Go West!
The hip, quirky, and unique destinations that are making West Colfax cool again.
- By Allison Cohn

Photo by Zane Balogh
We’re sure you’ve been here before. Yep, that annual trek you make with the kids or your college buddies to the most famous of pink castles – Casa Bonita – puts you right on West Colfax. But did you realize that when you’re standing outside that iconic fountain on a weekend afternoon you’re actually smack dab in the heart of a vibrant arts district? 40 West Arts District to be exact and the area is home to public art, locally brewed beer, fresh roasted coffee, and quirky local specialty shops. Plus, the place is packed with art galleries—you’ve just got to know where to find them. That’s where we come in. The “Daycation” guide below will give you some of our current picks and recommendations for spending a day in the district.

**EAT & DRINK**

**Susie’s Sweets (1470 Carr Street)**
Get your sugar high on the corner of Colfax & Carr at Susie’s. What started off over 20 years ago as Colorado Cookie Company has evolved into Susie’s Sweets, specializing in mouth-watering, soft-baked cookies. You can build your own custom box of goodies from a variety of fresh-from-the-oven cookies, brownies, macaroons, sugar cookies, toffee, fudge and more.

**WestFax Brewing Company (6733 W. Colfax Avenue)**
Nothing screams “up-and-coming neighborhood” like a shiny new brewery moving into Lamar Station Plaza. This sleek new(ish) watering hole is hyper focused on making small batches of tasty, genre defying beers. So far, they’ve been getting a lot of overflow from Casa Bonita tourists, luring them in with hoppy ales to wash down those sopapillas (and perhaps calm their nerves after spending three hours with the kiddos, holed up in a windowless arcade). This family and dog-friendly establishment brings about a sudsy sense of Colorado craftsmanship that makes the locals proud to call it their own.

**Sweet Bloom Coffee Roasters (1619 Reed Street)**
Sweet Bloom is one of West Colfax’s best-kept secrets, located off of Colfax on Reed Street. It’s so secret that it doesn’t even have a proper sign on its shop, but coffee nerds throughout the city still come flocking because of the quality of its beans. Sweet Bloom harvests the freshest coffees from around the world, as curated by their owner Andy Sprenger. Grab a seat inside the modern, metal and wood interior or take your cup o’ joe to go and wander around the corner to take in the seven murals painted on 16th Avenue during 40 West Arts’ 2015 MuralFest (a number of other galleries and studios are walking distance, as well).

**Chicago Style Beef & Dogs (6680 W. Colfax Avenue)**
Part restaurant, part museum, Chicago Beef & Dogs (located on Colfax, between Otis & Newland Streets) has been paying homage to Windy City fare in Lakewood for over 20 years. Joe Margotte and the gang use family recipes to make their Italian beef, pepper-and-egg sandwiches, corned beef, pastrami, bratwurst and more. Enjoy an Italian ice and listen to your favorite Chicago sports game over the radio, old school style.

**Lakewood Grill (8100 W. Colfax Avenue)**
Holding down the fort since 1950, Lakewood Grill is your classic dive bar with pinball, pool, and pub food. Grab a burger or a smothered burrito and wash it down with one of the many beers on tap. In addition to serving up brews and beef, Lakewood Grill also hosts live music multiple nights a week. It’s hard to miss the red brick building; the ‘Lakewood Grill’ sign is one of the iconic neon variety that made Colfax Avenue famous.

![Locals get their morning caffeine at Sweet Bloom.](image1)

![Marissa Spencer tops off the latest batch at Susie’s Sweets.](image2)
Pho 2 Love  
(*6593 W. Colfax Avenue*)
This authentic Vietnamese noodle house and grill, located in Lamar Station Plaza, has an overwhelming amount of (reasonably priced) boba smoothie flavors to choose from (plus lots of 40 West local art hanging on the walls!). You’ll be served your massive bowl of steaming Pho impossibly fast—great for a quick *hangry* fix.

SHOP

**Gallery of Everything & Red Herring Art Supply**  
(*6719 W. Colfax Avenue*)
Tucked in tight next to Casa Bonita, Gallery of Everything is run by a gaggle of colorful women with an affinity for oddities. *Westword* voted Gallery of Everything “Best Gallery Shack Up” in 2016, which accurately sums up the place. It’s a mix of local art from more than 30 different creatives, which gives the place a surreal feel to it. You’ll go in not quite knowing what you’re looking for and you’ll leave not really sure of what you’ve seen. Gallery of Everything is also home to Red Herring Art Supply, which sells hard-to-find, high-quality art supplies made from some of the oldest materials still available. The art supply shop is named after a murder mystery novel from 1931 and boasts the slogan, “Life is a red herring for art.” They carry brands such as Ceracolors, Rubley Colours and Natural Pigments that use minerals, resins, gums and plants from Afghanistan, Chile, Russia, Uzbekistan, India and Kenya.

