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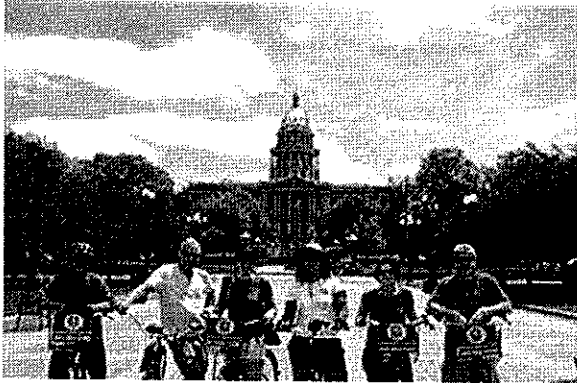
## THE VANCOUVER SUN<sub>mobile</sub>

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### A bike tour is the best way to view the plentiful public artwork on display in Denver

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By Dean Bennett, The Canadian Press



Tourists are shown during a bike tour in Denver in this undated handout photo. Visitors looking to get their bearings in the Mile High City should consider two wheels.

**Photographed by:**

HO-Mile High Bike Tours, Joseph Bloch/, The Canadian Press

DENVER — Visitors looking to get their bearings in the Mile High City should consider two wheels.

Just remember to duck your head when zipping between the hind legs of Denver's big blue bear.

"A bike tour allows you to cover a lot more ground in a short period of time and have everything pointed out to you," said Monique Madison, owner and lead guide with Mile High Bike Tours, run out of a corner shop near the downtown.

"Then you have time to go back to where you want to go."

There's a lot to see in the Colorado capital, which boasts more than 300 pieces of public art, propelled in part by a 1988 rule that one per cent of any capital improvement project over \$1 million must go to art.

The result impresses — and polarizes — visitors and locals from the moment they get off the plane at the Denver International Airport, with its towering white fabric conic roofs that echo the snow-capped spires of the nearby Rocky Mountains.

The airport's signature artwork is an electric-blue 10-metre-tall rearing bronco with demonic red eyes named "Blue Mustang" (nicknamed "Blucifer" by locals).

The downtown blossoms with public art and architecture that some love, some hate, but all agree is never dull.

The iconic statue is the three-storey fibreglass-and-steel-alloy blue bear on its hind legs, paws to the window, peering in through the soaring glass facade of the Colorado Convention Center.

Titled "I See What You Mean," the bear is blue because one of the early drafts of it came back in that colour. It looked funky and Lawrence Argent kept it.

Down the hill from the Denver Center for the Performing Arts is "Dancers" — a six-storey steel-and-fibreglass sculpture of two bright-white, faceless popsicle-stick-thin figures cavorting hand-in-hand.

Some adore it while others deride it as big bucks for two do-si-doing aliens and their freakish light bulb-shaped skulls.

The architectural tour de force is the Denver Art Museum. The new building, designed by Daniel Libeskind, is a geometric smash-up of sharp angles that challenges the mind's eye to get a handle on its overall shape.

Next to it is the original North Building, seven storeys of reflective grey glass, sliver windows and parapets resembling a medieval castle in the heart of the new west.

Madison's tour takes about two hours at a pace that is neither meandering nor demanding past other sights and buildings, including: historic Union Station, the Denver Mint, Coors Field (where the Rockies play major league baseball), the Pepsi Center (where the NHL's Avalanche skate), the paths along Cherry Creek and the 16th Street Mall, and Sports Authority Field (home of Peyton Manning and the NFL's Denver Broncos).

Mile High Tours provides durable three-speed bikes, helmets and water. The trip is along level ground for the most part and while the thin mountain air is not noticeable during the ride, by the end some cyclists may find themselves more winded than usual.

The city has lots of cycling paths and designated bike lanes on downtown streets.

It's the best hybrid tour, said Madison, for those who only have a few days in Denver.

"By foot it takes too long and on the bikes we go places where the cars can't go," she said.

"And it's just the freedom of being on a bicycle."

#### ***IF YOU GO***

[www.milehighbiketours.com](http://www.milehighbiketours.com)

[www.denver.org](http://www.denver.org)

[www.colorado.com](http://www.colorado.com)

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