



Sweet , Hoods

7 DENVER DISTRICTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

BY ASHLEY HUGHES

To truly get a sense of what Denver has to offer, spend time exploring the ins and outs of various neighborhoods — each possessing its own unique character and highlights. Here's where to go to feel like a local in different pockets around town.





Though it encompasses Denver's central business district, downtown is much more than suits working the 9-to-5 grind. Start with the **16th Street Mall**, a pedestrian promenade boasting restaurants, a movie theater, public art and shops galore — think: big names like Uniqlo and H&M. Meet in front of **Union Station** to join **Historic Denver's** seasonal LoDo Walking Tour. Afterward, head inside the station for lunch at **Mercantile Dining & Provision**, a European-style market by day and seasonally inspired restaurant at night.

Before hitting a show — the **Denver Center for Performing Arts** showcases touring Broadway productions, plays, cabaret and an opera house — grab a bite to eat. Chef Frank Bonanno brings French cuisine to a casual bistro setting at **French 75**, while **Euclid Hall** features innovative pub food like a green chile-based poutine and sausages made in house. Cap off your night with a cocktail at **Union Lodge No. 1**, where the bartenders pride themselves on pre-Prohibition era concoctions.

Photo Op: The signature canopy of lights hanging over **Larimer Square** sets an idyllic scene for an Instagram-worthy shot.



Culture vultures and politicians collide in this enclave, where you'll find several museums in the Golden Triangle Creative District. Fuel up on pancake stacks at **Jelly Café**, then peruse the vast collections at the **Denver Art Museum**. Or, narrow your focus with the **Clyfford Still Museum**, which houses more than 3,000 works by the Abstract Expressionist painter who was a contemporary of Jackson Pollock. For history buffs, the **Molly Brown House Museum** and **History Colorado Center** offer glimpses into the state's past, whether you're looking to go inside a former residence of the famed Titanic survivor or learn about life in Colorado during three different time periods.

On select summer weekdays, choose from a huge gathering of food trucks and carts at **Civic Center EATS**. Afterward, head up the hill to the **Capitol Building**; tours are conducted weekdays on the hour from 10am to 3pm, including one that visits an observation area inside the shining gold dome. For the afternoon, stroll tree-lined streets while admiring stately turn-of-the-century homes like the **Governor's Residence at Boettcher Mansion**. Stop by **Hudson Hill** for a caffeinated or spirited pick-me-up, then make your way to **Potager** for dinner, where the New American menu changes frequently to reflect of-the-moment ingredients, like beets from Boulder's Cure Organic Farm.

Photo Op: **Cheesman Park's** lush lawns and dramatic neoclassical pavilion present plenty of angles for shutterbugs right next door to the **Denver Botanic Gardens**.



As the longest commercial street in the country, it's no surprise Colfax Avenue boasts an eclectic mix of shops, entertainment venues, bars and restaurants. One of the most well known is **Twist & Shout**, a legendary record store that music fans and collectors from all over the country flock to for rare vinyl items. After browsing the wax, catch a matinee of the latest indie flicks at **Sie FilmCenter**. When happy hour rolls around, **Cerebral Brewing** will be ready to pour you a pint of its craft libations, brewed using the steps of the scientific method to ensure consistency. Or, go a less traditional route with an apothecary-inspired cocktail and a sweet slice at **Humble Pie** — we won't tell anyone you had dessert before dinner!

But when you are ready for an evening bite, **Tacos Tequila Whiskey's** menu of street tacos is an excellent casual option, while the cozy atmosphere of **To the Wind Bistro** sets a romantic tone. You can't come to East Colfax without checking out the music scene — the **Fillmore Auditorium**, **Ogden Theatre** and **Bluebird Theater** are all within a few blocks of each other, so there's bound to be a show any night of the week.

Photo Op: Just two blocks to the north in **City Park**, catch unbeatable views of the Denver skyline, set against a backdrop of the Rocky Mountains.

