

LET'S DO DENVER!

DENVER SKATE PARK

2205 19th St.

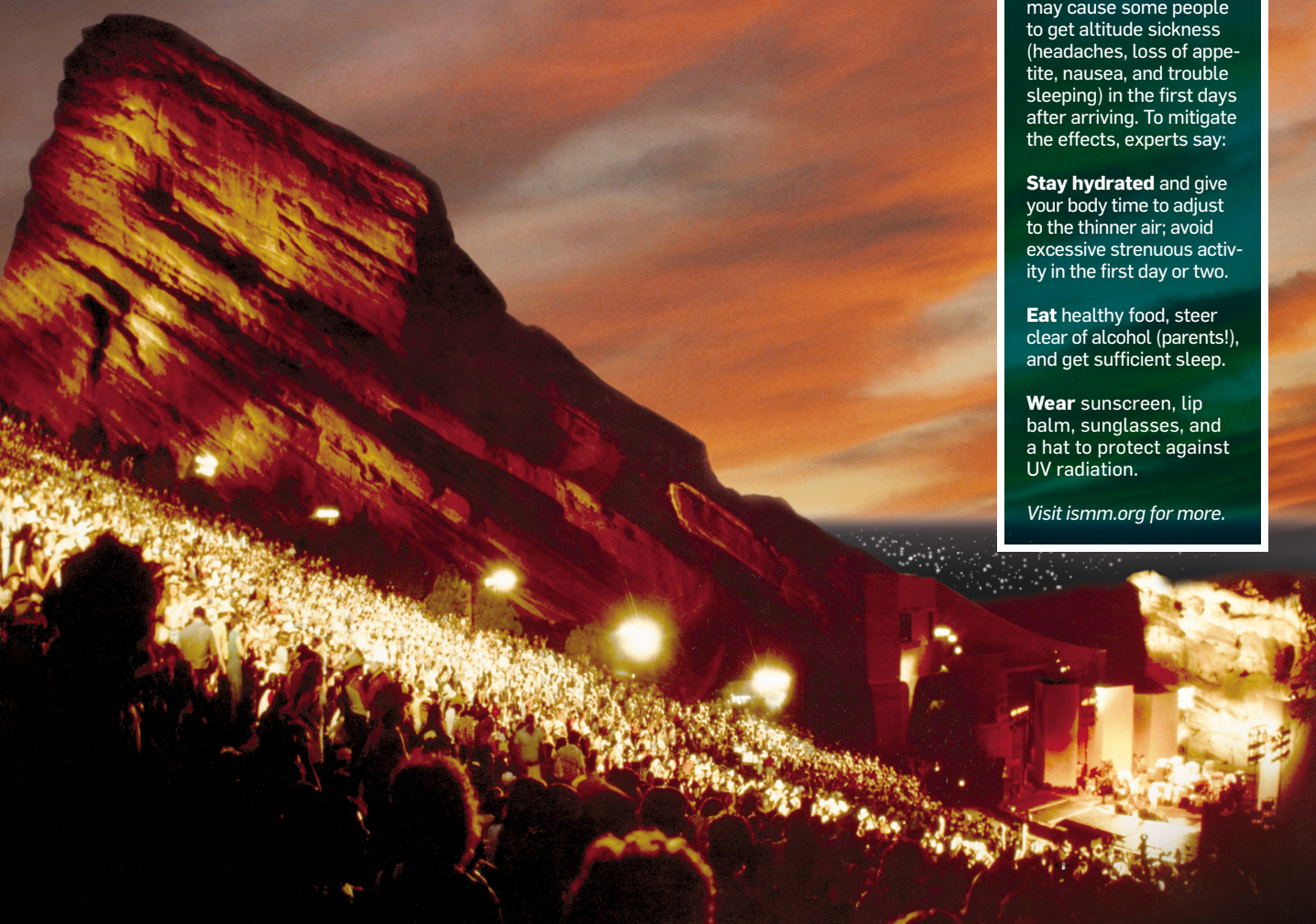
This 60,000-square-foot park is open to boarders, bladers, and bikers of all levels—but it's a good idea to show up early to beat the crowds. It's also exciting to just watch the regulars land their tricks. You never know which future X Gamers you might spot!



Lace up your sneakers, slather on the sunscreen, fill the water bottles, and do what Mile High City kids and their parents love to do most—head outdoors for some serious fun in the sun.

BY EILEEN OGINTZ

Denver is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country. And no wonder: It combines all the benefits of a big metropolis (world-class museums, trendy restaurants, and tons of local culture) with great weather (more than 300 days of sunshine a year!) and tons of opportunities to explore nature (the city itself has more than 4,000 acres of parks, plus the Rocky Mountains are right next door). All of this makes it an awesome spot for a long weekend with your clan—or a quick stop on your way to the state's well-known resort and ski towns. Let the city shine with these awesome outdoor activities for kids.



Altitude 411

Because Denver is 5,280 feet above sea level, the air is thinner and the sun is more intense. This may cause some people to get altitude sickness (headaches, loss of appetite, nausea, and trouble sleeping) in the first days after arriving. To mitigate the effects, experts say:

Stay hydrated and give your body time to adjust to the thinner air; avoid excessive strenuous activity in the first day or two.

