



Three Perfect Days Downtown



Fort Collins has much to celebrate in its sesquicentennial birthday year, but its heart remains Downtown, where the site of a military camp put the city on the map 150 years ago. Spend a few brisk fall days getting to know the one-of-a-kind small businesses and nonprofits that give historic Downtown Fort Collins its present-day charm.

DAY ONE Party People

Set the date for hosting an epic fall solstice or Halloween bash and start by selecting the vino for it at **Blue Skies Winery (1, blueskieswinery.com)**, where handcrafted wines not available anywhere else are made on site. Sample their smooth, well-balanced reds, surprisingly dry and drinkable whites, and fun selection of fruit wines like blackberry merlot, green apple riesling, and cranberry syrah. Pair your selection with a block of extra sharp and tangy Isle of Mull cheddar and other appetizer goodies from **The Welsh Rabbit Cheese Shop (2, thewelshrabbit.com)**. After shopping, fuel up on some of the seasonal surprises co-owner and head cheese chef Nate

Hines has up his sleeve at the quaint Welsh Rabbit Cheese Bistro around the corner.

It's always Christmas at **Rudolph's Landing (3, rudolphslanding.com)**, but you can find high-quality decorations for other holidays and special occasions here too. Soak up the impressive Halloween display in the store's huge front window for inspiration before going in to ponder whether the haunted wall kit or the wire black cat sculpture would best compliment your theme.

And since you can't go wrong with a dessert spread from the **Butter Cream Cupcakery (4, buttercreamcupcakery.com)**, spend some time salivating over the options in the adorable pink and white shop. Favorite flavors for fall include pumpkin spice with cinnamon and cream cheese frosting and classic red velvet

topped with white chocolate frosting. For the final finishing touches, follow your nose to the **Savory Spice Shop (5, savoryspiceshop.com)** and pick up some mulling spices and vanilla bean sugar in the exact quantities you'll need. While there, stock up on the shop's perfected, authentic Jamaican jerk seasoning and some fiery-hot ghost pepper salt to dress up roasted pumpkin seeds.

DAY TWO

Peace, Love, and Colorado

Set the tone for an inspiring day at **Happy Lucky's Teahouse (6, happyluckys.com)**, where co-owners George and Kari Grady Grossman are serving up world change. Born from the couple's nonprofit Sustainable Schools International, supporting education in Cambodia, the teahouse offers a great wall of gourmet tea blends, a comprehensive selection of teapots and accessories, and meaningful imported gifts including silk scarves made by landmine survivors. Put your tea buzz to good use and browse the eclectic, funky mix of artisan jewelry next door at **Curiosities (7, curiosities.biz)**. Admire freshwater pearl and sterling silver necklaces by Altitude jewelry in Winter Park and hand-forged metal pieces by Red Bench jewelry in Denver. Complete with a retro poster room and a ton of off-the-wall gift ideas, it's truly a place with something for everyone.

You'll be feeling proud to be in Colorado at this point, so cross the street to **Every Nook & Cranny (8, facebook.com/allthingscolorado)** and check out owner Mary Ellen Sinnwell's latest designs. Leave rocking the ever-popular, Colorado flag-embazoned long-sleeved tee and hoodie ensemble. Pick up a few keepsake pint glasses and a travel mug too, so you can carry Colorado with you wherever you roam. And if it's the rest of the world you wish to see, cross the square to **Ten Thousand Villages (9, tenthousandvillages.com/fortcollins)** — no passport required. Volunteers staff the fair-trade non-profit retail outlet, raising global awareness and showcasing handmade goods by artisans in developing countries all over the world. Ask for the story behind your feel-good purchase, and don't forget to grab a terra cotta pig from Chile for good luck.

Feeling energized to do more than just shop for positive change? Round out the day learning about the nonprofit **Trees, Water & People (10, treeswaterpeople.org)** and their efforts to preserve ecosystems and help communities manage natural resources. From clean cookstove projects in Honduras to renewable energy programs on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, plenty of opportunities exist for getting involved in helping people and the planet.