**Chain Reaction Records**  
(*8793 W. Colfax Avenue*)
Pop in to visit the boys at Chain Reaction Records (near Colfax & Dudley Street), Denver’s punk and heavy metal headquarters. Owners Josh Lent and Justin Lent like to embrace all things eclectic, especially music. Not only do they sell rare (and not so rare) vinyl LPs, but they’ve got CDs and cassettes (for people who still use those) and assorted memorabilia, ranging from t-shirts and books to posters and jewelry. Chain Reaction has “all the stuff you can’t find anywhere else and some you can.” Think: High Fidelity meets Empire Records, with a Sid Vicious sneer.

**Golden Music**  
(*10395 W. Colfax Avenue*)
In a classic, international-style building, designed by noted architect Raymond H. Ervin, the flagship location of Golden Music at West Colfax & Miller Street, repairs, restores, sells, and rents instruments. It also boasts a collection of some of the most distinctive and beautiful stringed instruments on the planet (in addition to others like woodwinds, accordions and ethnic drums). And, because the building is a former bank, dozens of rare violins, some more than 300 years old, are housed in the impressive, steel-doored vault. Golden Music also advocates for the local music community by hosting drum circles and other events.
Rockley Music Center  
(8555 W. Colfax Avenue)  
Get your history fix at Rockley Music: the oldest continuous running business on West Colfax, family owned and operated since 1946. It services and repairs pianos, sells bowed-string instruments, and provides both private and group lessons. Rockley’s recently added a 140-seat performance hall to host community events and recitals, too. This place is super dedicated to raising money for music education, donating over $17 million to the cause since 2007.

ARC Thrift Store  
(6791 W. Colfax Avenue)  
Located in Lamar Station Plaza (home to Casa Bonita), this massive thrift store has endless aisles of clothes, furniture and bric-à-brac (the best part of any consignment store). Passing through the ARC’s pearly gates—ahem, electronic sliding doors—is like entering a Narnia of used stuffs. You could kill hours in there, either perusing the racks and shelves or just people watching. On Saturdays prices get slashed in half, which means better deals but longer lines.

The Altar Bridal Consignment  
(9629 W. Colfax Avenue)  
You’re not even engaged. Actually, you’re single. Fine. But looking at pretty, lacy things is still a fun pastime for most ladies, even in the 21st Century. The Altar Bridal Consignment has hundreds of dresses, spanning all sizes and price points. The shop is overflowing with designer, discontinued and vintage dresses. And the store offers large dressing rooms and plenty of extra seating, so your friends can ooh and ahh when you step out in the perfect dress.
The EDGE Theater  
(1560 Teller Street)  
It doesn’t get more original or well, edgy than this theater which runs innovative and eclectic shows right in the heart of 40 West Arts District (the location is also 40 West Arts Gallery). Its performances run the gamut of comedy to tragedy, and if you still need a reason to forgo movie night and choose this for your next date, the EDGE won multiple ‘Best of Denver’ awards in the 2015 and 2016 editions of Westword, including ‘Best Boundary-Pushing Theater.’

Container Collective 
Yoga & Bikes  
(1492 Ammons Street)  
Container Collective is a thoughtful pairing of yoga and bicycles, located on Colfax & Ammons Street. Owners Russ and Brittany Hopkins are both extraordinarily knowledgeable about their respective passions; he builds bikes and she teaches yoga (and is actually a professionally trained dancer). They’ve brought together their skill sets under one roof to collectively promote open mindedness and sustainability. Her yoga classes span all levels, and there’s always a new workshop, retreat, or other community event going on. He offers unique two-day workshops where you can build your own bike out of bamboo—it’s as much about the process as it is about the awesomely hip bike you take (or ride) home.

Salt Spa  
(1450 Hoyt Street)  
Looking to zen out? Haven’t been able to breathe through your nose since last August? Head to Salt Spa, which offers a treatment called Halotherapy designed to clear pollens, viruses and toxins out of your lungs and nose. Basically, you sit in a comfy lounge chair in a room that’s filled with over three tons of salt. Tiny granules of the stuff are also blown into the room. By inhaling salt particles, airway inflammation is reduced. The treatment is for anyone suffering from respiratory issues, or those just wanting to relax and ground. Feel free to fall asleep or meditate during the treatment (most people do).

Hyperspace Arcade  
(1601 Reed Street)  
This 1980s-themed arcade is a major throwback to the glory days of quarter games, Tab soda, and Journey on the jukebox.
But forget the change machine; you can splurge on $10 for a full day ($45 monthly passes are available for the die-hard geeks) and come and go as you please. From pinball and vector games to classic favorites (think Donkey Kong and Pac-Man), there are oh-so many options to nerd out and lose yourself amongst the blips and graphics, climbing closer and closer towards that high score.

**Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (1600 Pierce Street)**

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (RMCAD) is the kind of place that makes a nineteen-year-old actually want to go to class. The 23 acres of landscaped grounds are covered with 17 historic buildings that date back to 1904 and include a sculpture garden and four art galleries. The campus is awash with acclaimed artists, designers and influencers—some faculty, others guest lecturers. With a new degree program in Business for the Creative Industries, you can schmooze with creatives, even if you intend to monetize them later. (Tours available by appointment).
Okay, to be accurate 40 West Arts District isn’t one space, it’s an all encompassing collective of galleries, public art installations, a slew of neighborhood murals, and more—all packed generously into a few block radius. But when we’re talking about 40 West Arts Gallery, we mean the little-engine-that-could space on Teller Street a half block north of Colfax Avenue. In addition to hosting approximately 10 shows per year, the gallery also serves as the hub for programming including senior and youth programs, family initiatives, an Artist in Residence, and the very magazine you’re reading now.

40 West Studios (1615 Reed Street)

Sixteen individual local artists have galleries and workspace located inside the building just next to Sweet Bloom Coffee Roasters. This collaborative space allows for maximum creativity, spanning a broad spectrum of media. The concept of sharing creative space permits artists to witness each other’s process as it evolves from concept to creation. The artists who make up 40 West Studios are all dramatically different, but still successfully cohabitate and learn from each other—making for a beautiful mash up of art stuffs.

Faye Crowe Studio and Gallery (1528 Teller Street)

Faye’s 2,000 square foot studio (located steps from 40 West Arts Gallery) is full of original oil paintings that are gripping, bold and dramatic. Her work is inspired by the local Colorado environment and landscape, featuring imagery of people and horses. Style wise, she leans towards abstract expressionism, while utilizing her design and architecture background.

C-Squared Studios and C2 Gallery (1520 Teller Street)

Owner and artist Chad Copeland has a vision, and one that includes lots of collaboration with his community. C-Squared Studios builds custom metal and wood fabrication, furniture, handrails, fountains and more. But C-Squared is about more than just making a living. In fact Chad has opened his studio to teach welding and fabrication techniques to the surrounding community. He’s also built...
C2 Gallery, a separate area for local artists to hang their work.

Lakewood Arts
This non-profit arts organization has been promoting the local creative community since 1988, ranging from theater, music, visual arts, dance and literature. For next to nothing (or nothing), you can enjoy its various events and exhibits (First Fridays are always fun), live concerts (usually local jazz and/or Americana musicians) and local performances. Lakewood Arts also offers a number of workshops and courses throughout the year, so you can get your fix in everything from mosaics to watercolor.

MURAL ART
Mural art is sort of a “thing” for 40 West Arts District. With a program titled COLOrFAX, focused on beautifying West Colfax through art, and MuralFest, a one-day festival featuring internationally recognized mural artists, 40 West Arts prides itself on public art. You can see the results of 2015 MuralFest at the intersection of 16th Avenue and Teller Street. The seven murals feature a painting style and subject matter that is extremely diverse, allowing you to enjoy a dynamic “outdoor gallery” that ranges from bold and abstract to soft and nostalgic. Other murals abound throughout the district including Martha Pinkard-Williams’ “Stardust” (8755 W. 14th Avenue) and Bobby Magee Lopez’s work “Hear the Train A Humming” (13th Avenue and Lamar Street).

SCULPTURE ART
Lakewood Legacy Trees by Lonnie Hanzon
Track down (but don’t climb) local artist Lonnie Hanzon’s “Lakewood Legacy Trees” located at the Lamar Street RTD Station. These whimsical saplings start off with solid brick roots and grow up into mosaiced trunks, their spindly branches budding with bright cherries and Monopoly houses amidst green leaves. The trees are indigenous to the West Colfax neighborhood.

Connected by Christopher Weed
You’ve heard of Giant Jenga, but have you seen these larger than life puzzle pieces? These four enormous, stainless steel jigsaw tiles are about 22 feet long by 10 feet wide and weigh 5.5 tons each. The connected theme of the puzzle pieces reflects Colfax’s importance as an avenue that unites and connects so many parts of the city and the communities within it. “Connected” is lit up at night, so it can be enjoyed by both motorists cruising past and dawdling pedestrians alike.

There’s much more, lots more, tons more that we can’t capture here. But if you speak to the locals who know this area best, they’ll tell you that West Colfax is reinventing itself again through the arts. So next time you’re in the area, take a break from Casa Bonita cliff divers, and wander around the district. Both are works of art, in their own right.