



15 FAVORITE WINTER ADVENTURES

to enjoy in the Golden area

By Savannah Nelson

One of the greatest perks of spending time in Colorado—whether as a seasoned local, a part-time resident or a visitor passing through—is that it's a four-season state. There's no better example than Golden, sitting at the perfect position at the entrance to the Rocky Mountains and offering the best of each time of year.

Because of its easy access to nature, Golden offers plenty of opportunities to opt outside during winter, with incredible scenery to savor and experience. Here are some of our 15 favorite winter adventures to enjoy in Golden.

SNOWSHOEING

To experience a truly picturesque Colorado winter, strap on some snowshoes and explore Golden's beautiful rugged landscape.

A favorite snowshoeing location is the Golden Gate Canyon State Park, which has over 42 miles worth of trails. Some heavy snow favorites (ideal for snowshoeing) include Horseshoe Trail to Frazer Meadow, Raccoon Trail Loop and Mule Deer Trail, each with incredible panoramic views.

If looking closer to town (with access to breweries and coffee shops afterward), the Clear Creek Trail starts at Lions Park and is an excellent route during years with a good snowpack to cover the concrete trail.

SLEDDING

Golden has toboggan-ready slopes at Golden Heights Park, Heritage Dells Park, or the hill near the Golden Community Center for winter fun for the entire family. These are BYOS—bring your own sled!

TUBING

Located just a short drive away in nearby Idaho Springs, snow tubing at Echo Mountain is a great way to experience the thrills of sliding down a slick incline in a speedy, inflatable donut. Add a soak in the hot local springs, then stop into Tommy Knockers for a beer to complete a well-rounded day trip before heading back to Golden!

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Skiing isn't just for the downhill; get a taste of fresh air mixed with great exercise with cross-country skiing in Golden's foothills landscape. There are several groomed trails in nearby state parks, such as Golden Gate Canyon and Eldorado Canyon, offering incredible scenic views.

GOLDEN ART WALK

Golden is home to more than two dozen pieces of public artwork, located on the Clear Creek Trail and across Washington Avenue—both right in town. The Golden Visitors Center has free Golden Public Art Walking Tour Brochures, which highlight the mix of statues and murals around town. A stroll in the fresh winter air makes for a beautiful, easy and free outdoor activity.

WINTER HIKING

With the aid of traction devices such as ice cleats and poles, most Golden hiking trails can be explored in winter, too. Be sure to slip on the extra traction, dress in warm layers and wear sunscreen! The views of Golden's surrounding landscapes are extra magical with a fresh dusting of snow on top.

WINTER ROCK CLIMBING

You might be familiar with Colorado's sunny days year-round, even in winter. Though it can still get cold, you can also bet that high sun exposure will improve winter activities, including rock climbing. Many of Golden's south-facing cliffs, including the Golden Cliffs at North Table Mountain, are sunny and dry—fun to climb even in winter.

WILDLIFE VIEWING

One way to spend time outdoors in the comfort of your car is with a nature drive to spot deer and elk, and sometimes even more elusive animals like mountain lions or wolves—if you're lucky! Head to Lookout Mountain Nature Center and Preserve or Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge are incredible wildlife viewing options.

BIKING

Did you know that you can even bike on the snow? You might've heard of New Belgium Brewery's "Fat Tire" beer, which is named after the mountain bike of the same name; its wide-width, studded wheels allow for traction on unstable and slippery terrain.

Whether you want to kit your own bike or rent a fat tire bike, you can do so at Golden Bike Shop, Pedal Pushers Cyclery, or Yeti Cycles in town. Possible biking trails include Apex Park, Golden Cliffs Trail at North Table Mountain, or White Ranch Park.

ICE CLIMBING

Some spots of Clear Creek Canyon are home to frozen water formations, with thrill seekers of all levels climbing them. Golden Mountain Guides is a go-to resource for knowledgeable guides to assist with this inherently dangerous—albeit fun—winter sport.

FISHING

Golden's Clear Creek is fishable in the winter, too. The "Golden Mile" section is home to brown, brook, cutthroat, rainbow and cut bow trout. Ask around at the Golden Fly Shop for gear, tips and suggestions.

RED ROCKS

Though concerts might not be in season, the nearby Red Rocks Amphitheater still allows recreational use during non event hours; you can climb the steps (watch out for ice!), check out the trails, watch the sunrise and admire the iconic site.

GEOCACHING

A GPS-oriented treasure-hunting of sorts, geocaching is a popular form of outdoor adventure in Golden. The Dinosaur Ridge Trail has several hidden caches, a fun challenge year-round.

NEARBY SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING

Thanks to its location near the mountains, Golden is a short drive from several ski resorts, including Loveland, Eldora, Keystone and Arapahoe Basin. Grab the gear in town at Powder 7 to avoid resort pricing, or seek out Icelantic Skis for local hand-crafted artistry.

FRESH AIR

If you're looking for a little fresh air, consider going to one of Golden's many parks, where you can play in the snow—whether that involves making snowballs, snow angels, or snowmen—or even take your pup to a dog park to run around and mingle. Pet-friendly options include the

Tony Gramscas or Homer's Run dog parks.

Before heading out into the chilly weather, be sure to dress warmly in layers, apply sunscreen and stay hydrated! It's also always a good idea to check weather conditions before heading out and to ensure that trails and roads are open and operational.

Stay safe in the elements, and have fun enjoying the beautifully scenic activities Golden has to offer during the winter months. ★



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