By Allison Cohn

Perhaps you’re a vacationer looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of downtown Denver or a local (i.e. you moved here from Texas at least five years ago) anxious for weekend plans that feel a little different. Then head west, friend, to the Lakewood end of Colfax Avenue where the corridor has seen a recent resurgence of local businesses catering to residents and visitors, from millennial transplants and young families to #natives, alike. West Colfax is brimming with local gems holding true to their roots and infusing the neighborhood with charm, culture and historic value. Read on for our tips on spending 48 hours along the Lakewood West Colfax corridor.

DAY ONE:

Cult-Worthy Caffeine

Start your day with Dutch Bros Coffee (6671 W. Colfax Ave.), which has franchises all over Oregon and has developed quite the cult following since its inception in 1992. Dutch Bros recently opened its first metro location at Lamar Station Plaza (home of Casa Bonita). Dave Szopa, the West Denver Operator for Dutch Bros is excited about their newest locale. “We felt instantly embraced and realized quickly that the community’s philosophy directly matches up with Dutch Bros’ company values,” Dave explains. Dutch Bros
Coffee prides itself on giving back to the local neighborhoods where its shops are located and he sees 40 West Arts District (the creative district that calls West Colfax home) as meshing perfectly with those values. What makes Dutch Bros so unique is its drive-thru and walk-up patio, where high energy and fast paced servers will deliver your caffeine fix quickly and efficiently.

**More Top Choices:** Sweet Bloom Coffee Roasters (1619 Reed Street), Mint & Serif Coffee House (11500 W Colfax Ave.)

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**Stretch ‘n’ Pedal**

You’re fully caffeinated so now it’s time to jump on your bike, or your yoga mat, or both. **Container Collective Yoga & Bikes** (1492 Ammons St.) houses a gorgeous yoga studio with an ever-expanding schedule that includes all level courses, plus kid’s yoga and yoga teacher training. It includes a bike shop and a bamboo bike-building center, where you can fix that gear that’s been making a weird popping sound or sign up for a weekend workshop where you build a bike and then take (or ride) it home. Container Collective “supports people in transforming their lives, giving them a skill set to serve the community on a deeper level,” says owner and teacher Brittany Hopkins.

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**Flora & Fauna**

You might not consider West Colfax much of a “green” destination (except for a smattering of local medical dispensaries), but it’s actually home to several renowned flower shops and garden centers. **Veldkamp’s Flowers & Gifts** (9501 W. Colfax Ave.) is a family-owned and operated business established in 1959 that recently went through a multi-million dollar renovation. Veldkamp’s is home to a gigantic greenhouse, adorable retail shop with plants, pottery, candles and more, and the company also hosts flower arrangement courses. Veldkamp’s imports the highest grades of flowers from California, Holland and South America multiple times a week and uses state-of-the-art transport technology to ensure quality freshness of all its products.

**Jensen’s Flower & Garden** (845 Wadsworth Blvd.) is a locally-owned garden center and nursery that has also been servicing the neighborhood for over 30 years. It grows a majority of inventory locally in greenhouses in Golden, so plants are already acclimated to Colorado’s dry mountain air. Since Jensen’s doesn’t ship out of state, it boasts a low carbon footprint and run an environmentally friendly business. Plus, the company claims to have the very best hanging baskets in town.

**More Top Choices:** O’Toole’s Garden Center (1404 Quail St.)

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**Lunchtime**

All that biking and yoga-ing and looking at plants works up an appetite, so head to **Thai Diamond Cafe** (1560 Kipling St.), tucked into a shopping center on the corner of West Colfax and Kipling. Its “Thai-spicy” curries and noodles are a force to be reckoned with. It’s also one of the rare Asian restaurants in Denver serving khao soi, a Northern Thai recipe that is also popular in Myanmar and...
Lao. This soup-like dish includes both deep-fried and boiled egg noodles topped with pickled mustard greens, shallots and lime with your choice of meat (typically chicken) in a coconut sauce.

