

COCKTAILS

Austin City Limits \$10

Tito's Vodka, raspberry liqueur, lemon and prosecco.

Brown Derby \$8

Bourbon, grapefruit, lemon, honey and simple syrup.

Monte Carlo \$8

Rye whiskey, Bénédictine, bitters and a lemon twist.

Ranch Water \$8

Silver Tequila, soda water and lime.

Gold Rush \$8

Colorado Honey Bourbon, honey, simple syrup and lemon.

Dead Man's Handle \$10

Tequila, Aperol, lime, orgeat with a salt rim.

Old Fashioned \$10

Rittenhouse Rye, simple syrup, luxardo cherry, orange and Angostura Bitters.

Kentucky Maid \$10

Bourbon, mint, cucumber, simple syrup and lime.

Animas City Cooler \$10

Melon and peach liqueur with orange and cranberry juice.

Southside \$10

Empress Gin, lime, simple syrup and mint.

Orange Whip \$10

Whipped flavored vodka, orange juice, triple sec and cream.

BOTTLES & CANS WHITE WINES

Becks - Non Alcoholic \$5.50

Bud Light \$5.50

Budweiser \$5.50

Coors Light \$5.50

Coors Banquet \$5.50

Guinness \$7.50

Miller Light \$5.50

Michelob Ultra \$6.50

Modelo Especial \$6.50

Stella Artois \$6.50

Stella Cidre \$6.50

OTHER

Draft Beer \$7.50

House Wines \$7

Chardonnay - Ava Grace \$9

Pinot Grigio - Ecco Domani \$8

Riesling - Hogue \$8

Sauvignon Blanc - Oyster Bay \$9

Moscato - Cavit \$8

Prosecco - Lunetta \$9

Rose - Seaglass \$8

RED WINES

Cabernet Sauvignon - Josh Cellars \$10

Merlot - Edna Valley \$9

Pinot Nior - Parducci \$9

Zinfandel - Bogle \$9

Malbec - Alto Molino \$9

Red Blend - 19 Crimes \$9

The Historic Strater Hotel

The Strater Hotel began as a dream in the mind of 28-year-old Henry H. Strater, who wanted to build the largest and finest hotel in the West. It was quite a challenge as he had no money or experience in the hotel business. With the help of relatives—and a lot of enthusiasm—Henry’s dream finally became a reality. After an expenditure of \$70,000 and the placement of 376,000 bricks, the Strater Hotel finally became a reality in 1887. It was constructed of native red bricks and hand carved sandstone cornices and sills.

Early in its history, the Strater was a popular winter retreat for travelers all around the West. Even the Durango townsfolk would close their own homes during the cold winter months and move into the Strater. Each room boasted its own wood burning stove and was equipped with comfortable furniture, including washstands. Inside of each washstand, a “facility” was kept. The maids emptied this each morning.

The Strater’s tradition of hospitality continued throughout the years. Western author, Louis L’Amour, with his wife, Kathy, and their children, made the Strater their Home-Away-From-Home. They always asked for room 222, right above the Diamond Belle Saloon. L’Amour said the honky-tonk piano, heard from below, helped set the mood for his novels about the Old West. Much of his Sackett series was written at the Strater.

Although built in 1887, and without “modern conveniences,” the Strater enjoyed an ongoing renovation for many years. Then, Earl and Jentra Barker bought the hotel in the 1940s and began the renovation project. They gave special attention to such details as bathrooms, air conditioning, heating, and in-room closets. The journey into Victorian charm began on a trip south for Earl and Jentra Barker. They found an authentic Victorian bed in an antique store, the same bed that is located in one of our Honeymoon suites. They then decided to furnish the entire hotel with authentic period furniture. The two of them drove back, pulling a U-Haul trailer, stopping at every antique store along the way. So began the hotel’s collection of American Victorian walnut furniture, which is now known as the largest collection in the nation.

The renovation continued under the direction of the third generation, Roderick E. Barker, son of Earl and Jentra. Rod oversaw and designed renovations of The Mahogany Grille, The Office Spiritorium, The Pullman and Centennial Rooms, the Oak Room, and a facelift for The Diamond Belle. The sleeping rooms also undergo renovations on a regular basis. Bradbury and Bradbury hand-screened art wallpapers and coordinating carpets are specially selected for each room. A single window in a room with drapes and valances can have up to 30 yards of plush velvet. Room 220 was renovated in this manner and was awarded Lodging Magazine’s prestigious Gold Key Award in 1989.

THE DIAMOND BELLE SALOON

Originally the hotel’s saloon, the corner location later housed the Strater-Thorpe Drug Store, followed by the Turner Investment and Silver State Security Co., and the Colorado Employment Agency. Earl Barker Jr. told his father of his idea to convert the space back to a saloon. Earl Sr. replied, “No, you’ll never get more than the \$25 rent currently being collected from the Colorado Employment Agency.” But in 1957, when Earl Sr. went back to Arizona for the winter, Earl Jr. figuring it was easier to ask for forgiveness than permission, restored the room back to a turn-of-the-century saloon anyway. And when Earl Sr. returned and saw all of his friends having a great time in the Belle, he told everyone it was his idea all along!

The costumes of the bar staff and the ragtime piano entertainment are reminiscent of that bygone era. The saloon girls are undoubtedly the most photographed people in Durango. The balcony was built as apothecary storage when the space was the drugstore. The tin ceiling is original but has been painted. The lions’ heads, from which the chandeliers hang, are from an old design found in Telluride. Below the balcony railing is a gilded sign, intended for the drinkers below: Work is the curse of the drinking classes. The original upper-plate glass windows are from 1887, as is the hand-painted oak wainscoting, and the flocked wallpaper came from England in the 1985 remodel. (At \$150 per roll, the wallpaper was very expensive when purchased, but it does closely resemble the 1957 wallpaper.) The blue star Bradbury and Bradbury art wallpaper, installed in 2005, is hand-screened and was specially selected to better showcase the beautiful, ornate bar. The bar was found in a dilapidated warehouse in Durango. Originally owned by Giuseppe (Joe) Corazzo at the National Hall Saloon, it became part of the Belle in 1957. The infamous bullet hole came from a robbery attempt against Joe. The unusual finish of the back bar was achieved by first painting it pink, and mixing the second coat of paint with stale beer so that it would slip. The paint was then grained by pulling a turkey or crow quill across it. The stained glass over the front door is original from 1887. With the addition of a beautiful new front door in 2005, stained glass was commissioned for the sides of the door to match the original. High-grade velvet curtains are typical of the period. Framed on the back wall is an 1892 publication with advertisements for both the Strater Hotel and the Columbian Hotel, which is now part of the Strater. An artist in residence paid his hotel bill with the two oil paintings that hang above the piano and above the front door. The portrait above the piano depicts Evelyn, who was one of the early saloon girls.

Some of the world’s best ragtime pianists have played in the Diamond Belle, as well as popular local artists. Cowboys gather regularly in the Belle to swap stories, poems, and songs. Cowboys and cowgirls alike have even ridden their horses and mules into the Belle. Real estate exchanges of note have been documented on cocktail napkins in the Belle. And world-famous author Louis L’Amour penned much of his Sackett series while choosing to stay in the rooms above the Belle, drawing inspiration from the cheerful sounds of the ragtime piano, the clinking of glasses, and the laughter of the patrons in the Saloon. The Diamond Belle is a favorite gathering place for locals and visitors alike.