene, the city is perfect for foodies, sightseers and active types.

Here are some of the specific reasons we think you should book a trip out west really soon.

The cushy hotel

The Denver metro area has an impressive roster of fresh hotels, and Halcyon, a Hotel in Cherry Creek one of the swankiest new kids on the block. Located in the city's upscale Cherry Creek shopping area, the Halcyon has an innovative and modern feel to it.

The property opened in August 2016 and boasts 154 rooms, seven floors, a rooftop pool and suites that feel more like luxury apartments than temporary accommodations. Inside, you will also find one of the city's hottest restaurants, Departure, a Portland transplant with celebrity chef Gregory Gourdet helming the kitchen. Soon the hotel will also host Quality Italian, an eatery from New York City's popular Quality Branded Restaurants.

Another chic venue to check out is Forbes Travel Guide Four-Star The Ritz-Carlton Denver. This 202-room building resides just a few blocks from the stunning Union Station (home to trains as well as great restaurants such as Mercantile and Stoic & Genuine), so not only do you get a sleek contemporary stay, but you also have access to one of the most buzzing areas in the city.



Avelina, Photo Credit: Corey Anthony

The over-the-top restaurants

One way to tell a city is growing is to look at its number of restaurants. Each month, roughly 20 new dining spots open in Denver, which shows a healthy amount of expansion.

One of the new and notable spots is The Denver Central Market, an upscale yet casual spot where guests can sit down for a bite or grab goods to-go from a butcher, bakery, fish market or ice cream shop. It's worth a look just to check out the way that designers fixed up the historic H.H. Tammen building.

For a high-class sit-down meal, Jeff Osaka's 12@Madison has been raking in the accolades. The small restaurant, where Ashley McBrady serves as chef de cuisine, features thoughtful seasonal fare, ranging from rainbow carrots with labneh to grilled quail with apple and prune streusel.

Chef John Broening's Avelina also has made waves since it opened in September 2016. The plates are small and precious, but, in a way, that makes you want to eat every bite and then order more.

Denver residents were also giddy over the arrival of Nobu Matsuhisa's new restaurant, Matsuhisa. It's the famous chef's first in the city, so now locals and visitors alike can dine on excellent Japanese fare without traveling all the way to his other Colorado eateries in Aspen or Vail.

The great outdoors

One of the best reasons to head to the Centennial State comes in the form of outdoor activities, and many can be found a quick drive from Denver. If you like skiing, head to Breckenridge or Winter Park, each reachable in under two hours. Visitors to the latter spot can take advantage of Amtrak's weekend ski train. Once the weather warms up, hiking and camping become popular pastimes due to excellent trails within 30 minutes of the city, including urban trails throughout Denver.

Gear up for these adventures at REI, an outfitter located right on the Platt River. You can also take a ride down the river in a raft or tube, the perfect entry into a more adventurous jaunt down some class four or five rapids in the mountains. REI also plans backpacking and sightseeing trips, so if you are looking for an in-the-know guide, this is the place to go.



Denver Museum of Nature and Science, *Photo Credit: Denver Museum of Nature and Science and Chris Schneider Photography*

The arts and culture scene

With Denver's collection of art and education institutions, there are plenty of shows to catch. At the Denver Art Museum, many of the exhibits focus on pieces from the American West, including the upcoming "Mi Tierra: Contemporary Artists Explore Place" (February 19 to October 22). Also, on August 13, the museum

will open the first comprehensive American exhibition of photographer Fazal Sheikh's work in the show "Common Ground: Photographs by Fazal Sheikh, 1989-2013."

At the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, check out "Basquiat Before Basquiat: East 12th Street, 1979-1980," which is all about the talented artist's work during that period, and "Wall Writers: Graffiti in Its Innocence," which explores the beginnings of the art of graffiti (both February 11 to May 7).

And look forward to conquering spring at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science with "Vikings: Beyond the Legend," opening March 10.