DAY THREE

Feather your Fall Nest

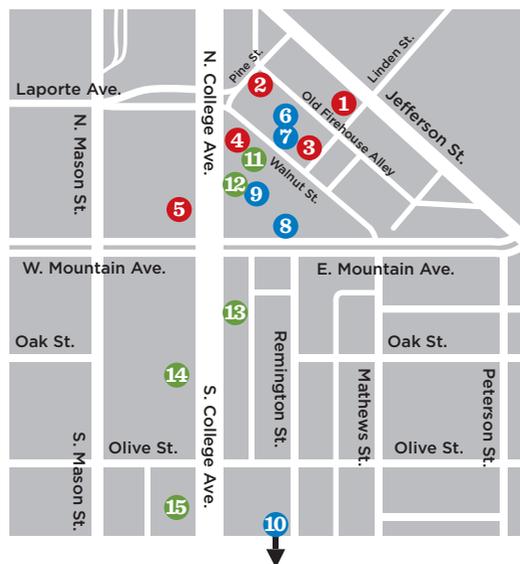
Spruce up your space and refine your style at **Sense of Place (11, downtownfortcollins.com/member-directory/sense-of-place)**, a store chock full of fascinating items for the home and closet. Enjoy oldies tunes as you sift through quirky coffee table books, wine, and bicycle-inspired art, clocks in all shapes and sizes, and jewelry designs by FoCo local Julia Macmillan. With your senses tuned in to the finer side of things, head over to **Rocky Mountain Olive Oil Company (12, rockymountainoliveoil.com)** and sample to your heart's content the dizzying array of aromatic olive oils and



balsamic vinegars lining the perimeter of the store. Locals love pairing the cranberry-pear white balsamic with the organic Tuscan herb olive oil and enjoying the blend with houseguests over French bread.

Since everyone ends up congregating in the kitchen, trick it out with some new gadgets and classy home décor from **The Cupboard (13, thecupboard.net)**. Bring home a stylish, artisan Kitchen Aid stand mixer for holiday baking and some festive harvest spice palm wax candles. Don't forget to thumb through their selection of over 2,000 cookbooks in the loft.

With home improvement ideas swirling in your head, chat up the famously friendly and helpful staff at **Ace Hardware (14, facebook.com/downtownace)**. Whether you're fixing to paint, clean, repair, or improve, you can count on having a satisfying shopping experience complete with great coupon specials, service with a smile, and free bags of fresh-popped popcorn. When the time comes to end the day and complete your home's new look, go with an antique piece from **Find of the Day! (15, findoftheday.co)** a first-rate secondhand store full of upcycled home furnishings you'll never find at the big boxes. Ask for the "Resale Trail" map the owners created, featuring a walking and biking tour of more locally owned resale shops, and kick off fall with some new-to-you finds.



Getting There

Park It

Downtown offers five surface lots, on-street parking for two-hour limits, free all-day parking on the periphery of town, and two paying parking structures; the Civic Center garage on N. Mason St. and the Old Town garage on E. Mountain Ave. If you pedaled yourself to town, you'll find racks on most curbs and six large corrals that can fit up to 20 bikes. Rent a bike from the Fort Collins Bike Library for free at the downtown transit center.

250 N. Mason St., fcbikelibrary.org

Local Motion

For a \$1.25 fare, hop on MAX, the new rapid transit bus line providing service every 10 minutes along a five-mile corridor on Mason St., from Cherry St. to Harmony Rd., with four convenient stops in Old Town. Bikes welcome on board.

fegov.com/max

More to Love

If perfect downtown days are your thing, you're usually in luck on Fridays. Check out the self-guided art gallery tours the first Friday of each month, watch for retail shops open late on the second Friday, and enjoy a foodie walk on the third Friday.

downtownfortcollins.com