

# Connect

| MEETINGS INTELLIGENCE |

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Destinations ... 53  
Florida  
Texas  
Rocky Mountains

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

SMOOTH MEETINGS ARE  
SURROUNDED BY RUGGED TERRAIN.

For most folks this naturally spectacular swatch of America's rugged frontier would seem a no-brainer for outdoor adventures, family vacations, ecotourism and the chance to get away from it all and clear one's head. For all of those reasons, along with a slew of affordable hotels, top-rate conference and convention centers, and an array of restaurants and recreational options, Colorado, Utah and Idaho offer an ideal solution for groups in search of something new and exciting in their meeting destinations.

## THE CENTENNIAL STATE

It's rare to find a destination that seems to perfectly balance both business and pleasure to the extent that Colorado does. In many ways the state's natural assets complete the meetings package of its destinations and resorts. Attendees can revel in the bustling excitement and urban sophistication of Denver and Colorado Springs, all the while within easy access of lakes, forests and some of the country's highest and most beloved mountains.

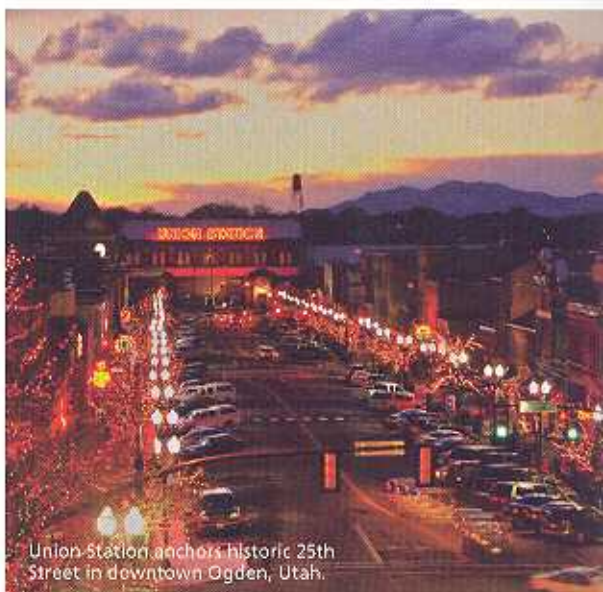
"Half of Colorado is public land, preserved in more than two dozen national forests, parks, monuments and recreation areas," says Richard Scharf, president and CEO at the Denver Metro CVB. "Our mountainous area is six times the size of Switzerland and offers some of the world's best skiing, golf, whitewater rafting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding and scenery. Scattered throughout the mountains are some of the world's most luxurious and famous resorts — places like Aspen, Vail, Beaver Creek, Steamboat and the Broadmoor, all offering world-class chefs, spas, golf and meeting facilities." Colorado resorts continue to raise the quality bar, with Telluride, Wolf Creek, Winter Park, Steamboat and Purgatory recently spending millions in overall upgrades.

The Denver area, one of the fastest growing regions in America, offers a good example of urban lifestyle in a broader rural setting (the 16th Street Mall repeatedly garners attendee kudos for its shopping, dining and entertainment). Groups can divide their day among the meeting room, ski slopes and beginning in July, King Tut at the Denver Art Museum (a nifty spot as well for banquets, receptions and other special events). The city's in the midst of a hotel boom, with a \$70 million redo of the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel (Colorado's largest hotel) and eight new properties adding some 1,200 rooms to the city in the past three years, from the value-minded Homewood Suites and Embassy Suites to the posh Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons entries. Denver's various sports venues — e.g., Coors Field, INVESCO Field at Mile High Stadium, the Pepsi Center — also provide great group options for team-building and recreational fun.

Colorado Springs, the state's second-largest city in the heart of the Pikes Peak region,



Groups go wild in Boise.



Union Station anchors historic 25th Street in downtown Ogden, Utah.



The Denver Art museum can be rented for events.



## SPOTLIGHT: BRECKENRIDGE

It's hard not to feel inspired by Breckenridge, Colorado's stunning beauty and serene alpine setting. "People come here because it's literally a breath of fresh air and, in a sense, serves as the anti-city for them," says Andreyia Platt, marketing manager for Breckenridge Hospitality. "The beauty of the natural surroundings and the friendliness of the community takes people by surprise," she says. The variety, quality and convenience of Breckenridge's location (just two hours from Denver), accommodations and meeting facilities make the resort a cinch for productive meetings as well, with more than 600 guest rooms ranging from lodges and hotels to condos and suites. Meeting options run the gamut, with 35 rooms comprising 43,000 square feet of space. Attendees can expect homey touches like fireplaces and views of the gorgeous surrounding mountains. [breckresorts.com](http://breckresorts.com)

gives new meaning to the concept of group adventure, with a new CityRock climbing gym, \$1 million skate park and the Richard Petty Driving Experience. The meeting industry here has expanded as well, as witnessed by both new properties (the 135-room Mining Exchange Hotel and 300-room Renaissance Colorado Springs Hotel, Spa and Conference Center, both opening this fall) and those, like the Cliff House and Cheyenne Mountain resort, that are sprucing up.

For Michele Manry, event coordinator with the Montana-based RightNow Technologies, the Pikes Peak region proves ideal for the mindset of her meetings. "We like to focus on a mountainous area because it's a big draw and that's our culture — we live by

the mountains," she says. "We hold our user conference, about 750-800 attendees, at the Brookmoor. Their meeting space is large and they go out of their way to make the customers feel that the resort is just for them."

### REACHING ZION

Utah may be the best kept meetings secret in the West. No doubt we think of the Beehive State as a recreational mecca of sorts, given Park City's resorts, the 2002 Winter Olympics site and a slew of spectacular National Parks — Zion, Bryce Canyon and Arches among the more popular stops. But Utah also brings top-rate meeting space to the table, led by the Salt Palace Convention Center, Ogden's Eccles Conference Center and a

well-balanced selection of accommodations and special event venues.

Another plus about meeting in Utah is the easy access in and out of the state, either by car, train or air, notably Salt Lake City Airport, just 10 minutes from downtown Salt Lake and a half-hour's drive to Park City. Once in town, Salt Lake will surprise and impress attendees, with its easy traffic flow and clean, nicely laid out downtown. Salt Lake City hotel stock has grown considerably recently, sporting several new economy properties (i.e., a Springhill Suites, Hyatt Place, Comfort Suites and Holiday Inn Express) with two Cambria Suites properties set to debut later this year.

Park City manages to exude both a posh ambience and a down-home attitude, helped by a number of meetings-friendly resorts and a cozy downtown. Moreover, this ski town also comes with a lengthy Green Meetings resume, from the stunning, 10,000-sq-ft, Swaner EcoCenter to the city's LEED Certified buildings and miles of bikeways. Nearby, the Utah Olympic Park remains a group

# TIP

The Colorado Springs area is ideal for business and educational networking with four colleges and 12 universities that groups can utilize for speakers and resources for their meetings.