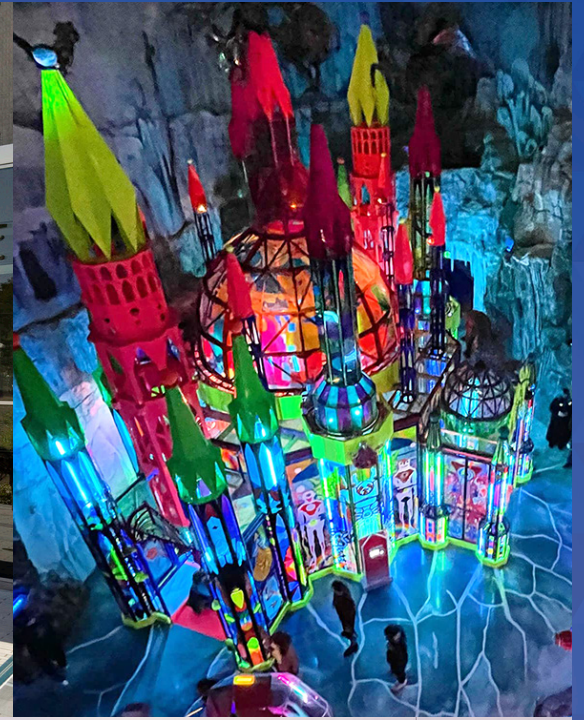


# VISIT DENVER 2021 ANNUAL REPORT







# VISIT DENVER, THE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

*Bringing Visitors and Conventions to  
Denver Since 1909*

VISIT DENVER is a non-profit trade association, contracted by the City & County of Denver to act as the City's official marketing agency.

In 2021, the Bureau had a budget of \$25.5 million, down from the high of \$38.8 million in 2019, but up 96.2 percent from the \$13 million of 2020.

Despite the lower budget, VISIT DENVER continued aggressive sales & marketing strategies throughout the year. This report will detail those programs and their successes.

In addition, VISIT DENVER contracts with the City & County of Denver to administer marketing funds from the Tourism Improvement District (TID), which began collecting funds on January 1, 2018. These funds are tied first to paying bonds for the expansion of the Colorado Convention Center and therefore, the marketing component dollars were not deployed in 2021. Usage of these funds will be fully incorporated in planning for 2022 and beyond.



## **MISSION:**

*To bring conventions and leisure  
visitors to Denver for the economic  
benefit of the City, the community  
and our partners.*



# CHAIRWOMAN & PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2021

2021 was a very productive year for VISIT DENVER and the city, despite the uncertainty, and 2022 is on track to improve greatly.

Overall, the organization and entire tourism and hospitality industry worked together to overcome challenges and take advantage of opportunities, and we are so proud of what we accomplished.

In January, we launched the “Coming Soon” campaign to meeting planners – our first promotional efforts in nearly a year to that market. The campaign focused on the many projects underway in the city.

In April, with patio-friendly weather and lots of outdoor seating, VISIT DENVER supported local business by producing the first-ever Spring Denver Restaurant Week; later in the year, the Bureau also brought back Denver Beer Fest and Denver Arts Week.

Through April, there was limited convention and meeting business due to meeting mandates and the convention center serving as an Alternate Care Facility.

In July 2021, with barely 13-weeks’ notice, Denver was able to successfully host the MLB All-Star Game and Draft. This nationally televised event included three-days of games at a sold-out Coors Field, the free Play Ball Park at the Colorado Convention Center and fan events. It generated tens of millions of dollars in business and renewed hope for the hotel and hospitality industry. Later in the year, the Denver Sports team hosted representatives from FIFA in an effort to secure Denver’s position as a host city for the 2026 World Cup.

Successful year-round advertising and marketing campaigns focused on national markets, select long-haul markets, and regional drive markets to promote Denver’s outdoor life, premier shopping, cultural activities and culinary scenes, generating more than 1.2 million incremental trips and more than \$330 million in local spending.

The Outdoor Retailer show returned to Denver in August, and ten more groups met at the Colorado Convention Center in the 4th quarter.



The Colorado Convention Center Expansion remains on track with a completion date of 2023. A “Raise the Roof” celebration in September promoted this milestone to meeting industry professionals around the world.

Cherished events like Denver Day of Rock, Juneteenth, PrideFest, BabeWalls, Taste of Colorado and the Cherry Creek Arts Festival returned to the city, as well as concerts at Red Rocks Park & Amphitheater, which was named the top-performing venue in the world for 2021!

Basecamp Denver, an innovative promotion, launched in the fall encouraging visitors through video and social media to “play in the mountains, stay in the city.”

And Mile High Holidays once again lit up the metro area through the holiday season, bringing hope and festivities to all through parades, lights, shopping, cultural attractions, and the third straight year of the Mile High Tree.

Across the city, there were so many new and returning developments to celebrate:

Denver International Airport soared to become the third busiest air center in the world, opening new gates and adding new and returning international flights, while working towards completion of a major refurbishing that will make this the world’s best airport for the 21st century and beyond.

Meow Wolf’s third permanent location, *Convergence Station*, opened in Denver in September 2021, creating a new unforgettable, transformational, and not to be missed experience.

The long-anticipated, four-year-in-the-making \$175 million opening at the Denver Art Museum of the Martin Building, Sturm Pavilion and Sie Welcome Center brought an expanded art campus – and significant national attention – to downtown Denver.

Live theatre returned to the city with the \$54 million renovation of the Bonfils Theatre Complex, four amazing, new, reimagined theatres and the return of original productions and Broadway shows, once again filling downtown with theater patrons.

McGregor Square opened next to Coors Field with 12 restaurants and bars, five retail outlets including a fabulous new home for the Tattered Cover, a new 182-room Rally Hotel, and a gigantic 17,000 square foot plaza complete with a stadium-sized LED screen.

Throughout this year, the team at VISIT DENVER worked with the Board, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock, Denver City Council, other economic development agencies and you – our VISIT DENVER partners – to keep The Mile High City on track as one of the great travel and convention destinations of the world. With all your continued support, Denver will not only get through the pandemic, we will come out of it stronger and a better travel destination than ever before.



**Janice Sinden**  
President & CEO, Denver Center  
for the Performing Arts  
2021 VISIT DENVER Board Chair



**Richard W. Scharf**  
President & CEO, VISIT DENVER



# DENVER TOURISM & CONVENTIONS BY THE NUMBERS 2021

*"The United Nations World Tourism Organization estimates that the contribution of tourism to the world economy this year will be \$1.9 trillion – a slight improvement over last year's \$1.6 trillion but still far lower than the \$3.5 trillion the industry earned in 2019.*

*Among the reasons for the slow recovery is the continuing pandemic, and the recent emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant presents another potential hurdle as the industry prepares for the upcoming winter holiday season."*

**NPR, Dec. 2021**

## NUMBER OF CONVENTIONS

(Source: VISIT DENVER)

2019: **1,026**      2021: **414**

**-60%**

## NUMBER OF CONVENTION DELEGATES

(Source: VISIT DENVER)

2019: **396,107**      2021: **151,070**

**-62%**

## CONVENTIONS ECONOMIC IMPACT

(Source: VISIT DENVER)

2019: **\$787 mil**      2021: **\$313 mil**

**-60%**

## DOWNTOWN HOTEL OCCUPANCY

(Source: Smith Travel Research)

2019: **77.0%**      2021: **53.8%**

**-30%**

## METRO HOTEL OCCUPANCY

(Source: Smith Travel Research)

2019: **76.1%**      2021: **58.3%**

**-23%**

## DOWNTOWN AVERAGE ROOM RATE

(Source: Smith Travel Research)

2019: **\$180.91**      2021: **\$147.55**

**-18%**

## METRO AVERAGE ROOM RATE

(Source: Smith Travel Research)

2019: **\$154.22**      2021: **\$101.54**

**-34%**

## DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PASSENGER TRAFFIC

(Source: DEN)

2019: **69 million**      2021: **59 million**

**-15%**

## U.S. TOURISM SPENDING

(Source: U.S. Travel Association)

2019: **\$1.2 trillion**

2021: **\$877 billion (forecast)**

**-27%**

We are continuing to benchmark against 2019 as those are the numbers we are striving to match and eventually exceed.



