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# Colorado Calling

Marriott's Convention & Resort Network's Colorado properties soar alongside the Rockies.

BY MICHAEL J. SOLENDER

The meetings market is front and center for Marriott in Colorado, where Connect visited Marriott's Convention & Resort Network member hotels: Denver Marriott Tech Center, Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center, Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel and Vail Marriott Mountain Resort. The foursome displayed a mountain of meetings and convention chops including the latest in food and beverage innovations; new and renovated meeting and guest rooms; public spaces; and access to prime local attractions. Here's what we found:

## GAYLORD ROCKIES RESORT & CONVENTION CENTER

Opened in late 2018, Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center in Aurora is the largest hotel by room count in Colorado with the grounds spanning 85 acres. This majestic 1,501-room resort is 10 minutes from Denver International Airport and

about 30 minutes from the Mile High City's downtown. The resort is Gaylord's first property built in the last decade, first mountain property and farthest west in location. Planners will be delighted to find outsize amenities to match the grand size of this spacious new kid in town.

Sweeping views of the Rockies, 486,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, five outdoor event spaces, 81 tech-advanced breakout and conference rooms, and a 175,000-sq.-ft. exhibition hall are among the conference utilities planners find here. Eight dining options appeal to a broad spectrum of tastes, including Gaylord's signature Old Hickory Steakhouse, Italian fare at Vista Montagne and Monte Jade, an Asian fusion restaurant and sushi bar.

## DENVER MARRIOTT TECH CENTER

Denver Tech Center is a hive of activity in the metro area's southeast corridor, dotted with startups and corporate tech titans. Scott Boyer, director of sales and marketing at Denver Marriott Tech Center, notes the hotel underwent a \$65 million renovation with guest rooms, public areas and meeting space all updated.

The meeting mix is heavy here, where planners find 605 rooms; 49,000 square feet of meeting space (28 event rooms with 17 breakouts and capacity to host up to 1,500); a fitness center; local art; and airy, open spaces. Food and beverage take on a distinctive Colorado feel here with Pint Brothers Alehouse as the anchor restaurant serving American classics, local beers and handcrafted cocktails.

## SHERATON DENVER DOWNTOWN HOTEL

General Manager Tony Dunn and his team are taking the stalwart Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel to new levels of guest experience with several initiatives underway, including a phased room renovation beginning later this year.

"Our goal is to be a connection place in the community, which is right in line with Sheraton's mission and new rebranding initiative," says Dunn of the two-building property that was formerly a May-Daniels & Fisher department store and opened in 1959 as a Hilton.

Today, the two buildings comprise the Sheraton and are connected by a walkway that spans over the busy Court Place. The hotel is the largest convention property in downtown

"Our goal is to be a connection place in the community."

—Tony Dunn



Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center



Denver, situated on the 16th Street Mall in the heart of the financial and business district, within walking distance of Colorado Convention Center.

Planners find 1,231 rooms and suites; 133,000 square feet of flexible event space; 52 meeting rooms; and amenities including a heated rooftop pool, a full fitness center and several on-site restaurants.

### VAIL MARRIOTT MOUNTAIN RESORT

This handsome mountain property sits at the base of Vail Mountain with access via Eagle Bahn gondola, a three-minute walk away. The hotel, a new addition to Marriott's CRN, recently completed a full renovation of rooms and meeting spaces and offers groups 343 rooms and 28,000 square feet of event space—including the largest ballroom in Vail Valley at 8,300 square feet—and three dining facilities serving casual fare, local microbrews and relaxed settings to share stories of the day's adventures.

During the winter months, group sizes range from 100 to 150, according to Patrick Davis, director of sales and marketing. Many are professional organizations (medical and legal, for example) that have classes in the morning and hit the slopes after lunch. Shoulder season offers value opportunities. Davis notes the property has hosted many SMERF groups.

Teambuilding activities include four-wheel-drive off-road exploring, mountain biking, cycling and fly-fishing. Want to get atop the mountain? There's no better way to experience the summer months than by tackling the adventures at Epic Discovery. Guests find a heart-pumping mountain coaster, zip lines, bungee-bounce trampolines, mountain tubing (don't knock it till you try it) and breathtaking views of the surrounding Rockies.



Cascade falls, Gaylord Rockies



Vail Marriott Mountain Resort