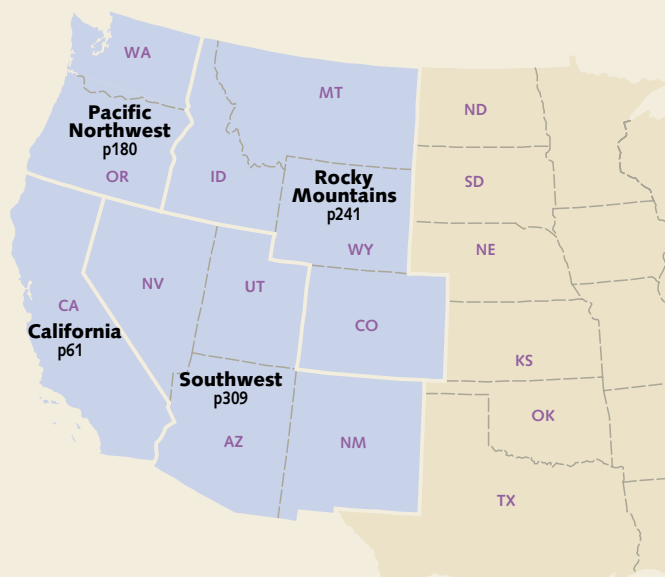




Western USA



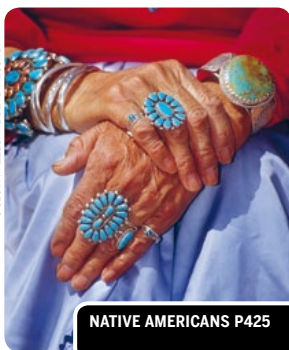
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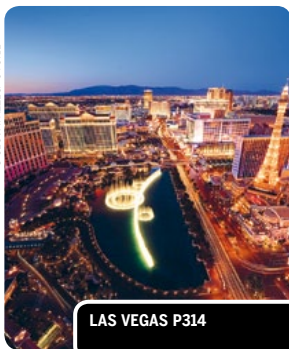
Sandra Bao, Michael Benanav, Greg Benchwick, Sara Benson,
Alison Bing, Celeste Brash, Lisa Dunford, Carolyn McCarthy,
Christopher Pitts, Brendan Sainsbury

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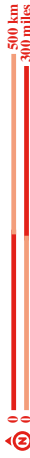
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Western USA



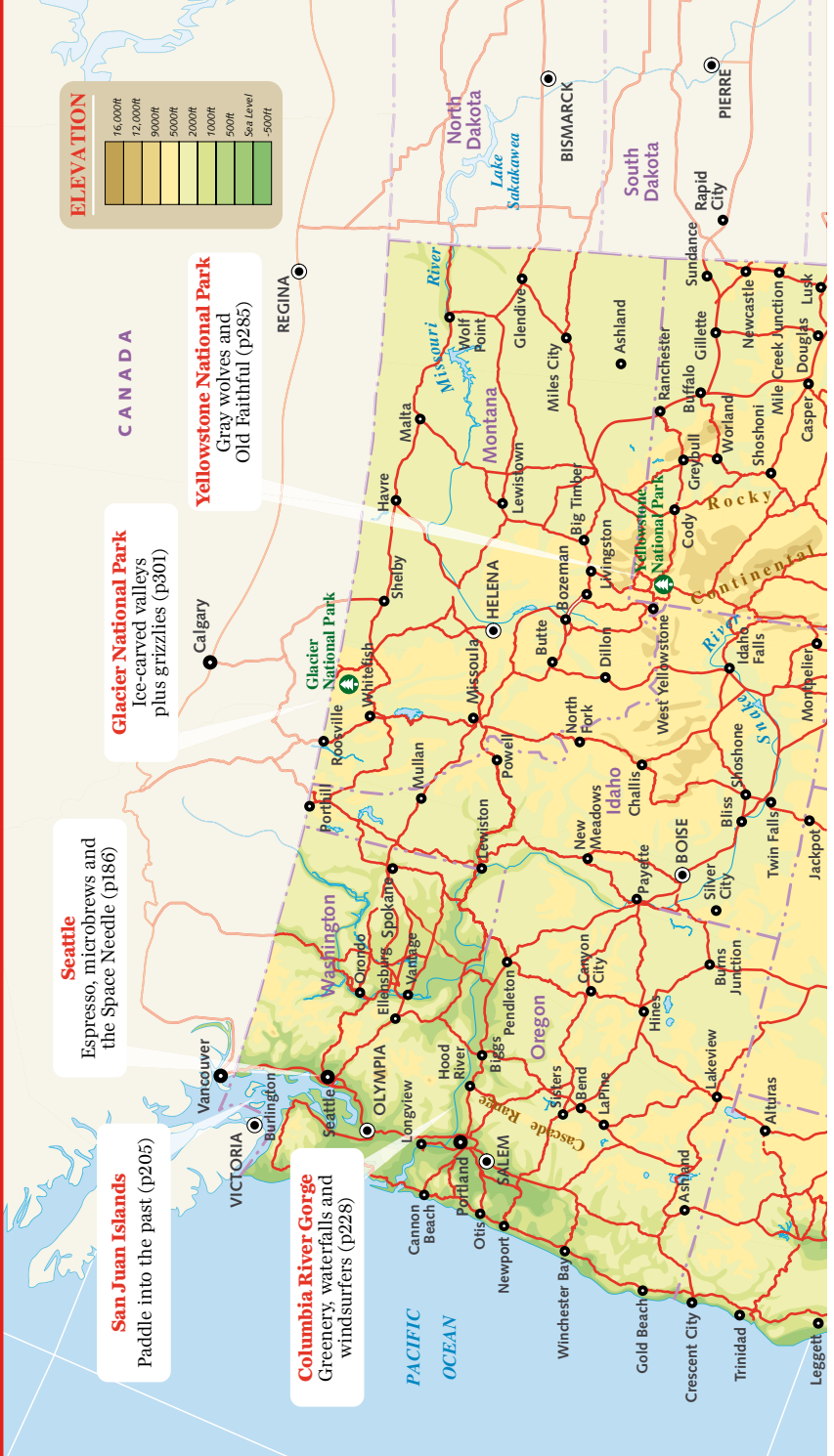
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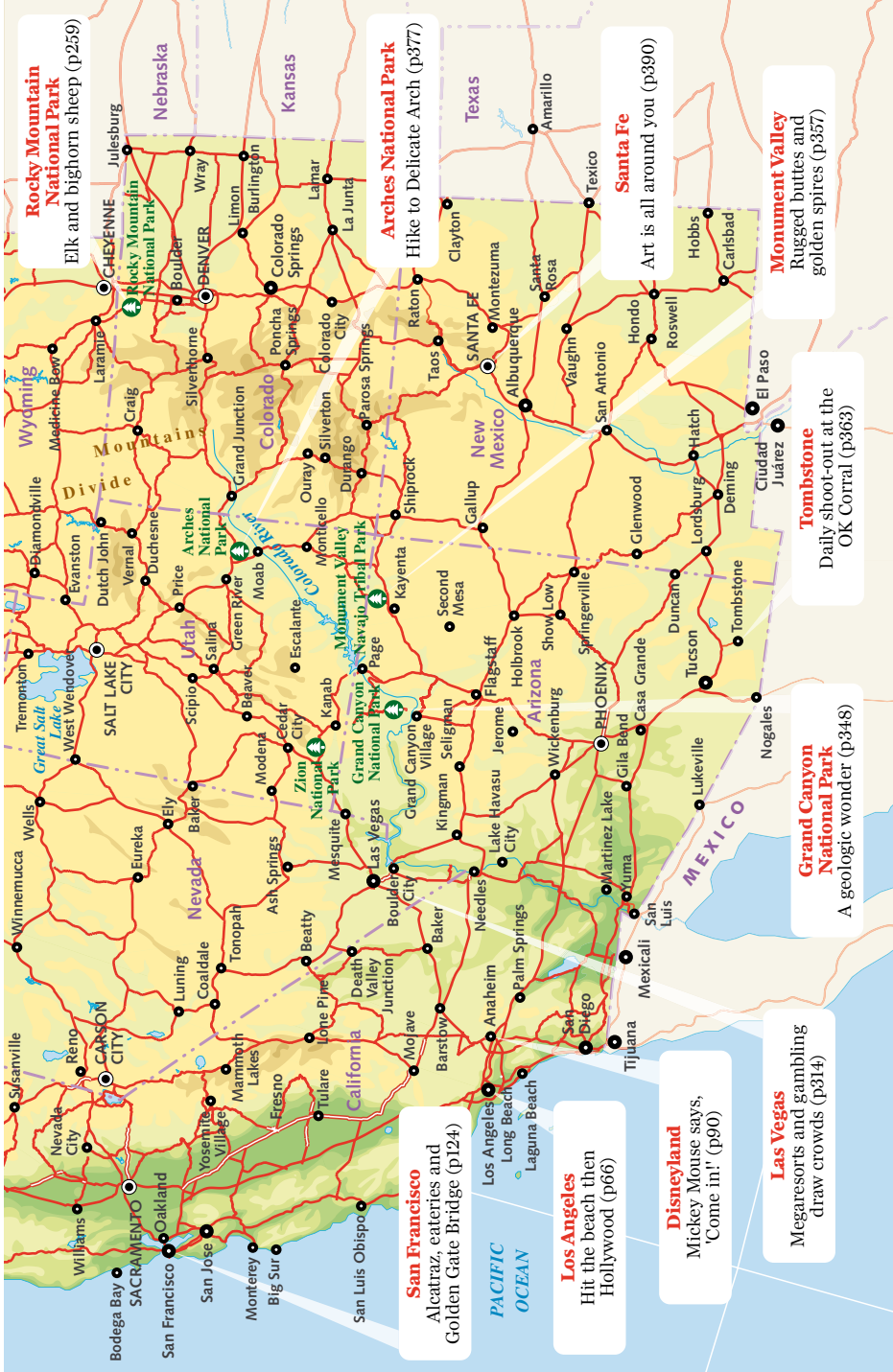
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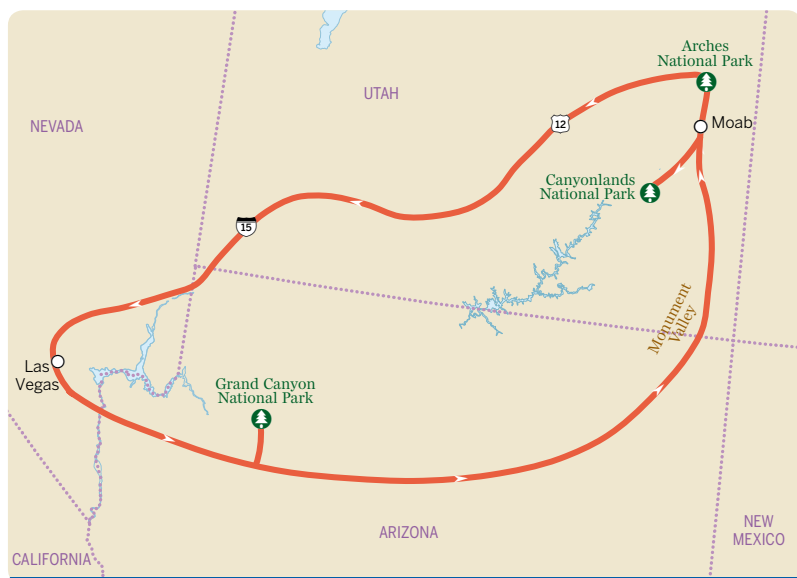
Mickey Mouse says, 'Come in!' (p90)

Las Vegas

Megaresorts and gambling draw crowds (p314)



Itineraries



2
WEEKS

Best of the Southwest

This tour spotlights the most iconic sites in the Southwest, looping past the region's most famous city, its biggest canyon and its most breathtaking red-rock scenery. Start in **Las Vegas** and spend a few days traveling the world on the Strip. When you've soaked up enough decadence, head east to canyon country – **Grand Canyon** country, that is. You'll want a couple of days to explore America's most famous park. For a once-in-a-lifetime experience, descend into the South Rim chasm on the back of a mule and spend the night at Phantom Ranch on the canyon floor.

From the Grand Canyon head northeast to **Monument Valley**, with scenery straight out of a Hollywood Western, to the national parks in Utah's southeast corner – they're some of the most visually stunning in the country. Hike the shape-shifting slot canyons of **Canyonlands National Park**, watch the sunset in **Arches National Park** or mountain bike slickrock outside **Moab**. Drive west on one of the most spectacular stretches of pavement, **Highway 12**, until it hooks up with I-15 and takes you back to Las Vegas.



3
WEEKS

Winding Down the West Coast

Beach bums and nature lovers – this trip’s for you. Kick off with fresh-roasted coffee in java-loving **Seattle** and check out the city’s sprawling food markets, microbreweries and waterfront. Heading south, visit **Mt Rainier National Park**, with superb hiking and relaxing inns nestled beneath the snow-covered peak. Continue on to the cutting-edge city of **Portland**, known for its sprawling parks, eco-minded residents and progressive urbanism – plus food carts, coffeehouse culture and great nightlife. Embrace nature’s bounty by driving east along the **Columbia River Gorge**, then turn south and make for **Mt Hood** for winter skiing or summer hiking. Further adventures await at the **Sisters**, a trio of 10,000ft peaks, and the striking blue waters of **Crater Lake**. Catch a Shakespearean play in sunny **Ashland**, then trade the mountains for the foggy coast. Enter California via Hwy 199 and stroll through the magnificent old-growth forests in **Redwood National and State Parks**.

Hug the coast as it meanders south through funky **Arcata** and seaside **Eureka**, lose yourself on the **Lost Coast**, and catch Hwy 1 through quaint **Mendocino**, where the scenic headlands and rugged shoreline make for a requisite wander.

For wine tasting with a photogenic backdrop, travel inland to the rolling vineyards of **Napa and Sonoma Valleys**, then continue south to romantically hilly, ever free-spirited **San Francisco**.

Return to scenic Hwy 1 through surf-loving **Santa Cruz**, stately bayfront **Monterey** and beatnik-flavored **Big Sur**. In no time, you’ll reach the surreal **Hearst Castle** and laid-back, collegiate **San Luis Obispo**.

Roll into Mediterranean-esque **Santa Barbara**, and hop aboard a ferry in Ventura to the wildlife-rich **Channel Islands**. The pull from **Los Angeles** is strong. Go ahead – indulge your fantasies of Hollywood then cruise through LA’s palm-lined neighborhoods. After racking up a few sins in the City of Angels, move south to wander the bluffs of **Laguna Beach**, then cruise into picture-perfect **San Diego**.



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Above: Big Sur (p117),
California

Left: Mt Rainier
National Park (p210),
Washington



3
WEEKS

Rocky Mountain High

Pack your bathing suit, mountain bike and hiking boots for this high-altitude cruise atop the Continental Divide; from here, rivers flow toward the west on one side and toward the east on the other.

Spend your first two days enjoying microbrews and single-track mountain-biking trails in **Durango**, the quintessential mountain town. From here, take the Million Dollar Hwy (Hwy 550) north through the San Juan Mountain range, sightseeing in **Silverton** and dipping into hot springs in **Ouray**. Take a side trip to **Telluride** for a festival – there's one almost every weekend in summer. From Montrose, drive east on Hwy 50, stopping at the **Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park** to ogle the inky depths of the gorge before continuing to Hwy 24 north. Finish your first week in style with an overnight stay in ritzy **Vail**.

