

August 10, 2008

## 36 Hours in Denver

By [ERIC WILSON](#)

THE shifting political landscape of the American West, where Democrats hope to make significant gains in several battleground states this fall, helped sell [Denver](#) as the site of the party's national convention, Aug. 25 to 28. But as easy as this city may be to navigate — you can practically see from one end to the other, it's that flat — Denver's political and social landscapes can still be tough for outsiders to read. With a convention that has already been beset by cost overruns and a severe cutback on pomp, some delegates may find it hard to see the gold here without first striking the surface. Still, as Molly Brown would attest, it's worth packing a pickax.

Friday

2 p.m.

1) CHANGE TO BELIEVE IN

Brush up on your federal history at the Denver Mint (320 West Colfax Avenue; 303-405-4761; [www.usmint.gov](http://www.usmint.gov)), where presidential portraits are stamped out on coins by the millions. You might even catch a glimpse of some of the new \$1 presidential coins, like the Jacksons and Van Burens being released later this year, but don't hold your breath for your own dollar, Bill, as the chronological series is currently planned to end with a Gerald Ford coin in 2016. (Admission is free, but reservations are highly recommended; [www.usmint.gov/mint\\_tour](http://www.usmint.gov/mint_tour)). About everything in your pockets is forbidden, so dress as you would for the airport.

4 p.m.

2) HIGH OFFICE

Walk across Civic Center Park to the steps of the imposingly gray state Capitol, a dead ringer for the one in [Washington](#), only made of sound [Colorado](#) granite. Ascend the west side to find the spot, around the 13th step, that is exactly 5,280 feet above sea level, giving Denver its altitudinal nickname.

4:05 p.m.

3) NO NEW TAXIS!

You'll be hearing a lot about this convention's efforts to be environmentally sustainable, so do your part to offset all that hot air and borrow one of the 1,000 bicycles that Freewheelin, a [bike-sharing](#) program ([www.freewheelinwaytogo.com](http://www.freewheelinwaytogo.com)), plans to provide for free use. Or hop on the MallRide, a free bus service along 16th Street from the Civic Center to Union Station. While you're waiting, familiarize yourself with local issues by watching the zipper that rings The Rocky Mountain News building near [Cleveland](#) Place: