

Aurora, CO

Taking Off

By Taylor Smith



Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center

“Aurora is really having a moment right now.”

That’s according to Amber Hejduk, director of sales at Visit Aurora, who said the destination sitting less than 30 minutes east of Denver offers the best of Colorado—“wide-open spaces, incredible outdoor experiences and a genuine sense of place, combined with a meeting infrastructure that makes planning easy.”



On Havana Street

With numerous unique venues and unbeatable proximity to Denver International Airport (DEN)—which is just five miles from the popular Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center—Aurora has the meeting planner necessities. This year, the destination begins an evolution that will make its group offerings even more robust.

“Aurora is a city on the verge of major growth,” Hejduk said. “New hotels, entertainment venues, restaurants and retail developments continue to emerge, making it a destination that’s evolving rapidly. For planners looking for a place with momentum and long-term potential, Aurora is a smart choice.”

A big part of Aurora’s rise is the ongoing renovations at DEN, enhancing the airport’s efficiency and solidifying its position as one of the country’s premier business-travel hubs. Growth in the surrounding Southlands outdoor lifestyle center, Stanley Marketplace and the CU Anschutz Medical Campus has also strengthened Aurora’s position as a multifac-

From Taylor’s desk, the destinations you haven’t thought of for meetings and events, from under-the-radar locales to new neighborhoods you should know about.



Stanley Marketplace

eted meetings destination—and more is on the horizon.

“One of the most anticipated developments is the upcoming room expansion at the Gaylord Rockies, which will open the door to welcoming even larger programs and more complex meetings,” Hejduk said. The property already offers 1,501 guest rooms and can accommodate events of up to 8,000 people.

“Add to that the growth of the Fitzsimons Innovation Community, a significant project poised to deepen Aurora’s influence in the medical and scientific sectors,” Hejduk continued, “and you have a destination that’s not just growing but evolving in ways that align strongly with the future of business travel.” ■

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STAY

The flagship **Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center** is the go-to option for groups looking at Aurora. “It offers virtually everything a meeting planner could need: flexible space, strong amenities and an atmosphere that elevates any event,” Hejduk said. **Denver Airport Marriott at Gateway Park** is another popular option and recently completed a renovation that refreshed both its guest rooms and event spaces, which total 5,929 square feet and can accommodate up to 285. marriott.com

EAT

Annette is a can’t-miss restaurant for groups, offering elevated, chef-driven, wood-fired American cuisine in a warm and welcoming environment. For a taste of Aurora’s rich cultural diversity, **On Havana Street** is a 4.3-mile business district that boasts dozens of international restaurants and authentic flavors from six continents. Standouts include **Leezakaya**, featuring Japanese fare, and **Tofu Story**, celebrating the culinary heritage of Korea. annettescratchtotable.com onhavanastreet.com

PLAY

For groups who want an immersive experience with food, retail and entertainment options all in one place, **Stanley Marketplace** is the spot to be. The former aviation facility is home to multiple food vendors, boutiques, entertainment outlets and collaborative spaces. Those seeking a more nature-focused outing can explore **Cherry Creek State Park**, which offers hiking, water activities and outdoor adventures that highlight Colorado’s natural beauty. stanleymarketplace.com cpw.state.co.us