Enjoy kayaking, rock climbing and people-watching in high-energy **Boulder** then twist up to **Rocky Mountain National Park** to hike and horseback ride. While here, drive the thrilling Trail Ridge Rd through alpine vistas. Continue north on I-25. In Wyoming, take I-80 west to Hwy 287; follow this highway to **Lander** for rock climbing.

Continue north to **Jackson Hole**, another fun gateway town. Anchored by a central park surrounded by chic stores and cowboy bars, it's a good place to relax, catch a rodeo or spend the night before rafting the Snake River. From here, it's an easy glide north into **Grand Teton National Park**, a scenic spot for a lazy lake day and a mountain stroll. Next up is mighty **Yellowstone National Park**, where geysers, bison and hiking are highlights.

Start your last week with a drive on the gorgeous Beartooth Hwy, following it into Montana then hooking onto I-90 west to **Bozeman** and **Missoula**; both are good places to stock up before the final push. Serious nature awaits in the **Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex**, while **Glacier National Park** is a place to visit now – there are still some 25 glaciers hanging tight, but they may not be there for long. Scan for wildlife on a hike, then end with a drive on the stunning Going-to-the-Sun Road.



4
WEEKS

Western US Grand Tour

This lasso loop takes in the highlights of the west as it rolls north along the California coast, cruises past the lush landscapes of the Pacific Northwest, the alpine villages of the Rockies and the glowing red-rock beauty of the Southwest, with a final swing back into California for a hit-parade tour of the state's national parks.

From sunny **San Diego**, follow Hwy 1 north through the surf-loving coastal villages of **Orange County**, detouring to **Disneyland** before driving into shiny **Los Angeles**. Continue up the coast on scenic Hwy 1, stopping to shop and sample wine in glossy **Santa Barbara**. Gawk at the gawdy **Hearst Castle** then continue north through woody **Big Sur**. Dine and shop then wander through Alcatraz in bohemian **San Francisco**. Return to Hwy 1 for the quirky towns dotting the northern California coast.

Check out the big trees in **Redwood National and State Parks** and continue into Oregon, taking time for outdoor fun in **Bend**. Soak in the greenery traveling west along the **Columbia River Gorge**, then spend a few days savoring brews and views in **Portland**. Zip up the Space Needle in **Seattle** and drive east into wide-open Montana, heading for the outdoor wonders of **Glacier National Park**. Continue south into **Yellowstone National Park** where Old Faithful still blasts regularly beside its namesake lodge. Swoosh below majestic peaks in **Grand Teton National Park** before swinging southeast through Wyoming's vast cowboy plains.

In Colorado, breathe deep in outdoorsy **Boulder** then embrace the charms of city life in bustling **Denver**. The mining towns of the San Juan Mountains are next, followed by **Mesa Verde National Park**. Just south in New Mexico, artist meccas **Taos** and **Santa Fe** are fab stops for one-of-a-kind gifts. Slurp green chile stew in **Albuquerque** and follow Route 66 west into Arizona, stopping at **Meteor Crater** before detouring north for **Grand Canyon National Park**. Continue west to **Las Vegas**, then drive into central California for **Death Valley National Park** and **Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks**, concluding with **Yosemite National Park**. Complete the loop with a glass of California wine in San Francisco.



Sara Benson

California After graduating from college in Chicago, Sara jumped on a plane to San Francisco with just one suitcase and \$100 in her pocket. She has bounced around California ever since, in between stints living in Asia and Hawaii and working as a national-park ranger. The author of 55 travel and nonfiction books, Sara summited Sierra Nevada peaks, uncovered the Lost Coast and survived Death Valley while researching this guide. Follow her adventures online at www.indietraveler.blogspot.com and @indie_traveler on Twitter.



