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Denver For The Family

Right here in and around our Capitol city. Your family can spend quality time, have fun and experience new adventures — together. In Denver's downtown area alone, you can pet a llama, tour a coin factory, stroll through exotic plants and flowers, befriend a shark, and gaze upon real gold! A short jaunt outside of Denver, several attractions will entice your whole family to explore and wonder as you learn about our state's oldest residents — millions of years old, in fact — dinosaurs, and one of our wildest citizens (Wild Bill Cody), immortalized in the foothills.

Downtown

By the time you reach the 93rd step of Colorado's State Capitol, you may need to stop to catch your breath. It's not lack of oxygen that may stop you in your tracks, but rather the breathtaking view of this new-against-old city nestled before the backdrop of the majestic Rocky Mountains. Inside the rotunda, you can almost hear the voices of our founding fathers taking care of business during the early days of our state. This historical building is also the caretaker of priceless, rose-colored Colorado onyx — the only known supply in the world — which was originally used as wainscoting. From outside you can see the brilliant dome, covered with 200 ounces of 24K gold leaf — truly a sight to behold.

One of the most popular sites to visit in Denver is the famous United States Mint, where more than 20 billion coins are produced each year. That's 40 million-plus coins every day! A terrific family outing, the Mint offers tours that begin with the history of money and instruction on the coin stamping process. Watch the faces of the kids as they see the 60 large, high-speed presses and the machines that count, sort and bag the coins. In the basement of the Mint, you'll see the second largest deposits of gold bullion in the U.S. after Fort Knox — an estimated \$100 billion worth of solid gold bars. On your way out, pick up a souvenir at the gift shop. For more information visit www.usmint.gov.

Denver's "littlest" museum is found just south of downtown at the Pearce-McAllister Cottage, housing the Denver Museum of Miniatures, Dolls and Toys. While the children's imaginations are being fueled, kids-at-heart will enjoy touring this historical house, which features 1899 Colonial revival architecture. For more information, call 303-322-1053.

If you're ready to relax and enjoy the finer things in life with your family, the Denver Botanic Garden is a must-see. Regarded as one of the top five botanic gardens in the country, this popular visitor attraction stimulates the senses. For more information, call 720-865-3500, or visit www.botanicgardens.org.

Slightly outside the city and off the beaten path is a great example of beauty transformed. More than 330 species of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians make the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge their home. Tours provide an overview of the Arsenal history (it used to be a weapons and chemicals plant) and wildlife and environmental cleanup efforts. For a once-in-a-lifetime experience, you won't want to miss watching the most regal of birds soar across the sky, the bald eagle. The refuge is open weekends, year-round. For more information visit www.pmrma.army.mil.



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