Curry isn’t your thing? It’s a quick jaunt to West Colfax favorite Chicago-Style Beef & Dogs (6680 W. Colfax Ave.), where the people behind the counter have just as much attitude as the food. Specializing in Italian beef and Vienna beef hot dogs, this authentic Chicago eatery even boasts Fannie May candy, Salerno butter cookies and Green River pop. Want to put ketchup on your hot dog? You might have to argue with the spirited family owners behind the register but hey, it’s all part of an authentic experience (and ketchup doesn’t go on hot dogs anyway, you savage).

Sustainable Vintage + Treasures

Filled up and ready for more action, it’s time to go shopping and West Colfax is known for its quirky, cool, independent haunts. If you’re in the market for some fresh costume accessories, Disguises (9797 W. Colfax Ave.) offers both costume rental and attire for purchase. It has it all, from rubber masks to more refined wares, like pin-up girl tights and heels, colorful wigs, and high-quality face paint, steampunk hats, and dusters. You can get lost for an hour in this expansive store with multiple rooms, but remember to take off the gorilla mask before you go looking for your family.

Lost Love Vintage Boutique (9797 W. Colfax Ave.) is just across the parking lot from Disguises, if you’re looking for something more subtle and authentic. This little boutique also boasts a rotating variety of quirky and colorful antique kitchen accessories, hats, gloves and fur coats. And finally the ARC Thrift Store (6791 W. Colfax Ave.) in Lamar Station Plaza is unbeatable when it comes to inventory, variety and pricing for all things reused and recycled. From home goods and furniture to clothing and an awesomely huge kids section, if you dig deep you’re likely to find some real gems.
The diner is one of three West Colfax haunts listed on the National Register of Historic Places (the other two are Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design and Golden Hill Cemetery).

More Top Choices: Danny’s Carnation (1395 Wadsworth Blvd.), Hits the Spot Diner (5637 W. Colfax Ave.), Lakewood Grill (8100 W Colfax Ave.)

The Future (and Past!) of Gaming

After breakfast it’s just a two-minute walk along Colfax to Head Games VR (9655 W. Colfax Ave.), the first woman-owned virtual reality arcade in Colorado. In her words, owner Victoria Merchant says her arcade “offers a form of family entertainment [virtual reality] that would normally be fiscally out of reach for so many, available to everyone.” Head Games VR provides the latest in VR technology for a total immersion experience. Offerings also include affordable custom-built gaming computers, computer repair, off-site VR equipment rentals and more. So strap on a headset and be transported to another world.

If you’re looking for a more nostalgic — and arguably less dizzying — experience, pop into Hyperspace Arcade (1601 Reed St.), where you can have unlimited access (plus, same-day re-entry!) to over 175 arcade and pinball games for just $14. This teeming game collection spans the decades from the 1970s through the 90s, and the arcade is open seven days per week from noon until 1 a.m. Monthly “Hyper Passes” are available for $45, granting you 30 days of unlimited play.

DAY TWO:

Vintage Diners

Start your day at Davies Chuck Wagon Diner (9495 W. Colfax Ave.), a location with traditional breakfast eats (think cheese omelets and steak and eggs) in a traditional 1950s era diner. And you can serve up a history lesson to your kids alongside their stack of pancakes. This fully equipped restaurant was shipped by rail from New Jersey all the way to West Colfax in 1957.
Authentic Eats

Hungry after all that gaming? Get a taste of Eastern Europe on West Colfax at the European Market & Deli (1990 Wadsworth Blvd.). Serving tasty sandwiches on homemade bread and authentic cheese pies from an unassuming counter in the back of the shop, this market is stocked with imported grocery items and treats from the Balkans region — including Bulgarian cured meats, Ajvar and Kinder Bueno chocolates.

