



T+L MAIN STREET AMERICA



The Happiest Place

In the 1950s, the charms of Fort Collins inspired the world of Disney. Decades later, this Colorado city is as enchanting as ever.

POPULATION 176,000

FLY IN TO DENVER (DEN)

KNOWN FOR COLLEGE-TOWN CHARISMA

PERFECT FOR THE YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART

WHEN HARPER GOFF, an illustrator and production designer for Walt Disney, was asked in 1951 to draw up plans for a section of the company's new California theme park, he thought back to his childhood home: Fort Collins, Colorado.

Established as a military outpost in 1864, the town became a stopover for the

stagecoaches and wagons headed west on the Overland Trail. By Goff's day, Fort Collins had grown into a quintessential American town—and its attractive Romanesque and Classical Revival buildings provided the perfect inspiration for Disneyland.

But FoCo, as the locals call it, isn't stuck in the past. The median age of its residents is 29, thanks in part to the campus of Colorado State University; new businesses, meanwhile, have introduced a youthful spirit. Here's how to explore the best of Fort Collins.

A GROWN-UP GRANDE DAME

The 1923 **Armstrong Hotel** was revamped in 2019, and its 54 rooms are now outfitted with burnished-brass beds and plush Persian rugs. Don't miss the vinyl-record library at Ace Gillett's, the subterranean supper club and lounge—and save time for a whirl around town on one of the hotel's cruiser bikes.

thearmstronghotel.com; *doubles from \$239*.

A BAKERY WITH PEP IN ITS STEP

Inside a former mechanic's garage on an old farm you'll find **Bindle Coffee**: a roastery with a bar made from rail-car floorboards and tables hewn from 1870s barnwood. Power up for the day with a lemon poppy cruffin (a buttery croissant-muffin hybrid) and a spot-on *cortado*. bindlecoffee.com.

AN EPICUREAN HQ

A resuscitated 1905 feed store and grain elevator is now **Ginger & Baker**, a market- café-restaurant where you can get bison carpaccio, scratch-made pies (the quadruple coconut cream is exceptional), and a locally blended chai that can

be transformed into a “cheeky chai” with a shot of Baileys. gingerandbaker.com; *entrées \$18–\$48*.

A SOPHISTICATED SWEET SHOP

The world’s largest selection of single-origin chocolate is made at **Nuance Chocolate**, which roasts ethically sourced cacao beans in-house. Specialties include the wildflower honey and lavender truffle—made in collaboration with Colorado beekeepers—and the fiery Snake Bite, featuring añejo tequila from nearby distillery Leopold Bros. nuancechocolate.com.

A HYPER-LOCAL BEER BAR

Taste Colorado in a glass: 11 of the 13 beers at **Stodgy Brewing Co.**, including a caramelly Belgian Quad and a Mexican Lager, are made entirely from regional malts and hops. When renovating the former fireplace- and stove-repair business, the owners repurposed soapstone stove parts for the tile floors. The bar is made from the remains of black walnut trees that were found on the property. stodgybrewing.com.

AN URBAN OASIS

More than 300 butterfly species—including black malachites, bright orange Julias, and zebra longwings—flit through the new 1,700-square-foot greenhouse at the **Gardens on Spring Creek**. Keep an eye out for exotic plants, too, like birds-of-paradise, angel’s-trumpets, and the voodoo lilies that bloom once a year. fcgov.com/gardens.

TIM O’HARA/COURTESY OF VISIT FT. COLLINS; COURTESY OF ARMSTRONG HOTEL; ANDREW WEBB/COURTESY OF BINDLE COFFEE; TOBY GADD/COURTESY OF NUANCE CHOCOLATE

