

◆ Colorado Rising ◆

With new restaurants, hotels and noteworthy spas, here's what's happening in Colorado now

By Jennie Nunn

Colorado may be known for its small, western-style towns trapped in time; outdoorsy, Patagonia-clad residents; and of course, ski resorts fit for some of the best skiing and snowboarding in the world. But now, the state is also on the radar for a bustling culinary scene, a crop of new hotels and noteworthy spas. Here, we reveal some of the best places to stay, eat and see.

Vail

For ski-in/ski-out access, check into the 292-room **Vail Cascade, A Destination Hotel** (vailcascade.com), along idyllic Gore Creek. Try a beer pairing dinner at lobby restaurant Atwater, or opt for a high-altitude massage at the adjacent spa, Aria Athletic Club & Spa.



Above: Plating food in the kitchen at Mountain Standard in Vail.
Left: Mountain Standard's Sweet Pea Bruschetta

From the balcony of select suites, watch fly fisherman cast in the creek, or depart for a day of skiing on Vail Mountain via Chair 20, the on-site chairlift. Or stroll the shops in Vail Village or Lionshead, take a hike or go ice-skating in Vail Square across from the 81-room **Arrabelle at Vail Square** (arrabelle.rockresorts.com). In Vail Village, make a reservation for lunch or dinner at **Mountain Standard** (mtnstandard.com), serving farm-fresh wood-fired mushrooms, baby kale salad with charred cauliflower and locally caught Colorado striped bass. For fine mountain dining, snag a table by the fireplace at **The Lord Gore** (manorvail.com). Order the hearty asparagus fries with black truffle hollandaise sauce, or Alaska char with red quinoa and Swiss chard.

Denver

Thanks to a major revitalization, with emerging chefs, new hotels, sports teams and museums like the **Denver Art Museum** (denverartmuseum.org), with its internationally acclaimed rotating exhibits, the Mile High City is now on the don't-miss list. Last summer, train station-turned-luxury hotel **The Crawford** (thecrawfordhotel.com) opened in Union Station. The property is expecting LEED certification this year and features 112 rooms in designs from Pullman-style rooms with a wink to Art Deco days, loft-inspired suites with exposed wooden beams, and one-bedroom LoDo suites (named for its location in the Lower Downtown neighborhood). The hotel also offers a bookstore, an array of restaurants, and more than 600 pieces of artwork including vintage travel postcards.

Another hotel option is **The Four Seasons, Denver** (fourseasons.com/denver) located within walking distance of Larimer Square, lined with boutiques and wine bars. Spend an afternoon at the spa for a moisturizing avocado and honey butter body wrap with cardamom and vanilla essential oils, or stop by lobby bar, Edge, for happy hour. For brunch, locals flock to **Linger** (lingerdenver.com) for crab cake benedict, roasted beet salad and the "anti-milkshake," made with almond cashew milk, chai, cardamom, carrot, hemp and cacao.

Newly opened restaurant, **The Nickel** (thenickeldenver.com),



Left: The pool at Gant Aspen; A loft room at The Crawford in Denver

inside the **Hotel Teatro**, is headed up by Chef Christopher Thompson (formerly of A16 restaurant in San Francisco). Menu items range from seared wild salmon to lamb Bolognese with housemade ricotta. For dinner, with farm-to-table offerings, try **Acorn** (denveracorn.com). Order oak-grilled octopus, kale and apple salad with candied almonds, and Oxford Farms carrots. Then, head to **Williams+Graham** (williamsandgraham.com), a speakeasy-inspired watering hole for a fresh-squeezed cocktail like the blackberry sage smash with bourbon, lemon, sage and blackberries.

Aspen/Snowmass

Aspen is framed by the infamous Aspen Mountain (or Ajax, as referred to by locals), and lined with historic brick buildings and high-end boutiques (try Magasin for vintage finds). The small town is home to some of the best restaurants, including **Justice Snow's** (justicesnows.com) originally built in 1889, and popular among locals for hand-crafted Prohibition-era style drinks, and small plates like Brussels sprouts with herbs and chile. **The Aspen Art Museum** (aspenartmuseum.org), designed by lauded Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, is a new must-see spot. Inside the building with a basketweave-like façade, peruse modern works by artists such as Gabriel Kuri and Alice Channer, or have a cup of tea in the rooftop café with sweeping views of the city.

For a quiet hideaway within walking distance of stores and eateries, stay overnight at **The Gant, A Destination Residence** (gantaspen.com) with an outdoor swimming pool and Jacuzzi, a newly revamped conference center, and grab-and-go café. At **Hotel Jerome** (hoteljerome.aubergeresorts.com) take a trip back in time with an old-West-meets-new World vibe. The 93-room hotel features a spa replete with treatments from a Sanctuary of the Mountains body wrap using evergreen oil, arnica and white willow, and a Hematite and Basalt stone massage that pays homage to the area's mining days.

In Snowmass, about 25 minutes away, check-in to the **Top of The Village, A Destination Residence** (destinationsnowmass.com), near the base of Snowmass Ski Resort. The rustic property is ideal for families, with fireplaces, washer/dryers, full kitchens and a fitness center. Relax and unwind in the lobby of **The Westin Snowmass Resort** (westinsnowmass.com), or in the Vue Lounge with hearty appetizers and oven-fired pizzas. Or reserve a table for dinner at **The Artisan Restaurant & Bar** at the **Stonebridge Inn** (stonebridgeinn.com), where Chef Randall Baldwin prepares starters from grilled artichokes and quinoa and vegetable salads to entrees including fresh cioppino and Ruby Red trout paired with toasted hazelnuts, bourbon sauce and grilled asparagus. Don't leave without trying the housemade banana split or the cinnamon roll bread pudding.