

Travel

FUN IN FORT COLLINS

Take a weekend to enjoy Colorado's brewery-laden, bike-friendly city



Ruby Sharp, 9, leaps from rock to rock while playing at the Poudre River Whitewater Park in Fort Collins.



Kathleen Hooper, left, and Aubrey Mable of Denver perform as LVDY (pronounced "lady") on the outdoor stage at New Belgium Brewery in Fort Collins on July 17. Photos by Helen H. Richardson, *The Denver Post*



Cyclists cruise along a riverside bike path in Fort Collins. Bike paths and protected bike lanes connect across the city and beyond.

By Shauna Farnell
Special to *The Denver Post*

Although just an hour's drive north of Denver, Fort Collins offers metro-area residents an easy but fun-filled getaway, with plenty to explore over a long weekend.

Although recognized by many as home to Colorado State University, the energizing college vibe is far from Fort Collins' most magnetic quality. FoCo (as locals call it) is a pioneer amid the Centennial State's craft beer industry; the city of 343,000 is home to 25 breweries and counting. And there are cycling opportunities (to breweries and beyond) at every turn, easy-to-access hiking, farm-to-table fare, live music, art, culture and locally made

goods to enjoy.

Here are a few reasons you'll want to visit FoCo again and again.

Old Town

One of the most picturesque historic downtowns across the West, Old Town was the natural heart of Fort Collins even before it was incorporated in 1873. With a freight train that passes nearby a couple of times a day, it still sports a feel of the Old West, although its modern qualities are too numerous to count.

Unlike many downtowns across the state, parking is free and bike parking is everywhere. As warm weather lasts into autumn, the main square as well as the pedestrian zone off Oak Street are where you'll find children cooling off in the

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ASK A FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Middle-seat etiquette, drunken passengers and jet lag

By Kristie Koerbel
© *The New York Times Co.*

As we say farewell to summer, travelers are surely hoping to say "so long" to the chaos in the skies too.

As a flight attendant who has been on the job for 20 years, I can tell you this season of delays and cancellations hasn't been a picnic for us either.

Recently, I arrived at a doctor's appointment with dark under-eye circles, exhausted from a delayed flight the night before. "Huh, I never thought about the flight crew being inconvenienced by delays, too," my doctor said.

While some travelers get angry with flight crews, the reality is that we don't like delays either (we often don't even get

paid for them, as I explain below).

My hope is that you will see us as people, too, and that I can share my insider knowledge to make your travels smoother.

Here are my answers to your latest questions, some of which have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Q: Does sleeping on the flight help lessen jet lag?

A: If you are blessed with the ability to sleep on planes, a nap is a wise use of your time on a long flight. On Europe-bound flights from the United States, I eat dinner then try to sleep, although I rarely manage it. When I land, I stay up until bedtime where I am locally. If I can't keep my eyes open, I take a short power nap, so I can still sleep that night. This should put

your body on the correct schedule to wake up the next day rested.

For the reverse route, which is usually a daytime flight, I force myself to stay awake so I'll sleep as soon as I get home. A short nap on a long flight won't hurt though, and if your flight is longer than 12 hours, sleep as long as you can.

Q: If traveling alone, should a passenger with an "invisible" medical condition like diabetes inform a flight attendant in case there is a problem during the flight?

A: If you are solo and aren't wearing a medical alert bracelet, please let us know. Knowing what could be wrong helps us respond to your needs



Where is the best seat if you're airsick prone? Why don't flight crews eat the same meals? And the age-old question: Can middle-seat passengers really claim both armrests? A flight attendant answers. Hannah Agosta, © *The New York Times Co.*

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refreshing spray of fountains. Downtown is abuzz even in the morning, when crowds flock to the Silver Grill Café, northern Colorado's oldest restaurant (it opened in 1933), for giant cinnamon rolls, or to the newer Little Bird Bake-shop for every sweet treat imaginable.

Celebrating 20 years, Wolverine Farm Publick House is a gathering place for book lovers and artists. On any given day, you'll find a friendly crew sipping lattes or beers on the patio, and reading poetry — or writing it — among its welcoming bookshelves. Wolverine's calendar is filled with courtyard concerts, drawing clubs, novelist meet-and-greets and craft workshops.

Also beckoning an all-day crowd, especially during lunchtime, is The Exchange — an outdoor food and drink collective rendered from shipping containers. Find a shady table to nosh on Vato's Tacos, sip wine from the newly opened Blanchard Family location, or get in line for a sweet scoop at Old Town Churn ice cream. For FoCo's most iconic ice cream experience, you must visit Walrus, which offers more than 20 flavors daily, 10 of which usually are amazing chocolate-focused concoctions.