# CORONAVIRUS & THE COLORADO HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY TIMELINE 2021

## JANUARY 2021

On Jan. 19, the City announced the Colorado Convention Center (CCC) would be decommissioned as an alternate care site for recovering COVID patients, re-opening the door to future convention business. Gov. Jared Polis extended the state's mask requirement through Feb. 5, 2021. The mask requirement was later extended to April 2021 and then on into May.

## FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021

With vaccinations leading the way to instill public confidence in dining out, restaurant workers were granted priority vaccination status on Feb. 1. Gov. Polis would further extend aid to 260 restaurants in 30 Colorado counties through the Winter Outdoor Dining Fund. Gov. Polis also announced individuals aged 65 and older and school staff would be eligible for vaccinations starting Feb. 8. In March, this was lowered to age 50 and all frontline hospitality workers and in April, every Colorado resident over 16 was eligible for vaccination.

## APRIL 2021

Denver started the month of April on a high note as the Colorado Rockies played a home game for the first time in over a year with an initial crowd of 12,500. On the same day, Ball Arena opened a new mass vaccination site, and the following day, the CDC announced that domestic and international travel was safe for fully vaccinated Americans who wore masks. The CDC's declaration served as the first official stamp of approval for the travel industry in over a year.



Red Rocks Park & Amphitheatre reopened for concerts and events with a 2,500 person capacity, eventually moving to full capacity. By the end of 2021, Red Rocks would be named the #1 performing venue in the WORLD, based on attendance and ticket sales. Also in April, the Brewers Association announced that they would not be holding the Great American Beer Festival in 2021.

## MAY 2021



On May 7, the Colorado Crossroads volleyball tournament kicked off, marking the first large event in more than a year at the CCC. The event qualified for the "extra-large venue" program, allowing Denver to host more than 10,000 athletes and spectators over two weekends with stringent safety precautions in place. Gov. Polis ended the statewide mask requirement on May 14, 2021. On May 31, 2021, a new COVID variant discovered overseas was officially given a

name: "Delta." By Sept. 2, 2021, there were 86,000 Delta cases in the U.S.; by Nov. 2021, there were 947,000 cases and by Dec. 2021, 99.4% of all COVID cases in the U.S. were Delta variant.

## JUNE-JULY 2021

On June 1, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment ended restrictions on large indoor gatherings. That same month, more than 70,000 soccer fans filled Empower Field at Mile High over two days to watch the U.S. men's national soccer team defeat Mexico in the Concacaf Nations League Finals – the biggest outdoor event in Colorado since the pandemic began.



In July, Major League Baseball held their All-Star Game at Coors Field, including the MLB Draft, Home Run Derby and marquee Midsummer Classic, with more than 49,000 attending each day's games and more than 100,000 people visiting the free Play Ball Park at the CCC.



On June 6, Gov. Polis signed a bill creating the Meeting and Events Incentive Program, which went into effect on July 1. The program allocates \$10 million in rebates and incentives for individuals hosting events in Colorado.

Also on July 1, the City of Denver announced a new Public Health Order (PHO) that followed State guidance regarding event approvals. With that PHO, indoor and outdoor events no longer required approval and could operate at full capacity with no restrictions.

## AUGUST 2021



The Summer Outdoor Sports Retail Expo returned after the Winter Show was canceled and held in the CCC with 7,500 delegates attending.

On Aug. 2, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock announced that all City employees, as well as private-sector workers in certain "high-risk" settings, must be fully vaccinated against COVID by Sept. 30.

Several private sector businesses and event producers such as AEG followed suit.

On Aug. 23, the FDA gave full approval to the Pfizer vaccine for adults after operating under an Emergency Use Authorization since it was launched earlier in the year.

## OCTOBER 2021

On Oct. 21, the CDC endorsed booster shots of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson COVID vaccines following the green light given the previous month for Pfizer boosters. Millions of Americans, including thousands of Coloradans, were expected to line up for the extra dose. On the same day, nearly 90 percent of Colorado's ICU beds were occupied with more than 1,200 people being treated for COVID.

## NOVEMBER 2021



On Nov. 8, the U.S. lifted an 86-week international travel ban, allowing vaccinated visitors from Canada, Mexico and other countries to enter the U.S. for the first time in more than 600 days. Three weeks later, a new COVID variant was detected in Africa and given the name Omicron. Within days, the first case of the new variant appeared in Colorado. By Nov. 29,

at least 19 countries had reported cases of Omicron, and 70 countries and territories had imposed new travel restrictions. Also in November, in-person theater performances returned to Denver with the first shows from Denver Center for the Performing Arts, including performances of "The Lion King" and "My Fair Lady."



On Nov. 19, the State announced that all unseated, public indoor events with 500 or more guests in the Denver Metro would require all attendees age 12 years or older to be fully vaccinated.

On Nov. 23, the City of Denver reinstated a mask mandate for indoor public places.

## DECEMBER 2021

On Dec. 1, the first U.S. case of the Omicron variant was reported in California, and the following day, Colorado reported its first case. As of mid-December, Colorado had endured 860,000 cases of COVID resulting in 47,000 hospitalizations and more than 10,000 deaths. Some 3,750,000 Coloradans had been fully vaccinated. On Dec. 20, Denver reported its first two Omicron cases, and just nine days later, Gov. Polis announced the Omicron variant accounted for 91 percent of all COVID cases in Colorado.



# VISIT DENVER'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION



The efforts towards social justice and equity continued in so many ways in 2021, from the boardroom to the courtroom, in homes and businesses across the country. The momentum built through the tragedies and triumphs of 2020 rolled forward in 2021. While the effort was not without considerable challenges, a spirit of determination was evident.

In 2021, VISIT DENVER continued the work began in 2020 (it will never be finished), expanding the role of the board-led committee on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), engaging with a diversity consultant and implementing multiple programs across the organization, including full-day trainings for the leadership team and staff.



The organization also implemented new policies and practices to seek out more diverse vendors, partners and service providers, strengthened methods to increase the number of diverse candidates applying for and accepting jobs at VISIT DENVER and continued our track record of representing the city's vibrant diversity within our marketing efforts.

For more information on these efforts contact Rachel Benedick, executive vice president, Sales & Services at [rbenedick@visitdenver.com](mailto:rbenedick@visitdenver.com).





# VISIT DENVER & THE RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC IN 2021

Richard Scharf, President & CEO

Every single aspect of VISIT DENVER's operations has been impacted by COVID.

Although leisure travel returned in large numbers in 2021, and the city hosted significant events like the Major League Baseball All-Star game and cherished local events like Denver Day of Rock and the Cherry Creek Arts Festival, the outbreak continued to create havoc for the tourism industry. U.S. borders were closed to international travel until November 2021, eliminating this market for the moment. Despite that, VISIT DENVER continued long term international marketing and Denver International Airport continued to add direct international flights.

Domestic tourism reached near-normal levels in the summer of 2021, but conventions and business travel remained far below 2019 numbers. For the Bureau's convention sales team, this meant an unprecedented amount of work cancelling conventions, changing dates, reselling meeting planners and finding future open dates for existing bookings, all while continuing to market Denver as a convention destination for new meetings into the future, including into the expanded Colorado Convention Center.

This report will show some of the many ways that VISIT DENVER continued to sell and market our city as a convention and visitor destination in these challenging times.



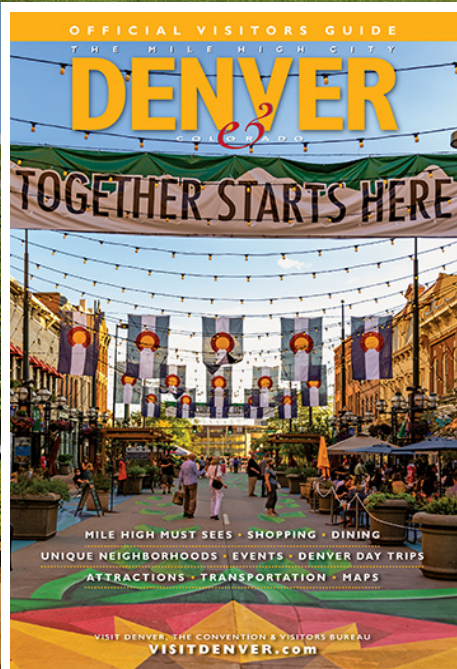




## SUSTAINABILITY

VISIT DENVER is committed to sustainable practices in all aspects of its operations and promotions, and 2021 was no exception.

- Recertification to the State of Colorado Environmental Leadership Program at Gold Level. As part of this certification, VISIT DENVER demonstrated its continued efforts to its sustainability program through continual improvement and monitoring of key performance metrics, development and sharing stated sustainability goals, identification of major environmental impacts, participation in environmental community programs, and providing educational environmental opportunities within the community.
- Over 80% of purchases were considered sustainable per VISIT DENVER's Environmental Purchasing Policy.
- The VISIT DENVER Sustainability website pages continue to be the premier sustainable resource for our clients.
- The Official Visitors Guide to Denver & Colorado was printed using Forest Stewardship Council sustainable paper practices, earning it the organization's highly respected FSC designation.





# CONVENTION SALES & DESTINATION SERVICES



  
**VISIT DENVER**



# CONVENTION SALES & DESTINATION SERVICES

On April 6, 2020, the Colorado Convention Center (CCC) was converted to an Alternative Care Site for COVID patients who might have overwhelmed existing medical facilities in Denver, just as they had in cities across the globe.

With these strict state meeting mandates in place, any possibility for meetings in the facility ended until March 31 2021, when the restrictions were lifted. In 2020, 450,000 convention delegates were unable to experience Denver for a meeting that was booked by VISIT DENVER.

While 2021 was by no means a normal year in terms of hosting conventions, it was not without its highlights. Bolstered by the Extra Large Venue program that VISIT DENVER helped negotiate with the City of Denver, State of Colorado, and the Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association several groups were still able to meet:



- In May 2021, the Colorado Convention Center welcomed its first group in more than a year - the Colorado Crossroads volleyball tournament - which brought more than 10,000 athletes and spectators over two weekends.



- In June, more than 70,000 soccer fans filled Empower Field at Mile High over two days to watch the U.S. men's national soccer team defeat Mexico in the Concacaf Nation's League Finals - the biggest outdoor event in Colorado since the pandemic began.



- In July, the eyes of the sporting world were on Denver when the city hosted the Major League Baseball All-Star Game. Awarded and planned in a mere 13 weeks, the event saw three nights of sellout crowds at Coors Field, as well as more than 100,000 people visiting the free Play Ball Park at the Colorado Convention Center. (see page 13)



- In August, the Outdoor Retailer group returned for their Summer convention, hosting 7,500 delegates and generating an estimated \$14.8 million in economic impact.
- In total in 2021, Denver hosted 414 meetings in the CCC and area hotels, including 26 groups and 78,108 delegates at the CCC. While that number remains 70% below 2019 levels, and though the market may not fully recover for another couple of years, it

speaks to the resilience of the market as well as people's interest in returning to in-person meetings.

## CONVENTION SALES TAKES OFF

- Future convention sales efforts continued throughout 2021, including a return to certain industry trade shows, site visits and client events, although many remained virtual or were canceled outright.
- VISIT DENVER continued a strategic account contacts program developed in 2020 to stay top-of-mind with key planners, helping long-term relationships and generating leads for future business.
- VISIT DENVER returned to convention marketing in 2021 with two campaigns: "Coming Soon" and "Business as Unusual". (see page 11)



- The Colorado Convention Center Expansion remained on track, with a completion date of 2023, and construction kickoff was celebrated with a "Raise the Roof" celebration in September. (see page 12)



- A "Daycation" program was hosted in October in an effort to engage local planners, one of VISIT DENVER's largest sources of business. The last such program was hosted in 2019. (see page 14)

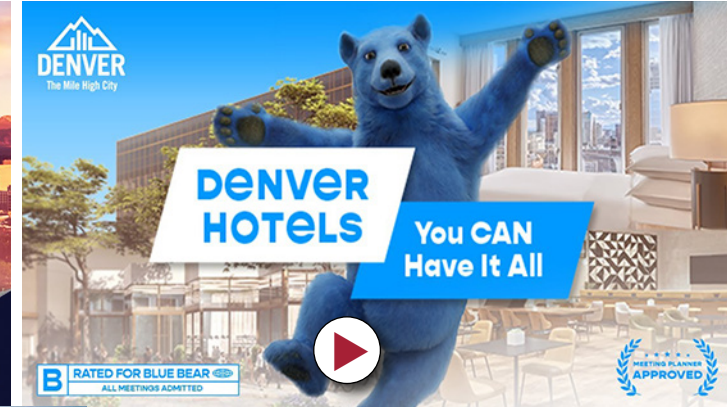


- Also in October, the Denver Sports Commission and the Denver 2026 Bid Committee hosted representatives from FIFA in an effort to secure hosting rights for the 2026 World Cup. (see page 13)
- These sales efforts resulted in \$638 million of new meeting business booked for Denver during the worst convention sales environment that has ever existed. A total of 2,025 leads for single hotel conventions were also received and the team made all of its stated goals.
- In total, there are 599 future meetings on the books, with 1.2 million delegates expected to bring \$2.6 billion in future economic impact.



# CONVENTION MARKETING

- In January, to help keep Denver top-of-mind with meeting planners, the Bureau launched the “Coming Soon” campaign. It featured seven fun, movie trailer-style videos of projects, like the DEN Gate Expansion, new venues like Meow Wolf and the expanded Denver Art Museum, and new hotels and attractions like McGregor Square that make Denver an even more desirable destination coming out of the pandemic. The campaign generated 1.6 million ad impressions, more than 500,000 video views and 10,000 web pageviews.
- A second campaign for meeting planners, “Business as Unusual”, launched in October to highlight even more reasons to love Denver. This series of three videos presented planner with softer – but no less impactful – reminders of what makes Denver so appealing.







## COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION

Throughout the pandemic, the expansion of the Colorado Convention Center was able to stay on track with a new design team and definite plans. Construction started in June 2021 with a giant “Raise the Roof” celebration in September 2021. The project remains on track with an opening date of late 2023. Throughout the planning process, the sales team worked closely with the City’s project manager, the team of RLB; contractor Hensel Phelps; and architect TVS Design. The 80,000 square foot column free ballroom/ multifunctional space with pre-function and outdoor terrace space will have 150-mile views of the Rocky Mountains and will offer the largest ballroom ever built in Colorado.



# WORLD CUP 2026 + MLB ALL-STAR GAME

On Oct. 25, 2021, FIFA officials toured Denver as one of the cities bidding to host games during the 2026 World Cup tournament. In all, 16 cities across the United States, Canada and Mexico will host games during soccer's most prestigious competition. Tournament officials are working to whittle down the pool of candidates. Of the 17 U.S. contenders, only 10 will make the final list.

From July 9-13, Denver played host to one of the most thrilling sporting events in the country, the Major League Baseball All-Star Game. Hosting the event, planned in just 13 weeks, was a community-wide affair that included VISIT DENVER and the Denver Sports Commission, the Colorado Rockies, the City of Denver, the State of Colorado and many more partners.

