

Insider Profiles

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Bird's-Eye View in Denver



"The thing about Denver that's really cool is that you literally have this beautiful, vibrant city that just butts right up to the mountains."

As a paramedic for Flight for Life Colorado, Kevin Kelble provides airborne emergency services to people in Colorado's backcountry: heart attack victims, skiers caught in avalanches, hikers who have taken a tumble. Born and raised in Denver, his father was a ski-in doctor in the '60s and '70s, back before mountain clinics existed. Kelble had planned to go to medical school, but his decision to take a hiatus and join the Copper Mountain Ski Patrol changed the course of his career. "I immediately fell in love with ski patrolling," he says, "and more importantly, I fell in love with avalanche and snow forecasting."

Nowadays, Kelble is based in Frisco, Colorado — the heart of ski country at 9,000 feet. He's had a hand in such cutting-edge developments as the Avalanche Deployment Program, which combines resources to help expedite airborne rescues. One of the best things about his job, he says, is the caliber of people he works with: the doctors, firefighters, pilots, flight nurses and mechanics. "Nothing in this program is solo," he points out. "It's about we, and it's all about team."

Working from a helicopter isn't too shabby, either. "I mean, what a spectacular office," he says. Kelble and his team frequently fly patients to Flight for Life's headquarters at St. Anthony Hospital, located in a west Denver suburb. He has witnessed the metro area's explosive growth from a bird's-eye perspective. Areas once filled with farms and ranches are now teeming with development. The reason, he believes, is the "geographic attraction to Denver," which is drawing "active and vibrant people."

He still frequents the same music venues he loved as a teenager, like [Herman's Hideaway](#). "Some of the biggest acts have come out of there," he recalls. He also returns to the [Fillmore Auditorium](#), another old-time music venue. Kelble's insider knowledge about Denver comes from his former job as a city paramedic some 20 years ago. "You get to see another side of the city that very few people get to see," he explains, which is how he discovered [El Chapultepec](#). "It's a full-on dive bar with the same little funky stage," he says. "You walk in, and who's played in there is the who's who of jazz. Before Coors Field was there, that whole neighborhood was skid road. Now it's all bars and restaurants and Rockies baseball."

Another found gem was the (recently renamed) [Denver Wheel Club 404](#), a funky local joint with great food where he'd visit after working the graveyard shift. "We'd go over there and get greasy bacon and eggs," he recalls, "and maybe a Bloody Mary if it was a tough night."

After spending a lifetime in Colorado, Kelble continues to rediscover the Mile High City and surrounding mountains through the great views he finds, which you don't necessarily have to be in a chopper to appreciate. "The thing about Denver that's really cool is that you literally have this beautiful, vibrant city that just butts right up to the mountains," he says. "In 15 minutes you can be sitting up in the foothills watching an incredible full moon rise over the city."

For spectacular views of the Continental Divide, he recommends the observation deck on Gap Road in [Golden Gate Canyon State Park](#), a vantage point he discovered while bicycling with friends. "I had no idea that deck was there, and I've been here my whole life!" he exclaims. "That's what Denver is like. In a short amount of time you can be in the mountains looking at views that just take your breath away."