

MAGIC

The Gathering®

GRAND PRIX DENVER

2016



The Venue



Crowne Plaza Denver International Airport Hotel & Convention Center 15500 East 40th Avenue, Denver, CO 80239

From the Airport

The hotel has a free shuttle from the Airport. If you call the hotel at 303-371-9494 when you land they can tell you when the next shuttle is coming. Once you get to the main terminal you will want to go to Level 5.

Notes from the hotel's web site: <http://www.cpdenverairport.com/contact/directions>

Complimentary Airport Shuttle

When: Every 30 Minutes from 7:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. then upon request after 11:00 p.m.

Hotel Departure: Crowne Plaza Main Entrance

Airport Departure: DEN Airport, Door 510 and 503, Island #3

Price: Complimentary for Hotel Guests and Conference Attendees

That link, to the venue's web site, has good directions to the venue – the Crowne Plaza hotel – from all over.

The airport charges taxis a pretty stiff fee, so the cab fare to the venue is over \$30. There's lots of free parking – probably true for all the hotels in the area (except the one attached to the airport) – so if you choose to rent a car, you should be fine.

There are many hotels near the venue; if the Crowne Plaza doesn't suit you (but beware – see below). Here's a link to a hotels.com search that may help: <http://tinyurl.com/GPDENhotels>

Hotel, Schmotel

Several years ago, at another Grand Prix, some judges stayed at the Crossland Economy Suites, just a short walk from the venue, on Chambers Road. The stories told of that hotel are firmly lodged in our collective consciousness, and we heartily recommend you choose your hotel carefully.

Things to do:

Getting Around

Local Shuttle

The Hotel has a local shuttle that, when available, will shuttle you to and from the airport as well as local restaurants. The shuttle will also take you to the nearby RTD station, where you can catch the bus to downtown.

RTD

RTD is the Denver metro area mass transit - mostly buses, us westerners are kind of slow to figure out this train thing. Having said that, the service isn't bad, and somewhat reasonable; a local fare is \$2.60, and you get free transfers onto connecting routes. You can also buy a local day pass (\$5.20 for local), or a day pass book with 5 local day passes for \$26 (i.e., no discount). The train now runs from the airport to downtown, but it's more expensive than the (much slower) bus. If you're looking to spend a day doing other stuff in the area, RTD is a viable option. <http://www.rtd-denver.com/>

Taxi

Taxis aren't outrageous - once you're off airport property, that is. The fare from the venue to downtown is about \$35. Uber, Lyft, etc., are also available, and should be significantly cheaper.

You can get an estimate of cab fares here:

<http://www.taxifarefinder.com/main.php?city=Denver>

Rental Cars

Driving around Denver isn't terrible, but involves the same sort of rush hour nonsense as any big city. The roads are mediocre, and early winter is when we start to grow potholes. However, there's very few toll roads - only two, and you probably don't need either one. Parking downtown is getting more expensive and harder to find, but if you look around, you can find reasonable parking lots (i.e., outdoor, uncovered). Parking **garages** downtown are nice when it's snowing, but expensive – expect to spend \$15 or \$20 for more than a couple hours. Parking at the venue is free, but uncovered. Make sure your rental car comes with a snow brush. (Not that it ever snows here...)

Bicycles

Bicycle paths are always getting better, and drivers are getting better at paying attention. It's not Amsterdam, so exercise extreme caution – but it was worse, not all that many years ago. Once you're near the downtown area, B-Cycle is an option: <https://denver.bcycle.com/> - weather permitting, of course.

Walking

Yep, you can walk around in Denver. That fresh air and sunshine will feel great. Until the lack of oxygen in that air, and the dehydration from lack of moisture, catch up with you. (See "Things you should know", below.) Generally, downtown is safe, but that deteriorates a bit as we approach closing time at the many Lower Downtown (LoDo) bars – that's 2am in Colorado.

Food/Drink

Best Restaurant in Denver: Rioja, in Larimer Square (downtown); Larimer Square has a few other restaurants that could lay claim to that "best of" title, if not for Rioja. Osteria Marco, Bistro Vendome, Euclid Hall, TAG, Russell's Smokehouse - all great, but all just a notch below Rioja. If you're looking for great at a lower cost, Euclid Hall is the choice - they make their own sausages, mustards, and pickles. And Duck Confit Poutine!

Downtown Denver has a plethora of outstanding and very good restaurants, too many to try and name them all; a few other favorites, outside Larimer Square: ChoLon Bistro (get the soup dumplings!), Panzano (I once saw Alton Brown eating there, and loving it), Guard & Grace, Ocean Prime. Cheaper options abound, too: Biker Jim's Gourmet Dogs, Sam's No. 3 (hugely popular with the theater crowd, so be prepared to wait), Lucky Pie, and on, and on...

Best Restaurant in Colorado: Frasca, in Boulder; if you rent a car, and you plan ahead, and you don't mind spending serious cash – this is the place. (But Rioja is really good, too!)

Best Restaurant close to the venue: hmmm... nope, just a bunch of chains. Ted's Montana Grill is decent, Thai Chili & Sushi gets good ratings, and there's a wealth of fast-food options, including many right across the street – which you will appreciate if you get a chance to eat between rounds.

