

# LANDING GROUPS WITH CONVENIENCE & AFFORDABILITY

The Denver International Airport corridor has taken off with hotels, restaurants and conference centers. **BY SHELLY STEIG**

*Denver International Airport's roof resembles snowcapped mountains.*



WHEN DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (DIA) first moved from Stapleton to the city's outskirts, it was the lone landmark in an otherwise open space where only the deer and the antelope played. Hotels popped up, followed by chain eateries and then entire communities. Early on, it seemed too remote from downtown for some business travelers. That's rapidly changing due to thoughtful expansion, especially throughout corridors leading west from the airport.

"They say you're not a destination unless you can get there, and DIA has been our connection to the rest of the country and increasingly to the world since it opened," says Jesse Davis,

VISIT DENVER's director of public relations and communications. "With some of the lowest average fares in the nation, a location in the center of the U.S. and a highly efficient

operation, the importance of DIA to Denver's success as a convention and leisure destination cannot be overstated."

DIA is not just important to Denver; it's also



Clockwise from top: Aloft Denver International Airport's modern and attractive backyard; a spacious king room at Woolley's Classic Suites; Renaissance Denver Hotel's meeting center break area.

had a huge impact on the city of Aurora. Davis points out that the two towns have a collegial, productive and cooperative relationship. "Our goal is to give the customer the product or service they are looking for," he says.

With the impressive growth around DIA, many of those customers are looking to find a convenient location near the airport. Justin Clark, director of sales and marketing at Visit Aurora, says, "The area west of DIA is ideal for meetings and events because of the high quality and affordable meeting space options and lodging that can provide a Colorado experience close to everything—at a cost below what is typically available anywhere else."

### Flyby Meetings

There are times when getting in, getting the job done and getting out is the main goal. That's when being near the airport offers special dividends. Lori Henderson, western regional sales manager for HD Supply Interior Solutions, plans meetings at **Aloft Denver International Airport** at least once a quarter. "The airport is minutes away, allowing us to get more functional time and less travel time to the airport," she says.

Henderson plans off-site visits to local restaurants, but also appreciates the hotel's shared



spaces, which are hip enough for even locals to hang out. "When the weather is nice, the outdoor area by the lounge offers a comfortable seating area where the team can socialize and get some fresh Rocky Mountain air," she says.

David Costlow, executive director of Colorado River Outfitters Association, has held the organization's annual convention and trade show at **Crowne Plaza Hotel and Convention Center Denver International Airport** for the past two years. "The trade show vendors benefitted by having the airport near. It was easier to get speakers in and out as well," he says. At the most recent conven-

tion, CROA didn't stray from on-site; instead, Costlow added levity by hiring VIE Events to bring in a studio-style *Family Feud* game.

Those seeking lodging close to DIA don't need to look any further than **The Westin Denver International Airport**, just steps from the iconic main terminal. The 519-room, 14-story property is scheduled to open in November, offering floor-to-ceiling windows with sweeping views of the Rocky Mountains or high plains. A 37,000-square-foot conference center features grand and junior ballrooms (both of which can be divided), 15 meeting rooms and a 10,000-square-foot prefunc-



*Bungee Sports Challenge is one of the many inflatable games available through Aurora-based Fun Productions.*

**DIA BY THE NUMBERS**

**1,600** FLIGHTS DEPART DIA DAILY

**180** NONSTOP FLIGHTS PER DAY WORLDWIDE, INCLUDING TO 23 INTERNATIONAL CITIES

**5TH** BUSIEST AIRPORT IN THE UNITED STATES, 13TH MOST ACTIVE IN THE WORLD

**3** AIRLINES CALL DENVER THEIR HUB: UNITED, SOUTHWEST AND FRONTIER

tion area with a panoramic three-story glass curtain wall. Between The Westin and the airport sits an outdoor plaza that’s an elevator ride away from the new East Rail Line, which will start making a 35-minute run to Denver Union Station downtown in 2016.

Light rail extensions also will stop near the **Hyatt Regency Aurora-Denver Conference Center**, which is slated to open in the spring. It will provide 249 guest rooms, along with 30,000 square feet of conference and event space. An International Association of Conference Centers (IACC) approved property, the Hyatt boasts rooms for general sessions and breakouts and features reception space for more than 1,500 attendees or 950 diners with banquet seating.

The most talked about project—the **Gaylord Rockies Hotel and Conference Center**—doesn’t swing wide its doors until

2018, but there’s still plenty of buzz. The 1,500-room hotel is the centerpiece of a mammoth campus, which sits on 85 acres minutes away from DIA. For those who are able to combine a work trip with family fun, the property will feature a year-round water park.

While there’s plenty of excitement about the newcomers, other hotels also roll out the red carpet for attendees. These include the Crowne Plaza, with its whopping 70,000 square feet of event space in 18 meeting rooms, with the largest accommodating 5,000 attendees.

In the Gateway Park corridor, **Woolley’s Classic Suites** offers 9,000 square feet divided between three event spaces. These have various arrangements that can hold up to 90 people. Two more rooms offer boardroom seating with state-of-the-art audio-visual.

Stapleton’s premiere property is the **Renaissance Denver Hotel**, an IACC-certified executive meeting center. It boasts 30,000 square feet of event space, including the 11,700-square-foot Colorado ballroom that welcomes up to 1,100 people.

**Stay & Play**

The expansion west of DIA means there are now less deer and antelope but plenty of ways to stay and play. The city of Aurora is unique in that it offers nearly 170 independent restaurants, says Clark, plus many more nearby. It also features

the Colorado Freedom Memorial and the growing Aurora Cultural Arts District. In addition, visitors also can enjoy Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum, which is located along the border between Aurora and Denver.

When the outdoors beckons, there’s Aurora and Quincy Reservoirs and Aurora Sports Park. For a day of play, Aurora-based Fun Productions can supply typical field-day games along with wacky tricycle races, “calf roping,” jump castles and racers that run on an inflatable track.

When the weather doesn’t cooperate—which isn’t often since the Denver area gets 300 days of sunshine a year—visitors can throw strikes at two different bowling alleys, take country Western line dancing lessons at Stampede or plan a breakfast at Dozen’s restaurant. VIE Events, one of Fun Productions’ sister companies, also can set up a virtual graffiti wall and LED dance floor—a sure way to get everyone moving.

If you’re looking for ease of transportation, great hotel experiences, plenty of event space and fun to boot, then the corridors west of DIA are ideal for your next meeting or event. ☞

**Get Connected**

ALOFT DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
aloftdenverairport.com | 303.371.9500

CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
cpdenverairport.com | 303.371.9494

FUN PRODUCTIONS/VIE EVENTS  
funproductions.com | vie4events.com | 303.344.5758

HYATT REGENCY AURORA-DENVER CONFERENCE CENTER  
aurora.regency.hyatt.com | 720.859.8000

RENAISSANCE DENVER HOTEL  
denverrenaissance.com | 303.399.7500

VISIT AURORA  
visitaurora.com | 303.326.8697

VISIT DENVER  
visitdenver.com | 800.233.6837

THE WESTIN DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
starwoodhotels.com | 303.317.1800

WOOLLEY’S CLASSIC SUITES  
woolleysclassicsuites.com | 720.599.3750