Located in the very same shopping center is Deli Italia Market (1990 Wadsworth Blvd.), which has been in the ‘hood for thirty years. It proudly makes its own fresh mozzarella daily and serves hand-tossed pizzas, carefully crafted sandwiches, its famous meatballs and heavenly cannolis — plus a wide variety of imported pastas, oils and vinegars from Italy.

More Top Choices: Bangkok Thai Food (2099 Wadsworth Blvd.), Chicago Market (1477 Carr St.), Colorado Cookie Company (1470 Carr St.), Pho 2 Love (6593 W. Colfax Ave.)

Explore Art Outside!

Grab lunch to go and then #ExploreArtOutside, it’s the tagline for the new 40 West ArtLine, a walkable bikeable arts route in the heart of West Colfax and Colorado certified creative district 40 West Arts. The route features murals both wall and ground, fence art and interactive art pieces including an Affirmation Station by artist Timothy Flood (punch a crosswalk-like button and receive an affirmation through the kiosk, which speaks to you and lights up). The ArtLine also intersects with Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (1600 Pierce St.), a private college in the heart of the corridor with a gorgeous outdoor space and four galleries open to the public.

And if walking or biking aren’t your thing (we get it, exercise is lame) there are a number of motorcycle shops located along West Colfax just waiting for you to spruce up your ride and drive like the wind. Dino’s Custom Cycles (7855 W. 16th Ave.) is one of the best, it services all makes and models and offers custom builds and almost any modification you can think of. Check out the one-of-a-kind cycles at the shop while you’re there.
More Top Choices: Foothills Motorcycles (1435 N Wadsworth Blvd.), G-Force Powersports of Lakewood (7700 W. Colfax Ave.)

Art and Theater

You’re in a creative district, so be sure to finish up your West Colfax jaunt with a little arts and culture (yes, we said arts, culture and Colfax in the same sentence). Haley Johnson, the Producing Artistic Director of Benchmark Theater (1560 Teller St.), describes her company as “extremely mission-driven, with a strong focus on community collaboration and partnerships.” They’re simply a group of artists looking to create and promote “interesting stories that question what it is that makes us human.” Benchmark has taken over the theater space previously held by the EDGE and boasts unique, high-quality productions in their intimate space. Benchmark is dedicated to bringing quality theatrical productions to the West Colfax corridor and neighboring community.

Before seeing a show, be sure to pop into one of 40 West Arts many galleries and creative businesses, where exhibits change monthly and there’s always something thought-provoking to take in. We won’t list em’ all here but Pirate: Contemporary Art, NEXT Gallery, EDGE Gallery, Lakewood Arts, and Gallery of Everything are just some of the creative spaces that call 40 West Arts home.

Chow Time

You’re tuckered out from a full two days along West Colfax, but recap your travels over a final meal in the corridor. You’ve got multiple options but for the local experience, head to Max’s Mexican Restaurant (6999 W. Colfax Ave.). This intimate location packs a big punch with authentic Mexican food and a full bar. The menu offerings run from cheese enchiladas to tacos al carbon and a muy bueno breakfast burrito, too.

Looking for something a little more ‘swanky’? Kazoku Sushi (10665 W. Colfax Ave.) has you covered. This local restaurant checks all the boxes with a rotating selection of unique sushi rolls and classic favorites like the California roll for the vegetarians in your life. You can also saddle up to the sushi bar for a quick food fix and a glass of Sapporo beer. Happy hour is from 4:00-5:30pm (we know you were wondering).

More Top Choices: Pattaya Thai Restaurant (1571 Wadsworth Blvd.), WestFax Brewing Company (6733 W. Colfax Ave.)

Life along Lakewood’s West Colfax is well, pretty sweet. This growing corridor is full of momentum and energy and has a certified creative district, 40 West Arts to boot. Nestled only 15 minutes from downtown Denver and 45 minutes to the mountains, you probably didn’t even know what you were missing. Shhhh, try not to tell everyone.