

## Drink in Denver's sights

Few sports fans realize the orange and blue in the uniform of football's Denver Broncos are hued after the primary colors of the city's sunset. Under this night time tapestry above the Rockies are a slew of other surprises, with more emerging from this former cow town's woodwork all the time.

Tucked between a sea of farmland to the east and the formidable Rocky Mountains to the West, today's Denver is a bustling metropolis, and the most isolated big city in the country, if not the world. This isolation makes Denver the cultural focal point of a quarter of the country, resulting in a striking set of amenities.

The Denver Performing Arts Complex (1101 13th St., 303-893-4000, [www.denvercenter.org](http://www.denvercenter.org)) is the second-largest facility of its kind nationwide, bested only by New York's Lincoln Center, but it actually hosts more events than its Big Apple counterpart. Featuring a renowned Western art collection, the Denver Art Museum (100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, 720-865-5000, [www.denverartmuseum.org](http://www.denverartmuseum.org)) is now putting the finishing touches on a splashy platinum-plated expansion.

Lower Downtown, better known as LoDo, has undergone a renaissance in the last decade, with casual eateries, a lively bar scene, and Coors Field, home of baseball's Colorado Rockies. MTV's "The Real World" is filming in the neighborhood, just down Market St. from the best jazz club in the Rockies, El Chapultepec (1963 Market St., 303-295-9126). Nearby, Comedy Works (1226 15th St., 303-595-3637, [www.comedyworks.com](http://www.comedyworks.com)) is the hometown venue for Josh Blue, the winner of NBC's most recent "Last Comic Standing."

On the other side of downtown, adjacent to the Colorado Convention Center and the unmistakable 40-foot-tall blue bear peering in its window, the new Hyatt Regency Denver (1750 Welton St., 303-295-1234, [www.denverregency.hyatt.com](http://www.denverregency.hyatt.com)) represents the first skyscraper to go up in these parts in a quarter-century. Beyond the Ritz-Carlton that's under construction and the Four Seasons on the drawing board, top downtown hotels include the historic Brown Palace (321 17th St., 303-297-3111, [www.brownpalace.com](http://www.brownpalace.com)), the hip Hotel Monaco (1717 Champa St., 303-296-1717, [www.monaco-denver.com](http://www.monaco-denver.com)), and the sleek Hotel Teatro (1100 14th St., 303-228-1100, [www.hotelteatro.com](http://www.hotelteatro.com)).

**DINING ... AND HIKING** Denver's culinary scene has come into its own in recent years, with a number of restaurants garnering national acclaim. Local standouts include Rioja (1431 Larimer St., 303-820-2282, [www.riojadenver.com](http://www.riojadenver.com)), purveyors of creative Mediterranean fusion on the historic downtown block known as Larimer Square; Table 6 (609 Corona St., 303-831-8800, [www.table6denver.com](http://www.table6denver.com)), a hip-meets-rustic bistro south of downtown; and Elway's (2500 E. First Ave., 303-399-5353), the creative steakhouse owned by retired Broncos quarterback John Elway in the chic Cherry Creek neighborhood.

But half the beauty of Denver isn't what's inside city limits; it's also what's just beyond them. Great hiking, skiing, rafting, mountain biking and fishing are close at hand, and that's a big part of what makes the city — often cited among the country's fittest and youngest — tick, and why it continues to boom. For more, contact the Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau (303-892-1112, [www.denver.org](http://www.denver.org)).