



Understand Colorado

COLORADO TODAY346

Colorado's boom industries have weathered the financial storm well enough. Politically, it's a bit harder to predict.

HISTORY348

From Wild West frontier to outdoor haven and ski central: Colorado has a whole lot of history.

WAY OF LIFE353

'Rugged individualism' is a cliché but that doesn't mean it's an inaccurate description.

THE ARTS356

Art doesn't figure in many people's concept of Colorado – let's see if we can change that.

COLORADO CUISINE.....359

Steak and Rocky Mountain oysters? Sure. But there's plenty more on the menu.

WILDLIFE & THE LAND362

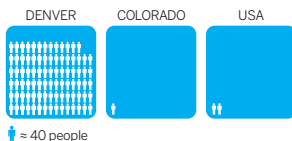
If you're coming here, you're likely heading outdoors. Here's a taste of what's waiting for you.

DINOSAURS365

Colorado is one of the world's top stops for dinosaur fossils and tracks.



population per sq mile



Colorado Today

Growing Young

Once a mining, ranching and farming stronghold, today's Colorado is a young state getting younger, with 25% of the five million residents under the age of 18.

Most these residents are living in and around Denver. Development in Denver suburbs on what was farmland fueled a real estate boom in the 1990s. And it was in those suburbs that tragedy struck on April 20, 1999, in the form of the deadliest school shooting in American history at Columbine High School.

That event overshadowed what was otherwise a pivotal and positive decade for the state in terms of economic growth as Denver and Boulder cashed in on the technology boom. Some of those jobs were lost in the late '90s tech bust, but the area weathered the storm. This growth not only sparked suburban sprawl but also urban gentrification. Denver's once blighted LoDo neighborhood came back strong with residential loft construction and the opening of dozens of bars and restaurants. Young college grads flocked in from across the US, with an eye toward pairing an outdoor, weekend-warrior lifestyle with a high-paying tech gig. Which is why Boulder and Denver were fixtures on the Forbes list of Best Cities for Singles throughout the mid-2000s.

Another stumble in the tech industry between 2000–04 cost the area some jobs, and there were other signs of a sustained slump. But it wasn't all bad news. In 2006, another industry gripped northern Colorado, and we aren't talking about the marijuana industry, although that's growing, too. Known as the Colorado Clean Energy Cluster, there are now 32 clean-energy companies working together to promote and produce green energy in the Denver–Boulder area.

No, you're not hallucinating: Colorado really is extremely Caucasian. More than 70% of the population is white.

Dos

- » Dress in full Tour de France gear on casual training rides about town.
- » Drink lots of water, or the high altitude and the high-gravity beers will do you in.
- » Tip generously – 15 to 20% is the norm.

Don'ts

- » Look John Elway directly in the eye.
- » Pee in communal hot springs.

Books

On The Road (Jack Kerouac) – The Denver doldrums and the origins of road-tripper culture
Whiteout: Lost in Aspen (Ted Conover) – Aspens in the 1980s
Plainsong (Kent Haruf) – Examines a Colorado farming community