Alison Bing

California Over 15 years in San Francisco, Alison has done everything you're supposed to do in the city and many things you're not, including falling in love on the Haight St bus and quitting a Silicon Valley day job to write 43 Lonely Planet guidebooks and commentary for magazines, mobile guides and other media. Join further adventures as they unfold on Twitter @AlisonBing.



Celeste Brash

Pacific Northwest Locals have a hard time believing it, but the beauty of the Pacific Northwest is what coaxed Celeste back to the US after 15 years in Tahiti. She was thrilled to explore and imbibe the treasures of her new backyard, hike snowy peaks, look for orcas, and get in touch with her cowboy and Indian roots for this book. Find out more about Celeste and her award-winning writing at www.celestebrash.com.



Lisa Dunford

Southwest As one Brigham Young's (possibly thousands of) great-great-granddaughters, Lisa was first drawn to Utah by ancestry. But it's the incredible red rocks that have kept her coming back for 10 years. She feels at home hiking through pinkish sand around Zion or Arches until her shoes are permanently stained, rounding a bend and being accosted by purple-, crimson- and rose-colored cliffs. Lisa co-authored Lonely Planet's *Zion &*

Bryce Canyon National Parks.



Carolyn McCarthy

Rocky Mountains Carolyn fell for the Rockies as an undergraduate at Colorado College, where she spent her first break camping in a blizzard in the Sangre de Cristo Range. For this title she sampled craft beers, tracked wolves and heard even more Old West ghost stories. Carolyn has contributed to over 20 Lonely Planet titles, specializing in the American west and Latin America, and has written for *National Geographic*, *Outside*, *Lonely Planet Traveller* and other publications.



Christopher Pitts

Rocky Mountains Chris first drove west on a family road trip across the US and instantly fell in love with Colorado's star-studded nights. After four years at Colorado College, he decided to move up to Boulder for grad school – but only after mastering Chinese. Fifteen years, several continents and two kids later, he finally made it to the end of what is normally a 90-minute drive. Chris currently divides his time between writing, dad-dom

and exploring Colorado's wilder corners. Visit him online at www.christopherpitts.net.



Brendan Sainsbury

Pacific Northwest An expat Brit from Hampshire, England, now living near Vancouver, Canada, Brendan is a Nirvana-loving, craft-beer-appreciating, outdoors-embracing, art-admiring, bus-utilizing coffee addict who had no problem finding like-minded souls in Seattle. He's been writing Lonely Planet guides for the last nine years and collecting notes on Seattle since 2009. He is the author of Lonely Planet's current guide to Seattle, and has

contributed to numerous US titles.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Amy C Balfour

Coordinating Author, Southwest Amy has hiked, biked, skied and gambled her way across the Southwest. In Arizona she enjoyed a return trip to Phantom Ranch, hiking down the South Kaibab Trail from the South Rim and back up on the Bright Angel. Amy has authored or co-authored more than 15 books for Lonely Planet and has written for *Backpacker*, *Every Day with Rachael Ray*, *Redbook*, *Southern Living* and *Women's Health*.



Sandra Bao

Pacific Northwest Sandra has lived in Buenos Aires, New York and California, but Oregon has become her final stop. Researching the Beaver state has been a highlight of Sandra's 14-year-long authoring career with Lonely Planet, which has covered four continents and dozens of guidebooks. She's come to appreciate the wondrous beauty of her home state, how much it has to offer both travelers and locals and how friendly people can be in tiny towns in the middle of nowhere.



Michael Benanav

Southwest Michael came to New Mexico in 1992, fell under its spell, and moved to a village in the Sangre de Cristo foothills where he still lives. Since then, he's spent years exploring the state's mountains, deserts and rivers as a wilderness instructor. Aside from his work for Lonely Planet, he's authored two nonfiction books and writes and photographs for magazines and newspapers. Check out his work at www.michaelbenanav.com.



Greg Benchwick

Rocky Mountains A Colorado native, Greg's been all over the Centennial State. He has taught skiing in Vail, walked through fire-pits in campsites across the state and attended journalism school in Boulder. He calls Denver's Highlands home.

OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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