Worst Restaurant in Denver that you just have to try once: Casa Bonita. Don't go for the food, go for the atmosphere, the experience ... OK, and the sopapillas. I usually tell friends to eat somewhere else first, then go there for sopapillas. Oh, and - if you're getting around on the bus, you get to ride the Colfax bus to & from Casa Bonita - and the Colfax bus is often an adventure in itself!

Sushi: c'mon, you don't fly to Denver for "fresh" fish ... sure, we have good seafood here, and even good sushi - but it's no better than what you can get next to an actual ocean. You come to Denver for steak! However, if you insist on sushi, there is excellent sushi to be found at Sushi Train on Hampden and I-25, they have reasonably priced lunch and dinner specials every day.

Steak (and such): downtown includes a Morton's, Ruth's Chris, Elway's; there's also Willie G's and Capital Grille, which are better than the aforementioned chains. Near the venue, not much, but Ted's does a decent job with meat. There is a Texas De Brazil a few miles from the venue and Fogo De Chao and Rodizio Grill (the budget version of Fogo), both downtown, if you want to partake in the meat! Meat! more MEAT! kind of steak place.

Best Mexican food in Denver – them's fightin' words. There's no way you'll get consensus on this – except, of course, that it's most definitely **NOT** the aforementioned Casa Bonita. You can't even get agreement on the best green chili! The good news is, there are a ton of good, very good, and more than a few great Mexican restaurants. Just look for a parking lot full of cars, and you'll know the locals eat there.

Best Peruvian style rotisserie chicken: Los Cabos II, 15th & Champa, downtown. They've got other Peruvian entrees - but that chicken is really, really good.

Sightseeing

Wow, where to begin? There's so much to do!

First, here's a very handy link: <http://www.denver.org/things-to-do/denver-attractions/must-see-denver/>

So much depends on your mode of transportation. If you rent a car, then by all means, make the trek to Red Rocks, to see the legendary concert venue, and the museum (Colorado Music Hall of Fame). In early December, there won't be a concert scheduled, so the amphitheater will be open for tourists.

If you're on foot, get on the bus or train, and go downtown. If you plan ahead, you can tour the U S Mint, and see how coins are made (but you really do have to plan ahead – like, now). The State Capitol is pretty neat, with the recently “refreshed” golden dome – that's real gold leaf, from Colorado gold mines. (Or so they tell the taxpayers who foot that bill!) The lower downtown area – known as LoDo – and the ballpark neighborhood, near Coors Field, are interesting just to walk around in, and there's plenty to see and do nearby. (Again, use that link.)

City Park – accessible by bus or car – hosts the Denver Museum of Nature & Science; yes, I'm biased, but out-of-town friends have agreed, it's one of the best museums of its kind. The dioramas are simply beautiful works of art, as well as educational. The Denver Zoo is also part of City Park, and is a fine zoo; Zoo Lights – the holiday lighting show – begins December 2nd, so a night-time visit might be worthwhile.

The Denver Broncos host the Kansas City Chiefs on the Sunday before the Grand Prix (Nov 27); no, we can't help you get tickets, they're already sold out and StubHub (et al) is pretty pricey. But if you manage to get a ticket – you'll love the stadium, and the fans are crazy. P.S. – wear your orange, or at least, don't wear red (KC's color).



The local hockey club, the Colorado Avalanche, have home games on Thursday and Saturday of the GP; these tickets are easier to get. The basketball team, Denver Nuggets, host the Miami Heat on Wednesday, and the Houston Rockets on Friday. Those tickets are – sadly! – plentiful and should be cheap. Pepsi Center, the downtown arena where both teams play, is a very nice facility – and you can take the train to the arena (with some number of transfers, of course).

Things you should know:

Weather

There is a misconception as to what the weather is like. It does snow.



Once or twice a season, we might get a lot of snow. However the bright sun and arid climate means snow doesn't stick around very long. Blizzards are a possibility. So is thermonuclear war. Granted, blizzards have a higher probability (we hope) - but it's much more likely to be moderate and sunny.

Speaking of warm and arid, temperatures in the 50s or even 40s aren't all that cold, when the sun is shining (which it does, most days) - but you will want a warm coat for night time.

The warmth of the afternoon sun has fooled many newcomers, mistakes have been made... remember the lessons of the past and bring layers.



Finally, drink plenty of water. It is an arid climate. You lose plenty of moisture without even realizing it, before you know it, you're dehydrated. If you don't have a water bottle, get one. Fill it. Drink it. Get more. If you think you're not thirsty, take another drink. This is very important, especially if you are from lower altitude. There is less oxygen here than you are used to, combined with the fact that you can get dehydrated quickly, it can lead to a bad weekend.

Just remember to drink more than you think you need, and be sure to take care of yourself. (Speaking of drinking ... alcohol tends to have a stronger effect at altitude.)

Things *NOT* To Do In Denver:

OK, let's talk about the elephant in the room.



Marijuana is legal in Colorado. Smoking it in the many places you'll be is not legal. You can't smoke in most hotel rooms, and smoking (of anything) is prohibited in public places, except in designated smoking areas – and that's tobacco only. Also, it's still a Federal offense to possess marijuana, so anything bought in Colorado must be left in Colorado – taking it through security at the airport is a really bad idea.