For dinner, there's an absolute bounty of options. For fresh Mexican-Asian fusion, hit Blue Agave. A Colorado staple, the Old Town Beau Jo's location has great pizza and a patio scene. You don't have to go far to find a great cocktail, but The Reserve at Old Elk Distillery makes an especially tasty variety, as does The Regional, which also offers locally sourced, farm-fresh appetizers and plates. For fine dining with comfort food appeal, Rare Italian is a great choice, and for a

tasty burger, sandwich or salad, Coopersmith's has been a go-to for decades.

Breweries

Founded in 1991 by a husband-and-wife team inspired to brew after a cycling trip through Europe, New Belgium Brewing Co. has become the nation's fourth-largest craft brewing operation and remains on FoCo's short list of must-visit breweries. New Belgium's flagship location offers one of the most entertaining free tours (available twice a day on weekends) with a surprise grand finale as well as a seemingly endless tap list of standard, throwback, seasonal and experimental brews.

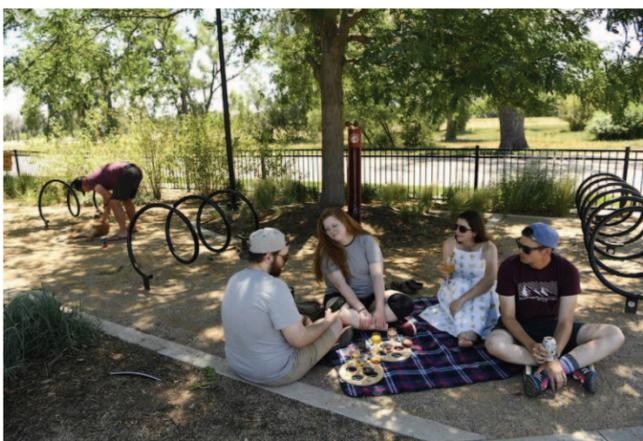
Even more elemental to Fort Collins, Odell Brewing, founded by Doug Odell along with his wife and sister in 1989, remains 100% independent and employee-owned, offering one of the biggest and buzziest beer-drinking scenes in Colorado, complete with live music that lasts into October and, for the gluten-intolerant or suds adverse, its own winery (The OBC Wine Project) next door.

For a more personalized sipping experience, Funkwerks, with its chill vibe and shaded beer garden, offers table service and some of the best sour beers you'll find anywhere (as well as tasty IPAs, saisons and barrel-aged varieties), its flights featuring generous 5-ounce pours and served in full-sized tulip glasses.

Biking, and biking to breweries

In addition to Odell, New Belgium and Funkwerks, local favorite Horse & Dragon, unassuming but awesome Snowbank and Atlanta-based SweetWater all lie east of Old Town within an easy, 5-mile pedaling radius.

Fort Collins has been deemed one of America's top bike-friendly cities and there are bike lanes, sidewalks and protected paved



From left, Blake Sewell, Maddie Dippold, Tess Robeson and Dave Logue enjoy a picnic while listening to live music outside New Belgium Brewery in Fort Collins on July 17.

Photos by Helen H. Richardson, *The Denver Post*

paths along every thoroughfare and beyond. In fact, you can loop all the way to Loveland and back (there you'll find another 10-plus breweries — Verboden and Loveland Aleworks are both solid choices), pedaling around lakes and sprawling open space on a network of recreation trails.

On the return trip, be sure to hit one or two of FoCo's less frequented but highly worthy breweries on the outskirts of town, the creative and ever-changing suds at Purpose or the area's newest brewery, Mythmaker.

Hiking

The nearest epicenter of dirt trails as well as paddling, fishing and camping is Horsetooth Reservoir. There is a \$9 fee to enter the park, which is open year-round. About 30 miles of trails line the green, rocky landscape and one of the most popular among hikers is Horsetooth Rock, which measures about 2.5 miles each way and brings you to spectacular vantage points of the reservoir below and surrounding panorama.

If views are what you're after, be sure to trek up Arthur's Rock, a 3-mile out-and-back trail through pines and meadows in Lory State Park, another hub for mountain bikers, campers, climbers and hikers that costs \$7 to enter and is about a 20-minute drive from Old Town.



Gabriela Rivera, right, walks with her mother, Laura Ontiveros, along a trail toward a small pond at Spring Canyon Community Park.

Poudre River

The Cache la Poudre is the state's only designated "Wild and Scenic" river. Flowing 76 miles from the headwaters in Rocky Mountain National Park, the river tumbles through rugged canyons, pine forests, aspen glades and sagebrush before mellowing and winding majestically through town.