The event went off flawlessly and included sellout crowds of more than 49,000 people for three straight nights at Coors Field for a celebrity softball and future stars game (Sunday), Home Run Derby (Monday) and the Midsummer Classic (Tuesday). The free Play Ball Park fan fest, held at the Colorado Convention Center, saw more than 100,000 people pass through its doors over 5 days.

The event brought tens of millions of dollars in economic impact to the city and shined a spotlight on Denver as safe and desirable place to host major events.







## DENVER DAYCATION

On November 1, VISIT DENVER welcomed 45 regionally-based meeting planners to attend our annual Denver Daycation event!

For this group of clients that are already familiar with Denver as their home city, Daycation is an opportunity to showcase the newest and most recently renovated infrastructure that the city has to offer! In our full-day agenda, the group visited several hotels, cultural attractions and venues, and finished the day with a networking reception for attendees.





# TOURISM & CONSUMER MARKETING

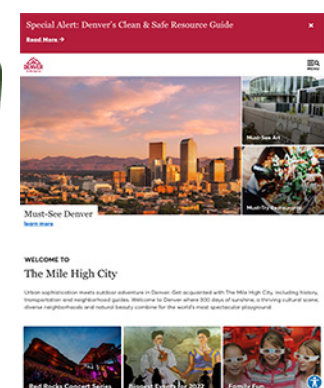
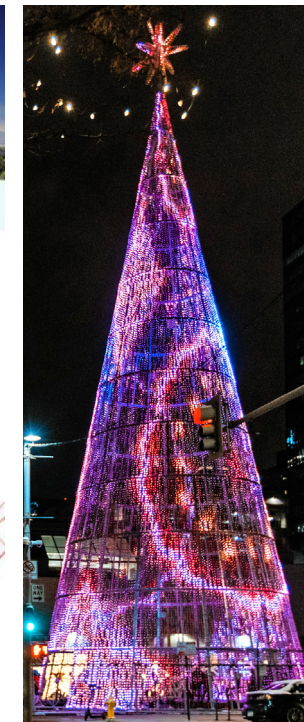
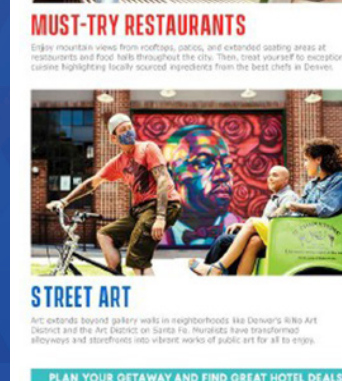
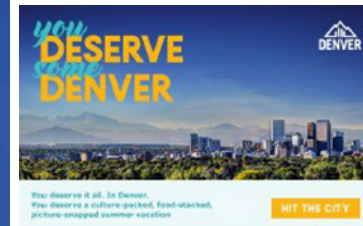




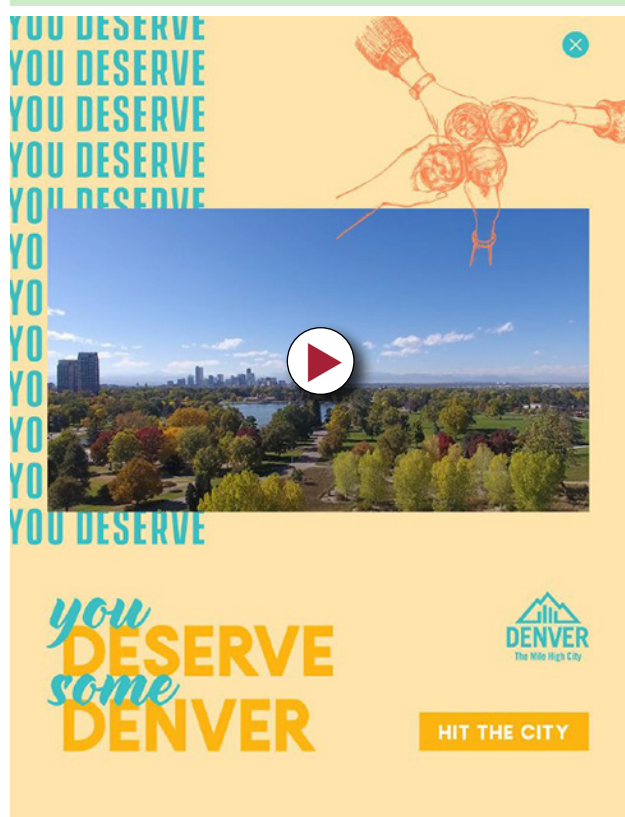
# TOURISM & CONSUMER MARKETING

2021 started with the very encouraging news of three effective vaccines being available, and by March 2021, all hospitality workers and people over 50 were eligible for the vaccine, which also meant that travelers would again be on the move! With this encouragement, VISIT DENVER planned a full year's worth of marketing – advertising, public relations, social media and more – to safely invite people from across the country to visit The Mile High City. 2021 campaigns included:

- A first quarter campaign designed to encourage skiers to spend a night in Denver. The high-tech, targeted campaign gathered more than 278,000 website pageviews.
- The city's first-ever spring Denver Restaurant Week that took advantage of warmer weather to encourage people to return to in-person dining that had been shut down in November 2020. (see page 17)
- A spring & summer campaign – our largest of the year – that targeted people around the region and across the country with a “You Deserve Some Denver” message. For the first time ever, this campaign also encouraged locals to be a tourist in their own city. (see page 17)
- Also this spring, VISIT DENVER re-opened the visitor centers at the Colorado Convention Center (during large conventions) and at Denver Union Station (during business hours), the first time since March of 2020.
- A fall cultural campaign that highlighted the city's many arts & culture-related activities, all leading up to Denver Arts Week, which returned to an in-person program including signature events. (see page 18)
- The return of our Mile High Holidays program that encouraged locals and regional visitors alike to plan a Denver getaway during this festive season.
- A new Basecamp Denver program that used innovative influencer-based videos to entice people to “play in the mountains, stay in the city”. (see page 20)
- Finally, in December, we launched an all-new version of our VISITDENVER.com website designed to better serve the needs of today's visitors.

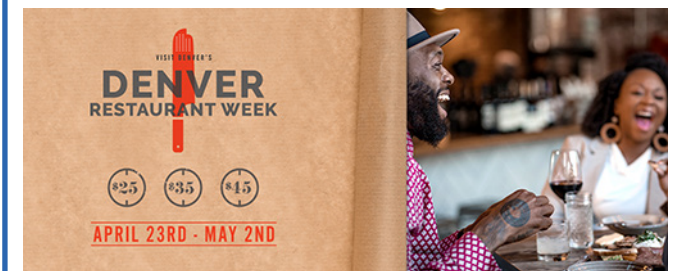






## SPRING SUMMER CAMPAIGN

- Travelers were on the move in the spring and summer of 2021 - a rare window of normalcy during the pandemic - and VISIT DENVER dived in with a national campaign, encouraging people to visit a city that embraced the outdoors. The “You Deserve Some Denver” campaign generated an astonishing 27 million video views, 288 million ad impressions and 843,000 website page views.
- The campaign also celebrated the return of some of the city’s most treasured events, such as the Red Rocks Summer Concert Series, Juneteenth, Cherry Creek Arts Festival, Denver Day of Rock and Taste of Colorado, all of which were promoted via the campaign.
- The campaign ran locally for the first time ever, as well as in regional markets, in target cities like Chicago, Dallas and Houston, and also across the rest of the country.

