
48 Hours in Boulder

Two days, in the order that actually works, with the parking and reservation traps already handled.

Day one: the Flatirons and downtown

Morning: get on the mountain early. Start at Chautauqua. It is free to park on weekdays and \$2.50 an hour on summer weekends, and it is the trailhead everyone else is also heading for, so early matters more here than anywhere in Boulder. The Chautauqua Trail climbs 459 feet and reads as easy to medium. If you want the payoff hike instead, Royal Arch is 1,153 feet of gain and reached on foot up Bluebell Road from the same lot.

Midday: the Pearl Street Mall. Four car-free blocks, 11th to 15th, closed to cars since 1977. It is legally a city park, which is why it has its own rulebook: no bikes, no dogs, no skateboards, no selling. Acoustic street performing needs no permit; amplification is banned outright. The bronze and marble animal sculptures have been there since 1977 and children still climb them.

Afternoon: pick one museum. The CU Art Museum is free with no ticket. BMoCA is pay-what-you-want, with a \$1 minimum only if you use a card. The Museum of Boulder is \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors, college students and youth, free under 5, and free with a SNAP card.

Evening. Boulder has one Michelin-starred restaurant and the reigning James Beard Outstanding Restaurant in America, plus a food hall and a farmers market that has run since 1987. The food guide names them, and Taste Boulder goes restaurant by restaurant.

Day two: canyon, science, water

Morning: Eldorado Canyon, if you booked it. \$10 per vehicle, timed entry in season, and dogs on leash everywhere in the park with no exceptions. The Fowler Trail is easy and ADA accessible. Critically: there is no public parking in the town of Eldorado Springs, so do not plan to leave the car there.

Midday: NCAR. Free admission, free parking, and a free guided tour at noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Open 363 days a year. There is no public transit up the mesa, so you need the car. The NCAR Trail is 293 feet of gain, and dogs are hand-held leash only because it is federal property.

Afternoon: water or dome. Boulder Reservoir charges a seasonal entry fee that stops in November, and bans dogs from the gates and south shoreline from May 15 through Labor Day. Prefer indoors? Fiske Planetarium has a 65-foot dome, the largest between Chicago and Los Angeles, at \$12 adults and \$8 concessions plus a \$1.50 fee, closed during Folsom Field concerts and CU home football games.

Evening: the Dushanbe Teahouse. A hand-built teahouse that arrived as a gift from Boulder's sister city in Tajikistan. It takes no reservations for lunch or brunch, walk-ins only, but it does take dinner reservations.