Whitewater rafting, kayaking, fly-fishing and tubing abound along many sections of the river, but the most accessible point is the Whitewater Park just north of Old Town, offering free and easy riverbank access for tubers, kayakers and paddleboarders of all skill levels.

The Poudre River Trail parallels the river for 12 miles in FoCo and connects for 20-plus miles between the northwestern town of LaPorte and Greeley.

Lodging

Adding to its charm, there are no monolithic chain hotels in Old Town, but instead a handful of character-rich boutique options. Located on the main drag (College Avenue), The Armstrong Hotel bursts with renovated 1920s energy, its funky-chic rooms ranging from queen studios to spacious, one-bedroom suites. The art deco motif extends to the underground jazz lounge/supper club, Ace Gillett's.

Also in Old Town, the considerably larger The Elizabeth Hotel is home to its own Instrument Lending Library and each room and suite comes with a turntable and vinyl collection. The musical theme continues in the resident live music venue, The Magic Rat, which hosts singers and songwriters year-round. The Emporium at The Elizabeth is one

of Old Town's most coveted brunch and happy hour haunts.

Located on tree-lined Mountain Avenue just a block from Old Town, The Edwards House ranks among the most charming lodging options in Colorado. Dating back to 1904, its neo-classical style radiates a stateliness in every corner and in each of its elegant guest rooms. There are only eight of them, but each has its own personality and a stay includes a delicious sit-down breakfast in the cozy dining room.

One-of-a-kind culture

Whether you enjoy learning about beer, geology or local wildlife, the Museum of Discovery is fascinating for visitors of all ages. Giving "art house" new layers of meaning, the Lyric Cinema's artistic appeal extends to the outdoors, where its exhibits include googly-eyed monsters and a houseboat exhibit. Its clever lineup of off-beat showings and events is one of Colorado's best-kept Bohemian secrets.

Speaking of quirky, if you visit in October, don't miss a mariachi-brimmed celebration of Día de Los Muertos on Oct. 28.

Shop local

Fort Collins' artistic spirit also manifests in the form of creative products. Akinz crafts its own shirts, beanies, tank tops, jackets and leggings in the nest of its colorful yarn collection inside its downtown store. Trimble Court is a gallery exhibiting usable and wearable artwork — cards, jewelry, dishes, clocks — handmade by local artists.

Selling each and all of everyone's favorite outdoor clothing brands, Jax Outdoor Gear is like a locally owned REI, except it also offers kitchenware, locally made hot sauces, syrups and jams and features an in-house barista and homemade fudge shop.

Travel Q&A

- Which country borders the Baltic Sea? a) Azerbaijan b) Latvia c) Romania
- Cotopaxi National Park takes its name from snowcapped volcano summits. This park, which is located 50 miles south of the Equator, is in which country along the eastern rim of the Pacific? a) Ecuador b) Colombia c) Chile
- In 1667, the Dutch traded land that is now part of New York City for land on the Caribbean coast of South America. This land now makes up which South American country? a) Venezuela b) Suriname c) Guyana
- Mezzogiorno, a word meaning "midday" and referring to the hot noontime sun, is also the name given to the southern, less prosperous region of which European country? a) Italy b) Greece c) Portugal
- A meridian is to longitude as what is to latitude? a) parallel b) Equator c) dateline
- Although Sierra Leone's name has Portuguese origins, what is the country's official language? a) English b) Spanish c) French
- Which river forms the southeastern boundary of Illinois? a) Ohio River b) Missouri River c) James River
- Which country has more time zones? a) Russia b) Mongolia c) India
- Which country is not a major producer of iron ore? a) Colombia b) Australia c) China
- Which of the three Baltic States lies closest to Finland? a) Latvia b) Lithuania c) Estonia

Questions provided by the National Geographic Bee. Visit nationalgeographic.org/education/student-experiences/geobee/study/quiz.

ASK

◀FROM 10E

correctly, faster. For instance, if you are hypoglycemic (low blood sugar), which has similar symptoms to intoxication, we can quickly get you medical attention if we already know you are diabetic and not drunk.

Once, a passenger told me he has frequent seizures and how I should handle them. It was not a full flight, so I was able to move him to the last row by himself, close to my galley. He did actually have several small seizures on the flight, but I was right there and made sure he was safe the whole time.

Q: On the last few flights I took, my rude neighbor in the middle seat used both armrests, spread their legs and was constantly touching me and elbowing me. What's the middle-seat etiquette? Is it truly a free-for-all?

