

Laurel Miller | Photo: Great Hall photo by Chad Chisholm; Crawford photo by Ellen Jaskol | December 19, 2014

Historic Union Station emerges from a major face-lift as Denver's new draw.



URBAN RENEWAL The thoroughly renovated Great Hall in Denver's Union Station

Since reopening in July, Denver's [Union Station](#) (1701 Wynkoop St.)—its overhaul one of the nation's most anticipated historical renovation projects—represents a new incentive to brave I-70 for a winter getaway. Housed in a meticulously restored 1881 Beaux Arts building, the public market and transportation center hosts some of Denver's hottest new restaurants and bars; two pocket-size green-lifestyle boutiques; a nano-outlet of famed bookstore the [Tattered Cover](#); and a handful of top-notch, local-centric,

fast-casual dining venues. Sealing the deal is crown jewel [The Crawford Hotel](#) (720.460.3700), a luxe 112-room independent property occupying the upper three floors of the station's north and south wings. Named after visionary Colorado preservationist and Union Station renovation partner Dana Crawford, the hotel is a triumphant mix of historical high style and ingenious architectural and interior design.

Each of The Crawford's three room styles pays homage to the glamorous rail travel era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. With a subtle art deco vibe, the Pullman rooms evoke a time when private sleeping cars meant high-class service. Classic rooms, a modern nod to the building's Victorian roots, feature lofty ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows, while distinctive Loft rooms, located in the former attic, flaunt original exposed-wood beams and vaulted ceilings.

Providing room service breakfast for the hotel is the newest local branch of [Snooze](#), the much-loved Denver-based A.M. Eatery chain. Dig into a stack of pineapple upside-down pancakes with creme anglaise and cinnamon butter (\$7.50) while lolling about in your cushy bed. For lunch and dinner, in-room options come courtesy of [The Kitchen Next Door](#), an outpost of the wildly popular Boulder original.

Art represents a major part of The Crawford's aesthetic, from vintage Western thematic images and found objects salvaged on-site to contemporary pieces utilizing repurposed materials (think original building blueprints inked on linen, images photographically reproduced onto old paintbrushes and lifelike wildlife murals bursting with color). The hotel's comprehensive printed art guide makes for a fascinating self-led tour of public pieces lining hallways and stairwells.

On Union Station's mezzanine level, with an entrance from The Crawford, you'll find the intimate [Cooper Lounge](#), a sexy 1930s-style bar modeled after a railway car. Helmed by Marcel Templet, formerly of Denver's Capital Grille, the focus is on sophisticated seasonal cocktails, like the seductive Café con Leche with Tequila Ocho



HIGH STYLE A Loft room at The Crawford Hotel

reposado, Dancing Pines Zoranj, Novo iced coffee, piloncillo syrup and whipped cream (\$13). The lounge affords views of the expansive Great Hall and LoDo; Templet suggests arriving just before sunset, when light streams through the massive windows on the hall's west side, bathing the marble bar and its vintage cut-crystal glassware in golden light. If you're not a hotel guest, you'll need to make a reservation for the lounge or sign up for walk-in access at the desk in the Great Hall (near Amtrak).

Despite ultramod touches like iPad menus, the lounge's decor is emphatically vintage glam, with pewter, faux-eel skin barstools and leather and fabric seating, while nearby resto [Stoic & Genuine](#) provides raw bar items and cheese plates.

Down in the 12,000-square-foot whitewashed Great Hall, beneath 20 original two-story plaster arches, is a convivial common area surrounded by restaurants, bars and boutiques. The moody, retro [Terminal Bar](#) utilizes the original ticket windows and office to great effect, serving a rotating list of more than two dozen Colorado craft brews on draft, beer cocktails and contemporary takes on classic cocktails. Eats are from the adjacent [Acme Burger & Brat Corporation](#), which uses local goods like Tender Belly bacon, Continental sausages and rolls from Harvest Moon Baking Company. Other grab-and-go spots include [Milkbox Ice Creamery](#), which scoops out small-batch flavors from local favorite Little Man Ice Cream; [PigTrain Coffee](#) with its local roasts; and Fresh Exchange for salads, sandwiches and wraps. For shoppers, [5 Green Boxes](#) sells ethnic-inspired crafts and jewelry, while [Bloom](#) offers quirky decor, homewares and a cut-flower kiosk.

The hall's main attractions are two outlets from well-known Denver chefs. James Beard Award winner Jennifer Jasinski's [Stoic & Genuine](#) offers a global take on seafood, from generously sized lobster rolls (\$19) and Dungeness crab and mango salad with coconut-kaffir lime vinaigrette (\$17) to the raw bar that features a variety of oysters (\$3.50 each, with granitas such as lychee-sake and tarragon-cucumber). Past *Food and Wine* Best New Chef Alex Seidel's Euro-style [Mercantile Dining & Provision](#)—all weathered hardwood floors, ecru walls and gleaming white tile—sells cheeses, charcuterie, bulk spices and specialty foods. In the morning, drop by for house-baked treats like bacon sticky buns (\$4). The rustic dinner menu highlights housemade cured meats and humble ingredients like farro, root vegetables and marrow bones, prepared with classical European and Asian touches. Under the direction of Chef de Cuisine Matt Vawter, even a simple dish of housemade egg yolk pappardelle with braised rabbit, Colorado porcini, cauliflower and truffle (\$14) is life-altering. Or order up a nightcap from the list of cheeky creations like Brom Bones: George Dickel No. 12 whiskey, maple syrup, roasted pumpkin, pepitas, baking spices, Angostura bitters and orange peel (\$11).

In early 2016, expect light-rail service to run between Union Station and Denver International Airport, making this an easy stop for travelers. All aboard!

Local Lodging (and Cartier!)

Guests of The Crawford Hotel (rooms from \$289) enjoy complimentary bikes and Tesla car service within a 2-mile radius, plus access to the adjacent Oxford Hotel's fitness center, spa and salon. A \$10,000 package offered in conjunction with the [Denver Art Museum's](#) (100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, 720.865.5000) world-exclusive *Brilliant: Cartier in the 20th Century* exhibit, running through March 15, includes a night in the Crawford Suite, dinner, limo transport and a Cartier-inspired diamond and ruby bracelet. For other hospitality near Union Station, try one of these haute spots. —LM

[The Ritz-Carlton Denver](#) A modernist high-rise with airy rooms, the Ritz also offers a VIP Cartier exhibit

package starting at \$394 per night, with deluxe accommodations, two VIP exhibit tickets, breakfast and a keepsake book on Cartier. *Rooms from \$360, 1881 Curtis St., 303.312.3800*

The Oxford Hotel This grand old brick landmark, established in 1891, has light, spacious rooms with a low-key Victorian vibe and is across the street from Union Station. *Rooms from \$200, 1600 17th St., 303.628.5400*

Hotel Teatro Housed in a 1911 building, this elegant boutique hotel has rustic-modern touches like reclaimed wood, artisan metalwork, marble, leather and Rocky Mountain artifacts. The new signature restaurant, The Nickel, features stripped-down Colorado cuisine and a bar menu honoring local distillers. *Rooms from \$199, 1100 14th St., 303.228.1100*

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