What was once a separate town in the late 1800s is now a hip 'hood with a lot going on. Stop by the **Farmers' Market at Highland Square** on summer Sundays to pick up locally made goods, and continue the retail therapy at boutiques along **West 32nd Avenue**. As you head east to the Lower Highland district (also known as LoHi), keep an eye out for a giant structure in the shape of a milk can. This is one of the city's most popular spots for a sweet treat, **Little Man Ice Cream** (you won't regret standing in line with locals for a scoop of the Salted Oreo, we swear).

As night falls, turn to innovative dining establishments like **Señor Bear** or **El Five** (with one of the very best views in town), or don your own apron at **Stir Cooking School**. Pros will walk you through the hands-on experience of crafting your own multi-course meal according to the night's theme. Or, see what's happening at the nearby **Bug Theatre**, whose calendar sees stage productions, films fests, workshops and more. Either way, you'll want to settle into a cozy booth at speakeasy **Williams & Graham** for a nightcap.



Photo Op: In addition to a unique vantage point over urban landscapes, the **Highland Bridge** provides pedestrian access between the Highlands and downtown.



The hipster hangout that is South Broadway mixes old with new, especially when it comes to shops and restaurants. While away a morning searching for treasures at **Finders Keepers**, **Gallagher Books** and other vintage gems on Antique Row, or check out **Fancy Tiger's** modern take on a craft shop. On weekends, plan for a whimsical brunch at **Beatrice & Woodsley**, where you can sip their signature Bruncha Puncha amid décor inspired by an aspen grove.

Punch Bowl Social is a mash-up of a gastropub and amusement emporium, complete with a bowling alley, arcade and pool tables. After you've worked up an appetite, enjoy Latin American small plates and wood-fired meats at **Leña**, **Cho77's** pan-Asian dishes or vegetarian delights at **Sputnik**. Round out the classic dinner-and-a-movie combo at the **Mayan Theatre**, which originally opened in 1930 and has the Art Deco architecture to prove it.

Photo Op: Capture a dramatic sunset from the rooftop of **Historians Ale House**.



Short for River North Art District, RINO's industrial vibe is seen in repurposed warehouses and street murals. Artists and creative entrepreneurs helped spur its revival, and their works are on display during **First Fridays** each month. A free eTuk circulator operates at the same time, as well as every Saturday, with stops throughout the neighborhood. Choose to gallery hop, or tour the many craft-beverage operations to be found — **Great Divide Brewing Co.**, **Ratio Beerworks**, **Stem Ciders** and **The Infinite Monkey Theorem** winery are all worthy of a tasting.

The area is also an ever-growing hotspot for restaurants and bars, so you're unlikely to go hungry — or thirsty. The indoor/outdoor cocktail bar and food-truck pod at **Finn's Manor** is a lively place to spend an afternoon or evening. Buzzy venues like **Work & Class** and **Hop Alley** may require a wait, but time will go quickly with an interim libation at **Bar Fausto** or other nearby watering holes. Finish the night with a rousing rendition of your favorite song at **Voicebox Karaoke Lounge**.

Photo Op: Beyond the galleries, colorful murals line alleys and perk up buildings around nearly every corner.



Posh Cherry Creek is connected to Downtown and beyond via the 22-mile **Cherry Creek Bike Path**, a perfect route for a morning jog or afternoon bike ride. But if relaxation is more your speed, look no further than the numerous spas and salons for a couple hours of pampering. **SoCo Salon & Spa** will soothe any aches, and **Luxury Nails** can attend to all of your mani/pedi needs. Grab lunch at **The Cherry Cricket**; if the laid-back burger joint seems out of place, just know that this institution has been slinging patties since 1945.

Hit the sidewalks of **Cherry Creek North**, a premier outdoor retail and dining destination, or the adjacent **Cherry Creek Shopping Center** — home to brands like Burberry, Tiffany & Co. and Louis Vuitton — in search of the latest designer duds. Once you've shopped until you've dropped, indulge in a classic steak dinner at **Elway's** (named for football legend and owner John Elway), take a culinary trip around Asia at **Departure** or relish **Barolo Grill's** authentic northern Italian fare and fine wines.

Photo Op: There's plenty to see, buy and snap during the **Cherry Creek Arts Festival** in July.

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RINO ART DISTRICT, DANIELLE WEBSTER.