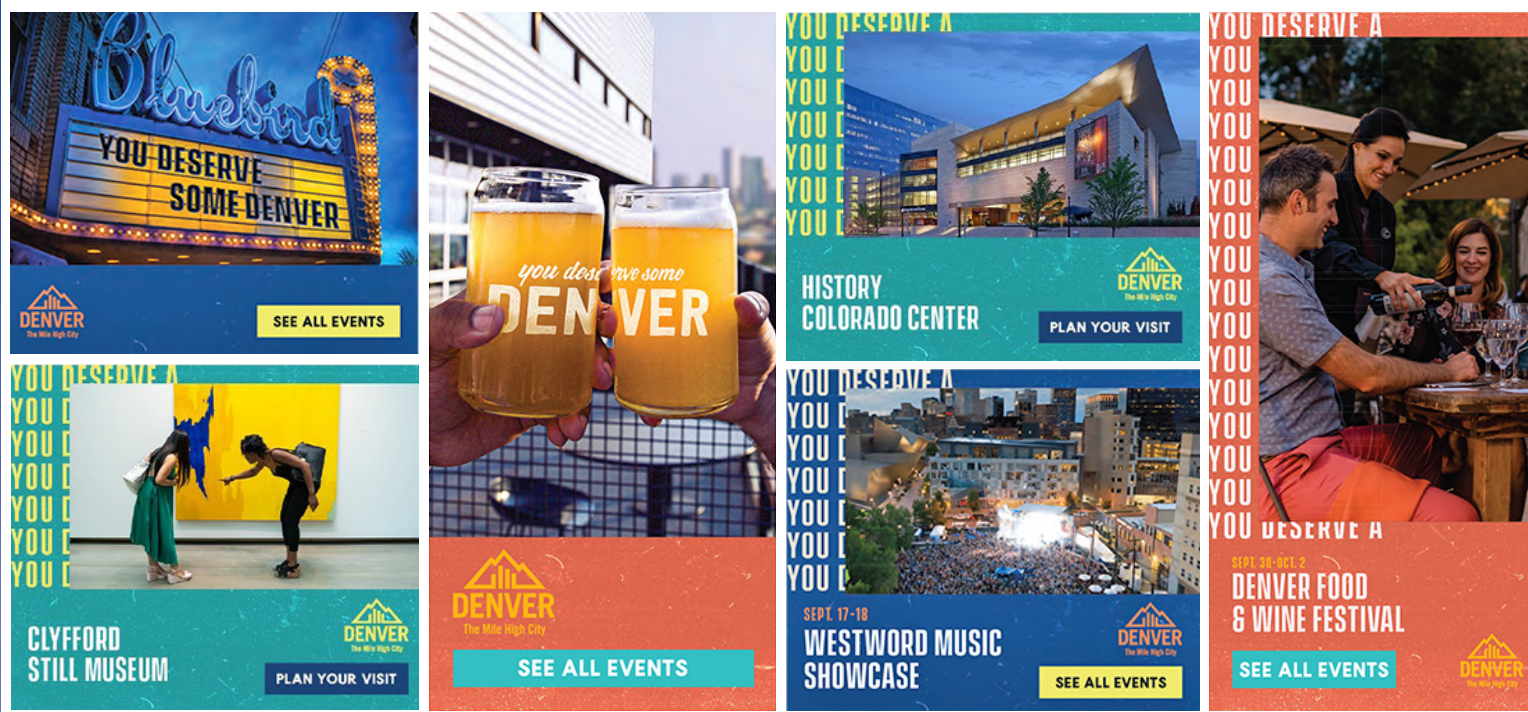


- To take advantage of outdoor restaurant seating, VISIT DENVER launched the first ever Spring Denver Restaurant Week. More than 200 restaurants participated and 1.3 million page views showed that people embraced the idea of outdoor dining and a return to normalcy.



# FALL CULTURAL CAMPAIGN & DENVER ARTS WEEK

- Despite COVID numbers rising again, we pressed ahead with Fall marketing efforts that focused on live music, food and drink, and cultural events including the new Meow Wolf, the re-opened Denver Art Museum campus and exhibitions at cultural institutions across the city.
- The fall campaign culminated in a reinvigorated Denver Arts Week, which took place from November 5-13 and included more than 330 events at more than 250 different cultural institutions. Denver Arts Week also saw the return of signature events like First Friday Art Walks and Night at the Museums, which saw more than 11,000 people visit a dozen metro area museums for free. Denver Arts Week also promoted the return of the Denver Film Festival, which resumed in-person programming in 2021.





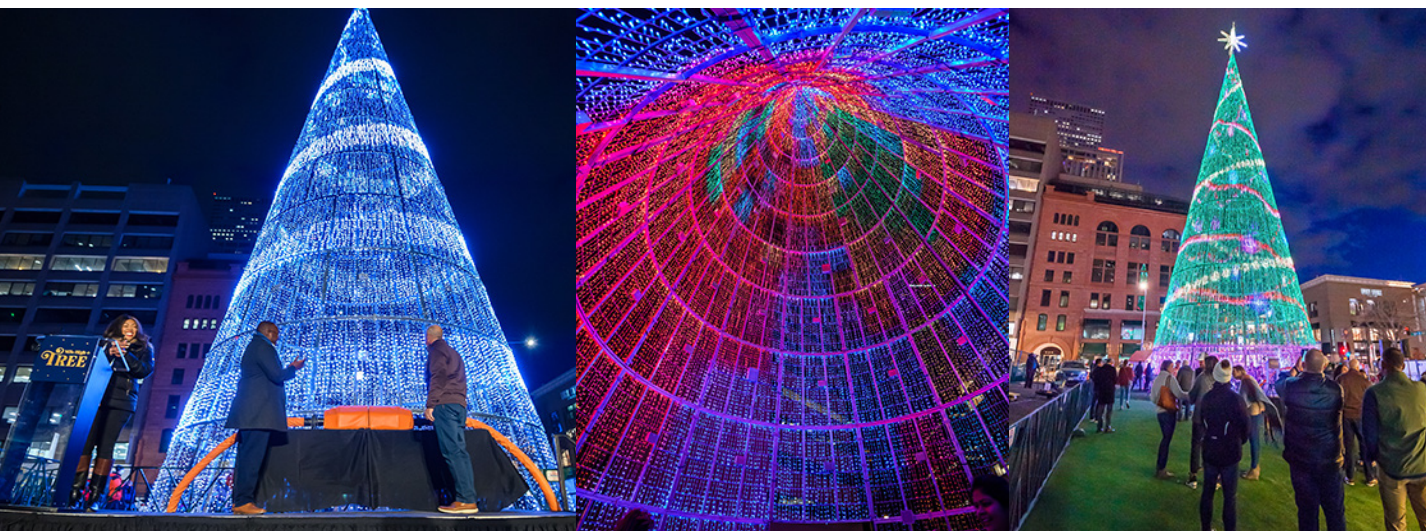
## MILE HIGH HOLIDAYS

- The holiday season offered another window of opportunity for safe local tourism promotions, and the \$1 million Mile High Holidays campaign created a bright spot of cheer. The campaign promoted the city's many light displays, holiday shopping and performing arts, as well signature events like the Parade of Lights and New Year's Eve fireworks, both of which returned in 2021.
- The campaign ran in both local and regional markets and promoted attractions like Zoo Lights at Denver Zoo, Blossoms of Light at Denver Botanic Gardens, the new Luminova Holidays at Elitch Gardens Theme & Water Park, shopping in Cherry Creek, cultural exhibitions across the city and January's National Western Stock Show.



## MILE HIGH TREE

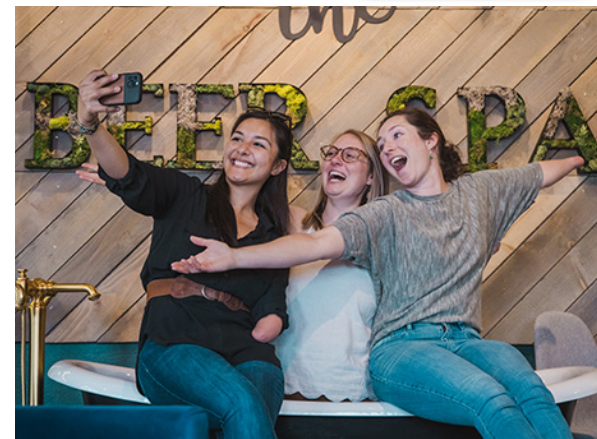
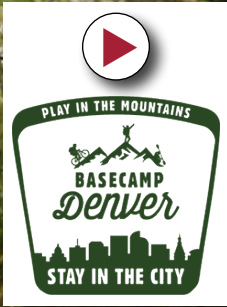
- Mile High Holidays included the third lighting of the Mile High Tree, presented by Modelo® USA, on the 16th Street Mall. More than 95,000 people enjoyed the attraction this year, which again included a choreographed light display timed to festive and diverse holiday music.





