

# Five fun and easy ways to enjoy the outdoors this winter

Cooler temperatures and shorter days mark the start of winter activities in Colorado.

If you enjoy being outdoors, there is no shortage of activities in and around Denver to make the most of this winter. From a simple enjoyable walk in a neighborhood park to mountain biking on local trails and ice skating, there are many activities to choose from that will suite all kinds of preferences for outdoor adventures.

Even though the weather is cold and you might prefer to watch your latest favorite Netflix series, here are some ways to stay active and make the most of being outside this winter:

**1 Ice skating**  
Is there a better winter tradition than ice skating? This season visit a rink in Denver to give skating a whirl. The Downtown Denver Rink at Skyline Park opened on Nov. 24 and provides free skating through Feb. 20. During the season, skating is free, with skate rentals available for \$7 for kids 12 and under, and \$9 for people ages 13 and over. Bring your MY Denver Card to enjoy free skate rentals at the Downtown

Denver Rink and check online for more information including hours of operation, parking options and special events - including details about free skating and free rentals for all Colorado fourth graders.

**2 Sledding, snowboarding and skiing**  
After a major snow fall, venture to the corner of West Florida Avenue and South Platte River Drive, where you'll find 80-acre Ruby Hill Park and a seasonal Rail Yard and terrain park for skiers and snowboarders. Bring a sled to experience the hills that the park has to offer and enjoy a classic pastime. In the winter months, Denver Parks and Recreation and Winter Park host the free Ruby Hill Rail Yard in Denver, which includes a terrain park for snowboarders and skiers.

If you are feeling extra adventurous and want to venture outside of Denver, there are a plethora of winter programs through Denver Parks and Recreation where youth can learn to snowboard or ski, and adults can try their hand at cross country skiing, snowshoeing and other winter adventures.

**3 Walking in a city park**  
You don't need snow to enjoy walking in the many great parks Denver has to offer, or on the more than 80 miles of off-street, multi-use trails within the city limits. Especially when it's cold and

dark, getting outside is invigorating and provides positive mental and physical health benefits. Plus, you never know what you might run into along the way - a playground, a trail, a great view of the mountains or a friendly neighbor - that will make your walk even more worthwhile. And if there is some snow on the ground, consider letting your inner child out, pick up some snow and toss a snowball or build a snowman.

**4 Hiking or snowshoeing in Denver Mountain Parks**  
If hiking or snowshoeing in the winter is more your style, grab your snowshoes or hiking shoes, bundle up and head on up to Echo Lake Park. This area offers easy snowshoeing and winter hiking that is suitable for the whole family. If you'd prefer not to go solo, you can participate in an adult snowshoeing day or a guided family adventure snowshoeing day that includes snowshoeing through the trees, games and hot chocolate.

**5 Mountain biking**  
We all know the Colorado weather can surprise us with some sunny and warmer days throughout

winter. Weather permitting, visit Ruby Hill Bike Park to test your riding skills on a variety of terrain and features that are designed to improve balance and other biking skills. The park features a slopestyle course, dirt jumps, pump tracks and a skills course. Varying lines of difficulty from beginner to advanced offer options for all skill levels, with a special expert slopestyle line to challenge and entertain professional riders. There is also a 1.7-mile multi-use natural surface loop trail around the perimeter of Ruby Hill Park that is suitable for mountain biking. Please be aware that the bike park closes when conditions are muddy to preserve the integrity of its features.

What outdoor fall and winter activities are you interested in that you'd like to see in Denver's future open spaces? Visit our website at [tinyurl.com/OutdoorAdventurePlan](http://tinyurl.com/OutdoorAdventurePlan) to learn more about efforts to improve the future of outdoor adventure in Denver. After all, we don't have many snow closure days in our Denver outdoor spaces, so get outside and play!

*Happy Haynes is the executive director of Denver Parks and Recreation*

## EDITOR

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Something to pay attention to is how the different organizations operate their SCFD Free Days. Some may require an advance ticket, while others may do it as a first come, first served basis. The Denver Zoo, for example, does a lottery system for its SCFD Free Days.

I love the SCFD Free Days because they truly accomplish what they're meant to - I believe everyone should get to see a theater production, visit a museum or attend a concert, no matter if they wouldn't normally

have the financial means to do so. Culture and arts enrich us as a society.

But another reason that makes the SCFD Free Days so great is that they offer an opportunity to experience something new. Maybe there's something you think is not really your "thing," but there's no harm in checking it out free-of-cost during an SCFD Free Day. And who knows, after that experience, it just might become your new "thing."

To learn more about the SCFD, visit [scfd.org](http://scfd.org). To browse its calendar of SCFD Free Days, hover over the 'Find Culture' tab to get the drop down menu, and select 'Free Days.'

## LETTERS

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### Protect Medicare program

My grandfather spent more than three decades working to support our Colorado economy. After retiring, the years of hard labor started to take a toll, and his health began to decline.

At 91 years old, he handles a host of health issues, including frequent falls. This past year, he has had to be hospitalized seven times. And while these incidents used to result in high-priced medical bills, he has been able to access the care he needs for minimal costs since switching to Medicare Advantage earlier this year.

ity of his medical bills, he is able to access free transportation to and from his doctor appointments, which helps him get to all the appointments he needs since he can no longer drive. The benefits he receives have been helpful for our family too, as we know he is getting the care and assistance he deserves.

Coloradans should all have access to quality health care, like the coverage that is provided through Medicare Advantage. That is why I hope our representatives in Congress will continue to advocate for this program and protect it from potential funding cuts. After so many years of supporting our state, our lawmakers should be doing everything they can to assist outstanding citizens like my grandfather.

*Slade E. Mills  
Denver*

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