



# Industry Leader

Can this guy make adventure pay in Colorado?

**A** decade ago, Littleton resident Luis Benitez was one of the most sought-after mountaineering guides in the world. Benitez's foray into government, however, might be his most pioneering excursion yet. Last summer, Governor John Hickenlooper hired Benitez as founding director of the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, an agency tasked with bolstering the state's \$13.2 billion outdoor sector. Colorado is only the second state, after Utah, to carve out a special spot for outdoor rec with-in government—meaning there aren't many best practices to copy. Benitez, 44, spent his first year in office building an advisory council of 32 executives across the state's varied outdoor segments as well as organizing regional coalitions in recreation hot spots. "It's about getting the different segments of the industry talking and hopefully pointed in the same direction," Benitez says. That mission, though not impossible, might make scaling mountains seem downright simple. —JAYME MOYE

**"This isn't about hugging trees and building trails. It's about harnessing a major economic engine."**

**LUIS BENITEZ**  
on the Colorado Outdoor  
Recreation Industry Office



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