# BASECAMP DENVER

- The pandemic caused a dramatic increase in interest in outdoor experiences, as shown by the success that many Colorado resort destinations have experienced since the beginning of the pandemic. Indeed, Colorado has been a top-ten destination since the early days of COVID. In response to this, and in an effort to maintain as many city room nights as possible, VISIT DENVER launched the Basecamp Denver campaign that encouraged visitors to “play in the mountains, stay in the city.”
- This video-based campaign used influencers from outdoors and creative industries to take visitors on unique mountain-based activities and then returning them to the city for a related experience, before they ended their days at a Denver hotel. Stories included:
  - Fly fishing at historic Lincoln Hills ranch and dinner at Stoic & Genuine in Denver Union Station
  - Hiking and climbing with a world-champion adaptive climber, followed by a unique Beer Spa treatment
  - Mountain biking at nearby Mount Falcon, paired with a pedicab street art tour guided by one of Denver’s most renowned muralists.
- The program has been enormously successful, garnering more than 2.5 million views of all videos. A winter version has just been released.

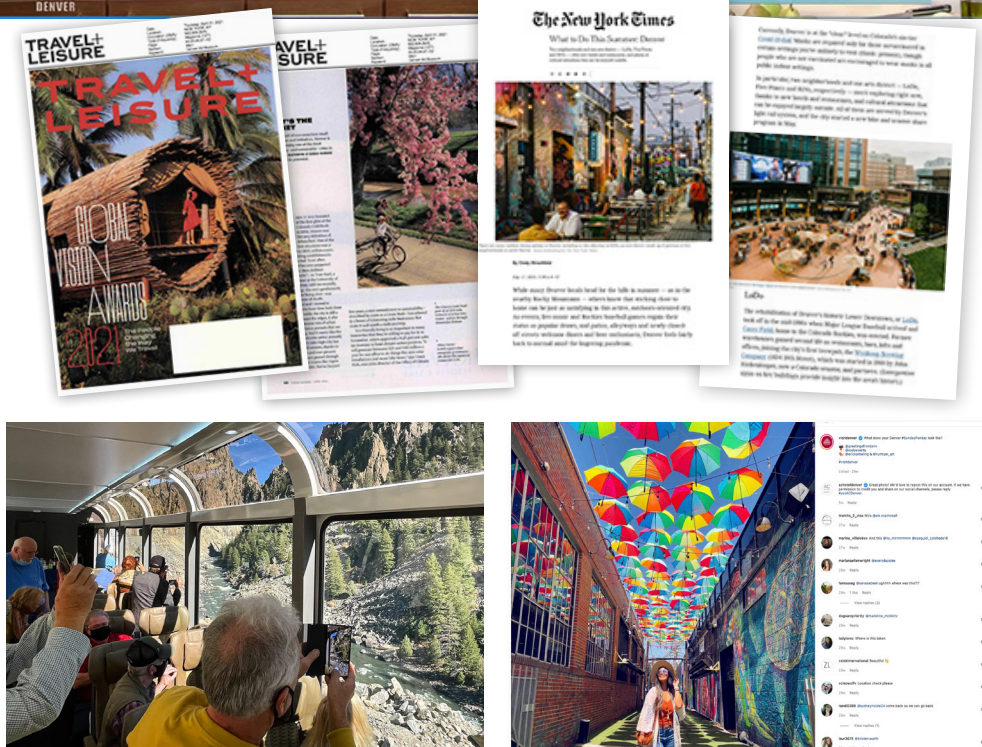






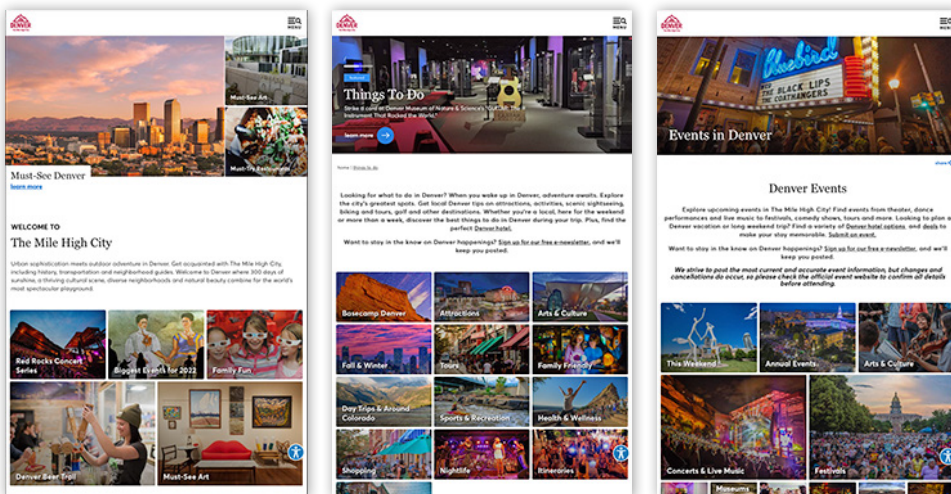
## PUBLIC RELATIONS & SOCIAL MEDIA

- Public relations efforts were able to pick up again in 2021 with socially distanced media events, press trips to experience the city in person and a press tour to help launch the new Rocky Mountaineer. The Canada-based Rocky Mountaineer is a luxury train excursion that can bring as many as 350 upscale travelers to Denver three times a week from spring to fall. Publicity around the All-Star Game alone generated more than \$6 million in global media value. And, despite an overall decrease in 2021 travel stories due to the pandemic, public relations efforts still generated over \$54 million in earned media coverage.
- Key 2021 placements
  - The New York Times, "What to do this summer: Denver"
  - Travel + Leisure, "Sky's The Limit"
  - LIVE with Kelly and Ryan, "Live's Virtual Road Trip: Denver"
- Social media continued to be an important travel motivator in 2021, and VISIT DENVER increased its social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other outlets, with more than 230 million impressions, nearly 3 million total engagements. Social media activity drove nearly 1.2 million visits to the website. The Bureau also created more video content for social media. Our videos were watched a combined 19 million times last year!



## THE NEW VISITDENVER.COM WEBSITE

- On December 15, we launched a brand new VISITDENVER.com website. The result of a year-long effort involving the entire organization, the site is built to respond to the strong shift to mobile visitors (up to 70% of traffic) and to showcase our stunning city through photography and videos. The new site is easy to navigate, more visual and helps people find more things to do in Denver to encourage them to stay longer.





# INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

- The international market has experienced deep challenges since the beginning of the pandemic due to on-going border closures. While those challenges persisted through much of 2021, the end of the year saw positive developments. Beginning with the opening of U.S. borders to non-essential visitors on Nov. 8, 2021 – ending an unprecedented 600 days of restricted international travel – and paired with encouraging news from Denver International Airport (DEN), positive momentum was generated for Denver's international visitation into 2022 and beyond.
- Denver's 2021 declines in international visitation mirrored the country as a whole, but forecasts show the city returning to 2019 levels over the next few years. International visitation dropped from a record 580,000 in 2019 to 138,000 in 2020 and is forecast to hit 108,800 in 2021. That number is expected to improve to 312,000 in 2022, 441,400 in 2023 and 533,100 in 2024. This return is due to a combination of factors, including pent up demand from international travelers, Denver's growing reputation as an international destination following our hosting of IPW in 2018 and the strength of Denver International Airport's international flight development efforts.
- Denver International Airport was a relative bright spot in Denver travel news in 2021, operating for much of the year as the third busiest airport in the WORLD due to the strength of their domestic network. For the year, DEN's TSA throughput declined by 23% while the rest of the U.S. was down 31%.







# INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

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- On the international front, while many international flights were paused in 2021, Denver is expected to ultimately retain most of its direct international flights, including direct service to Tokyo, London, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, and see growth in this area in 2022. Currently, DEN serves a total of 21 international destinations, a number that is sure to grow in 2022, as will international seat capacity. United Airlines will add a 2nd daily flight to London Heathrow beginning May 2022 and will be the first carrier in Denver history to operate twice-daily flights to a European destination. With the addition of United Airlines service to Munich this spring, increased frequency to London-Heathrow, and the return of Air France service to Paris, flights between Denver and Europe in summer 2022 will increase by 23% compared to summer 2019.
- The Tourism Department managed to get back on the road in 2021, the first in-person tourism tradeshows & international sales missions attended since early 2020. In September, the team attended IPW, the largest U.S.-based international tradeshow, where they had 74 appointments. In November, the department participated with the Colorado Tourism Office in a sales mission to the UK & Ireland that included meetings and training with 89 sales contacts as well as a press dinner with nine media in attendance. In all cases, the tone from clients was clear that visitors have pent up excitement to travel to this part of the country and have more savings to use on these trips.



# PARTNERSHIP & VISIT DENVER FOUNDATION







Founded in 1909, VISIT DENVER is a public/private trade association with nearly 1,200 private members and a contract with the City & County of Denver to act as its official marketing arm. Both the public and private sectors continued to struggle in 2021 due to the pandemic. VISIT DENVER was quick to react to meet our partners' needs.

Every effort was made to help our partners navigate the new reality we all faced this year, including prorated dues for all members. As a lifeline of communication for our partners, VISIT DENVER hosted virtual and in-person events. More than 2,600 partners attended these events in 2021, which included a virtual and in-person Annual Partnership Meeting, quarterly Industry Updates, and monthly workshops such as the Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC), social media roundtables, and partnership "Spotlights".

In March 2021, VISIT DENVER was forced to cancel the annual Denver & Colorado Tourism Hall of Fame dinner. However, the VISIT DENVER Foundation launched its first-ever online fundraising appeal, raising more than \$40,000 dollars for scholarships. Due to the fact that no in-person event was held, VISIT DENVER did not induct any new members into the Hall of Fame, but recognized the college and university hospitality programs in Denver and the State.

The 34th Annual golf tournament held at the newly renovated City Park Golf Course, raised an additional \$18,000 dollars.

Since its inception, the VISIT DENVER Foundation has awarded more than \$1.2 million dollars in support of the next generation of industry leaders, including \$90,000 that was awarded to 27 students in 2021. The work of this Foundation has become more important than ever since it will be more difficult in these troubling times for students to continue their higher education in tourism and hospitality.

In August, VISIT DENVER went back to an in-person board retreat with 40 board members attending to discuss programs such as the new normal of travel in a post-pandemic world, air service development at DEN, the Denver visitor experience and homelessness, and workforce development.

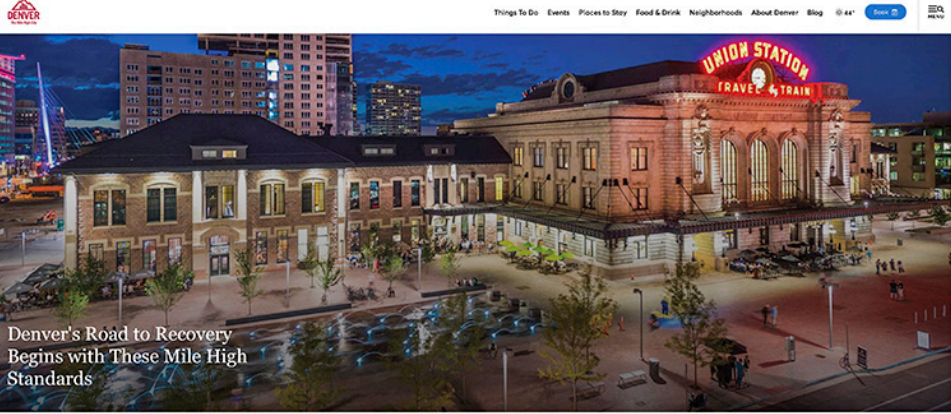
In December, 16 VISIT DENVER employees participated in the Amp The Cause Holiday for Kids gift wrapping which create once-in-a lifetime holiday experiences for over 19,000 children.



# GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS





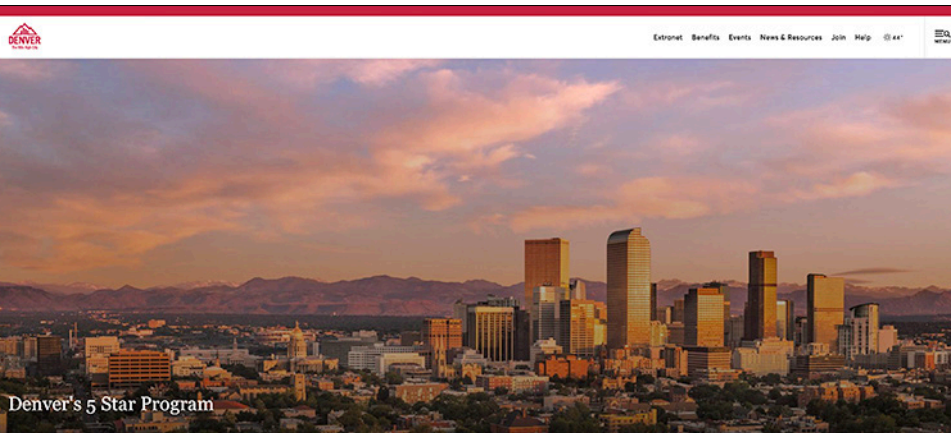


## Denver's Road to Recovery Begins with These Mile High Standards

PHOTO: VISIT DENVER

### Our Standards are a Mile High

VISIT DENVER is continuously monitoring developments surrounding COVID-19 and is following the lead of local, state and national health and travel authorities. The safety and well-being of our community, partners and visitors is our number one priority. We are fully engaged with local and state officials to coordinate a safe return for visitors and meetings. Our hospitality community is working together to implement enhanced procedures to [safely welcome you back](#) with our Mile High Standards.



## Denver's 5 Star Program

PHOTO: VISIT DENVER

### Colorado 5 Star State Business Variance Certification Program

The State of Colorado has issued parameters for counties to build a 5 Star State Certification business variance program. The program requires businesses certified through the program to implement safety measures beyond what is already required by public health orders and guidelines that will help slow the spread of COVID-19 and in doing so, they will be able to expand operations. This program is for responsible businesses that are following public health guidance and going above and beyond to prioritize the health and safety of their staff and customers. Business sectors eligible to apply for the 5 Star program are: General Business, Personal Services, Indoor Events, Restaurants and Gyms.

More details on the 5 Star program can be found [here](#).

Throughout 2021, the Government & Community Affairs (GCA) department closely monitored more than 20 local and state ballot measures, determining the impacts each would have on both the organization as well as the industry. Utilizing this research, the VISIT DENVER Board of Directors evaluated and provided an official position on three citizen-led ballot initiatives that appeared on the November 2021 ballot: 2F, 303 and 304.

Additionally, the Board voted to support the 2021 GO Bond package with a resolution, which appeared on the ballot as measures 2A-2E.

To address the challenges experienced by the industry, the Tourism Roadmap & Strategic Partnerships committee met with Board members to discuss strategies and solutions for building back our workforce, including ways to improve the appeal of jobs in tourism and hospitality.