A: Manspreading is not acceptable in any seat. That said, the middle seat is the dreaded torture device of flying. So, the unwritten rule is that the middle seat gets both armrests. The aisle and window each get their own armrest and room to lean over a little.

To handle someone invading your space, ask them nicely. Often, the person doesn't even realize they are being rude. Try a joke, like, "they keep making these seats smaller and smaller." That acknowledges your problem is with the seat, not the person, and that you are both in this together. As long as you feel safe, try handling it yourself before getting the flight attendant involved.

If the person is quite tall and is completely folded in their seat with nowhere to go, you could offer to trade seats. We all hate the middle, but it

both of you over the flight.

Q: How can I show my appreciation for hardworking flight attendants? I brought cookies for them once, but later heard that they aren't allowed to eat food given by passengers. Is that true? What can I do instead?

A: While I'm not aware of a rule against eating food given by passengers, in the case of homemade treats, we don't know where it came from or what's in it. Even though your heart is in the right place, it's a crazy world out there, so we would most likely not eat them. (Fun fact: Many airlines actually advise their flight crews to not eat the same meal from the same place on a given day. This is to prevent crew members being struck with food poisoning at the same time.) Packaged food, like candy, is a safer bet.

Gift cards are the best option if you really want to give us something. Think about places commonly found in airports that sell things everyone can enjoy, like a hot, comforting beverage that helps keep us fresh and perky on those early morning flights. We appreciate each and every gift we receive, and they make our day no matter what.

Q: Do you keep track of how many alcoholic drinks a person has during a flight? When do you decide to cut someone off?

A: I do keep track. I start making mental notes once someone has had three to four alcoholic beverages. I consider the length of the flight and how the person is handling themselves before I decide to step in. Red flags are increasing aggression and demands, excessive slurring or just getting very loud. The effects of alcohol are actually felt more strongly in flight because of the decreased oxygen levels.

I have cut off several passen-

gers in my career, and it almost never goes well. Almost everyone argues and insists they are fine. If things escalate, we inform them that their disruptive behavior could be in violation of federal law and that we could arrange law enforcement to meet them when we land. That usually solves the problem.

Q: Is it true that flight attendants don't get paid until the plane starts moving?

A: That is true. Each airline is slightly different. I am paid as soon as the door closes, and we stop being paid when the door opens. It is also true for pilots.

That means if we show up to work on time and our flight is delayed for three hours, we are not paid for that time. If we board up, have a full plane of passengers and then have a maintenance issue or an air traffic control hold, we are also not paid for that time. However, if we get out on the taxiway and are No. 27 in line for takeoff, we do get paid for that.

If a flight cancels, most airlines have cancellation pay that protects us, so we get the pay that was scheduled. Some airlines don't have that protection, though. So trust me: We hate delays and cancellations as much, if not more, than our passengers.

Q: I get airsick when I fly, especially when the cabin pressure changes during takeoff and landing. Do you have any recommendations?

A: Sit as close to the wing as possible. Think of the airplane as a seesaw: The wing is the most stable part. Keep your air vent on. Wear layers you can take off if you start to get that sweaty feeling. Ask the flight attendant for a cup of ice, or whatever nonalcoholic beverage settles your stomach. I also recommend not flying on an empty stomach — but don't eat too much right before a flight either.

If you do throw up, that is what that sick sack in your seat-back pocket is for. You can dispose of the used bag in the lavatory trash can, ring the call button or leave it sealed under the seat in front of you. Just please don't leave it there for an unsuspecting cleaner to find, or hand it to a flight attendant who doesn't have a trash bag in hand.

Q: Would you still encourage others to pursue this field, knowing everything you know now?

A: I absolutely would, but this career is definitely not for most people. If the thought of working the same schedule in an office every day makes your soul want to shrivel up and die, it might be the job for you. You can have a terrible day flying that makes you want to cry like a toddler, but the next is guaranteed to be completely different: new passengers, a new location and most likely a whole new set of co-workers.

Being a flight attendant is still a great way to see the world. But some cities still elude me. I've wanted a long New Orleans layover my whole career, it just never shows up on my schedule. After 20 years of flying, I still have six states and countless countries left to visit.

This job is mentally and physically exhausting in a way that I think compares with working in a hospital or a school, except you can't go home for three to five days.

It takes a toll on relationships and you can't have pets, but you also meet amazing people and can make lifelong friends that feel more like family.

It takes a certain kind of person to fall in love with this life, but when that person finds this job, it's magic. For me, the good always outweighs the bad; if that ever changes, that is the day I hang up my wings.