Eat healthy food, steer clear of alcohol (parents!), and get sufficient sleep.

Wear sunscreen, lip balm, sunglasses, and a hat to protect against UV radiation.

Visit ismm.org for more.

DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

1007 York St.

The 24 acres of gardens at the center's downtown location feature everything from a Cactus and Succulent House to a "living roof" to a Native American exhibit. But our favorite spot is the three-acre Mordecai Children's Garden. Here, kids can wander through alpine wildflowers, hunt for bugs, climb across a swinging "trail" bridge, splash around in a stream as they learn to make beaver dams, and more.

botanicgardens.org

CITY PARK & DENVER ZOO

17th Ave. and York St.

Pack a picnic and head over to Denver's largest park to enjoy its playgrounds, lakes, and trails. City Park is also home to the Denver Zoo, where kids can stroll through two miles of interconnected trails at the Toyota Elephant Passage or ride the Pioneer Train past Bear Mountain as they spot grizzlies and black bears.

denver.org/parks; denverzoo.org

RED ROCKS PARK & AMPHITHEATRE

18300 W. Alameda Pkwy., Morrison, CO

Red Rocks Amphitheatre, about 25 minutes from downtown Denver, is worth the trip. The stage is framed by two natural, 300-foot red sandstone walls, which give it perfect acoustics for concerts. The surrounding Red Rocks Park—there is no charge to enter—offers 868 acres to explore, with dinosaur, plant, and animal fossils (don't miss the fragments of a 40-foot sea serpent!).

redrocksonline.com

ELITCH GARDENS THEME & WATER PARK

2000 Elitch Cir.

A classic amusement park right in the middle of downtown! Older kids can take a thrill ride on the new 17-story Star Flyer swing while little ones jump on the more low-key Blazin' Buckaroo family coaster. Or head to the adjacent water park, which features a 65-foot-tall Acapulco Cliff Dive and the Hook's Lagoon water tree house (with slides, 150 water gadgets, and a water playground). There are even "dive-in" movies that you watch from the pool!

elitchgardens.com

SOUTH PLATTE RIVER TRAIL

E. 88th Ave.

Hike or bike the 18-mile-long Denver portion of this popular paved trail. It runs through the Downtown Denver and South Denver neighborhoods, past lakes, golf courses, industrial areas, and the historic Riverside Cemetery, where many of the city's pioneers are buried.

walkridecolorado.com

16TH STREET MALL

16th St.

Designed by world-famous architect I.M. Pei—who created the glass pyramid at the Louvre in Paris—the pedestrian promenade has granite pavers that look like the scales on a diamondback rattlesnake when viewed from above. There's plenty to eat, see, and buy as you walk the mall. But kids will really enjoy the street performers, souvenir shopping, and nighttime horse-drawn carriage rides.

16thstreetmalldenver.com



More to Love

Outdoor activities may reign supreme in this western city, but its Golden Triangle Museum District also offers a lot of fun for families. These spots make it worth stepping indoors:

COLORADO STATE CAPITOL BUILDING

200 E. Colfax Ave.

First stop: the 13th step on the west side of the building, where you are exactly a mile above sea level! Then grab a free tour, which takes you up to the top of the building's gold dome. leg.colorado.gov/visit-learn

DENVER ART MUSEUM

100 W. 14th Ave. Pkwy.

Borrow age-appropriate backpacks filled with games, puzzles, and art supplies that help kids engage with exhibits on everything from Western movies to Japanese fashion. denverartmuseum.org

MOLLY BROWN HOUSE MUSEUM

1340 Pennsylvania St.

Learn about early 20th-century life in Denver from this famous city resident, who, among other adventures, helped save passengers when the *Titanic* sank! mollybrown.org

DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURE & SCIENCE

2001 Colorado Blvd.

"Hike" to the top of a 14,000-foot mountain with an assist from virtual reality; or head to the museum's terrace for skyline views. dmns.org

HISTORY COLORADO CENTER

1200 Broadway

Pilot a time machine over a 40-by-60-foot topographic map of Colorado, hovering above different areas to learn about their history. historycoloradocenter.org



Where to Stay

>> **COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN DENVER** is in a renovated historic building on the 16th Street Mall. It has the feel of a boutique hotel but with bonus conveniences like laundry facilities and free Wi-Fi. Rates start at \$199; marriott.com

>> **GRAND HYATT DENVER** is in walking distance to Denver's top attractions and is known for its oversize rooms and indoor pool. Rates start at \$239; denver.grand.hyatt.com

>> **KIMPTON HOTEL MONACO** offers special perks for its littlest guests, like pet goldfish in the rooms, pint-size bathrobes, and hula hoops. Rates start at \$199; monaco-denver.com

>> **BROWN PALACE HOTEL AND SPA** was built in 1892 and feels like a trip back in time. Check out the rooftop beehives! Rates start at \$284; brownpalace.com

STEVE CRECELLI/VISIT DENVER; OPPOSITE PAGE: MATT INDEN/MILES.