In early 2021, VISIT DENVER, along with the City and multiple industry partners, developed the 5-Star Certification program, allowing businesses that went above and beyond standard COVID precautions to host more customers at less restrictive levels. The GCA department continued to work with the City to help manage the 5-Star Certification program until restrictions were lifted and it was no longer needed. These efforts included updates to the 5-Star Program website and regular partner communications regarding current (at the time) restriction levels, changes to the State-defined dial framework, indoor event capacity and state listening sessions.

We also worked with the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) and CHLA to establish and draft the Colorado Meetings and Events Incentive program, which provides a 10% cash rebate against eligible hard costs for hosting meetings and events in Colorado. The program's goal is to increase tourism industry recovery by incentivizing meeting and event planners to book new meetings and events in Colorado now and into the future. As of January 31st, there have been 69 applications that have been pre-approved for a total of \$1,196,350 in cash rebates.

As the impacts of the pandemic continued to throw our 1,200 tourism partners uncharted waters, VISIT DENVER helped them navigate this new reality in multiple ways:

- Suspended all partnership dues in 2020 and pro-rated them in 2021
- Continued to offer all Tier III Cultural organizations free membership in 2021



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- Helped partners stay on top of vital information and industry trends, sharing regularly by email, virtual industry updates, such as the Travel Trends series, online educational seminars that have been attended by more than 2,600 partners and the regularly updated VISIT DENVER Clean & Safe Resource Guide
- In June 2021, began conducting partner events in-person with safety precautions in place
- In order to showcase the amazing work of organizations and individuals a cross the city, continued sending weekly "Feel Good Friday" emails to lift spirits and inspire more positive action. Since the beginning of the pandemic, VISIT DENVER has shared nearly 80 updates to this truly "feel good" series!
- Maintained "Virtually Denver," webpage, which promoted dozens of online and virtual experiences to keep up interest and excitement about special exhibitions and cultural offerings.

## 2021 AFFILIATIONS

- Amp the Cause
- Asian Chamber of Commerce
- Biennial of the Americas
- Brand USA
- The Center on Colfax
- CherryArts
- City Club of Denver
- Civic Center Conservancy
- Colfax Marathon Partnership
- Colorado Association of Destination Marketing Organization
- Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce
- Colorado Business Committee for the Arts
- Colorado Competitive Council
- Colorado Concern
- Colorado Hotel and Lodging Association/Metro Denver Loading Council
- Colorado Restaurant Association
- Colorado Ski Country USA
- Colorado Society of Association Executives
- Colorado Sports Hall of Fame
- Colorado Tourism Office
- Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce
- Denver Architecture Foundation
- Denver Department of Housing Stability
- Denver Film Society
- Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
- Denver Police Foundation
- Denver Rescue Mission
- Denver Theatre District
- Destination Colorado
- Downtown Denver Partnership
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Colorado Holiday Commission
- EAT Denver
- Girl Scouts of America
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro Denver
- I Have a Dream Foundation
- Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation
- Japan America Society of Colorado
- Kiwanis Club of Denver
- Meetings Industry Council
- Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation
- Metro Mayors Caucus
- Mizel Institute
- National Western Center
- NEWSED
- Rocky Mountain Business Travel Association
- Rocky Mountain Chapter of ASAE, IAAE, MPI, PCMA, SGMP
- Rocky Mountain Indian Chamber of Commerce
- Rocky Mountain International
- Scientific and Cultural Facilities District
- Slow Food USA
- Su Teatro Cultural and Performing Arts Center
- Tour Colorado
- Tourism Industry Association of Colorado
- University Programs statewide
- Urban Spectrum
- United States Travel Association
- World Trade Center



Our community continues to pull together in so many ways that make us proud to live in Denver! Below is our latest edition of Feel Good Friday, featuring some of those stories from across the city's tourism and hospitality community. Enjoy!



January 25 is U.S. Travel's National Plan for Vacation Day. To help battle burnout and spur Americans to take some much-needed vacation, thousands of travel organizations around the United States are highlighting the annual **National Plan for Vacation Day (NPSD)** on January 25 to encourage Americans to plan all of their time off for the year at the start of the year. Denver International Airport (DEN), with more than 200 nonstop destinations, wants you to tell them where you're going on social media (for a chance to win a prize!).

The American Public Gardens Association, with support from Denver Botanic Gardens and the Institute for Museum and Library Services, launched The IDEA Center for Public Gardens™ (the Center), an initiative to teach and inspire inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA) among public gardens across North America and beyond. The Center will fund speakers and trainers, offer peer-to-peer cohorts and develop next practices as all cultural institutions strive to be more inclusive. In 2022, the Center will create a pilot cohort of gardens and will coordinate speakers and facilitators with the Association. By 2023, it will offer a full roster of programming.



Colorado Creative Industries, a division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), awarded \$300,000 in American Rescue Plan funding to 20 individual artists through round one of the **Colorado Creative Corps ARP grant**. This funding initiative is supported through Colorado's partnership agreement with the National Endowment for the Arts. Arts, culture and entertainment are a \$31.6 billion industry in Colorado, and the creative industries have been among the hardest hit by the impacts of the pandemic. Funded by the American Rescue Plan (ARP), a total of \$500,000 is dedicated to supporting employment opportunities for artists impacted by COVID-19 through this funding by building new structures and partnerships that will help to sustain Colorado's creative sector.

Denver City Council recently granted approval for the completion of Denver International Airport's (DEN) Great Hall Project, allowing DEN to immediately begin design work on the project's Completion Phase. The Great Hall Completion Phase will include improved safety for passengers, upgraded ticketing areas and airport facilities and the Center of Excellence and Equity in Aviation, which will engage and educate people interested in careers in aviation. The airport improvements are also expected to create 7,000 direct and indirect jobs. Currently, Phase 2 of the Great Hall Project is under construction, which is anticipated to be done by mid-2024; the Completion Phase will follow Phase 2.



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press releases

## "VIRTUALLY DENVER" OFFERS EVER-GROWING LIST OF ONLINE/VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES

BY VISIT DENVER PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF / APR. 04, 2021

Denver residents complying with a mandatory "stay at home" order to help curb the spread of the coronavirus can still explore The Mile High City's rich cultural and performing arts scenes and attractions from the safety of their homes with a new online resource called **Virtually Denver**. The new web page and event calendar provide easy access to dozens of Denver's top virtual museum experiences, art galleries and installations, performing arts, concerts, culinary demonstrations and even educational tools for families. Created by VISIT DENVER, **Virtually Denver** also offers an array of online film and literature options with a local flavor as well as a family friendly section featuring children's activities and learning tools, among other options. A new "Virtual & Online" section on the popular Denver360 events calendar provides an even deeper list of options.

Mandated, statewide shelter-in-place measures across Colorado have forced Denver's acclaimed attractions and cultural facilities to shutter their doors, but many of them maintain a robust online presence ranging from gallery browsing to virtual, interactive tours.

"Although it's important that we all make sacrifices right now to get through this crisis, sheltering-in does not mean we have to give up all of the rich cultural offerings and unique experiences in our great city," said Richard W. Scharf, president and CEO of VISIT DENVER. "Our hope is that Virtually Denver helps to provide our community with a means to support and enjoy Denver's attractions and arts and cultural organizations in a safe environment."

**Virtually Denver** visitors can take in a broad range of easily accessible online experiences. The Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre link features live recorded music concerts of top performing artists, while the Denver Zoo's "Zoo to You: Virtual Safari" offers recorded video tours guided by zoo experts introducing many of the zoo's full-time animal residents. Link to The Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art for a 360-degree virtual tour of its amazing collections, and visit the Denver Art Museum link to browse through more than 500 pages of captivating images highlighting its collection. Visit the Colorado Symphony link for live recorded

Virtual Denver

Virtual Demonstrations: Experience Denver Through Your Five Senses

Virtual Demonstrations

Colorado Cures

Spice Up Your Game Day

Mile High Mindfulness

Experience Denver through 5 senses

Capturing Memories

Stop and Smell The Roses

Mile High Music

The Perfect Press

Feel the Movement



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