

DESTINATION

NEW MEXICO

It won't take long for you to discover the captivating charm of America's 47th state. Its landscape—dotted with mountains, sandstone outcroppings, and deep river gorges—is as diverse as its rich confluence of cultures. Whether you explore by bike, boat, ski, or foot, New Mexico just might leave you in a state of enchantment. **By Christine Hayes**

Gabriel's guac,
made tableside



SANTA FE

The City Different brims with vibrant cultures, outdoor adventures, and a renowned arts scene—both visual and performing. Whether you crave an authentic Southwestern meal or hope to take in a show, New Mexico's capital city is ready to deliver.

SAVOR

For a dinner that flawlessly blends the best of Old Mexico and the American Southwest, reserve a spot at the oft packed Gabriel's, known for its tableside guacamole, hand-made tortillas, and margaritas. And don't overlook the authentic New Mexican surroundings: Take in the dining room's intricate Spanish tiling, or enjoy your meal alfresco on Gabriel's spacious garden patio.

SIP

Wine connoisseurs and newbies alike will savor a visit to Estrella Del Norte Vineyard, just north of down-



Dancers at
El Rancho de las
Golondrinas

town. The winery offers tastings on its expansive, cottonwood-lined estate. Sample a variety of vino as you take in the breathtaking natural scenery, and then stop by the gift shop to find a few bottles to bring home for friends.

SEE

Travel back in time at El Rancho de las Golondrinas, Santa Fe's living-history museum. During the 1700s, this area was the primary point of entry for Spaniards coming to the Rio Grande Valley. The village maintains its 18th-century aesthetic, providing tourists a look into Spanish heritage. Don't miss

the *horno* baking classes every Thursday and Saturday, when you'll learn how to cook in traditional outdoor ovens.

DO

One of the best ways to see the area's gorgeous vistas is atop two wheels. And don't just take our word for it: Santa Fe's diverse terrain and awe-inspiring views helped it land a spot on *USA Today*'s list of America's top mountain biking towns. There's a bounty of trails—whether you're an adventure biker looking for a bit of off-roading or a family seeking more relaxing routes.

The Santa Fe Opera House is

one of the city's top destinations for travelers of all ages. This open-air music hall's dramatic, swooping roofline draws you in while the flawless acoustics wrap around you. In a typical opera house, when the overture begins the lighting dims. Out here, the sun slowly sets right around start time—on a clear night, it's a spectacular sight to behold. Tip: Arrive early. Much like at sporting events, patrons love to tailgate before the show.

STAY

Indulge in a night of luxury at the Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado. Delectable dishes,



LEFT: Santa Fe County is an ideal stepping off point for a cycling adventure thanks to a diverse and extensive system of trails.

BELOW: In a town packed with more than 250 galleries, don't overlook this standout: Fairchild & Co.

her jewelry gallery is a Santa Fe destination focusing on beauty and excitement. Valerie still hand-draws her designs before creating her distinctive pieces, which are evoked by people, nature, ancient cultures, mythology, astrology, travel, and science. Whether something in the gallery catches your eye or you have a custom design in mind, Fairchild & Co.'s team of skilled goldsmiths bring together precious metals and gemstones to create a personal statement.

At Santa Fe Goldworks, each of David Griego's masterpieces is created in the heart of the city and is inspired by the area's architecture and scenic landscapes. David handpicks the materials he uses in his jewelry—diamonds, turquoise, opals, and Mediterranean coral—to ensure he produces the very best. The shop's trademark design, the River of Love, depicts a heartbeat and a beautiful mountain that contrasts with Santa Fe's bright blue skies, but David loves creating timeless pieces customized to patrons' tastes and needs, too.



sumptuous spa treatments, and a peaceful slumber await at this romantic getaway in the Sangre de Cristo foothills. The retreat features more than 60 rooms, as well as a fine-dining restaurant by James Beard Award semifinalist Andrew Cooper. Consult with one of the resort's adventure guides to select outdoor activities that will get your heart pumping.

SHOP

Valerie Jean Fairchild is a trained goldsmith and designer with a remarkable aesthetic. She founded Fairchild & Co. in 1976 and today



Horseback riding at Inn of the Mountain Gods is available through October.

RUIDOSO SAVOR

A small village nestled between the Capitan and Sierra Blanca mountains, Ruidoso is an ideal destination for a relaxing getaway. From skiing and hiking to wining and dining, there's something for every traveler.

Bring your appetite and a pair of cowboy boots to Flying J Ranch. Since 1982, owners James and Cindy Hobbs have been serving up a traditional chuckwagon supper and busting out Western tunes for guests who want to experience Ruidoso like the Old West cowboys did. Feast on barbecue, biscuits, and mashed potatoes, and then stick

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ABOVE: The exhilarating Apache Eagle ZipRider at Inn of the Mountain Gods reaches speeds of up to 55 mph. Don't close your eyes, though. The views of Lake Mescalero and the surrounding area are breathtaking.

RIGHT: Grab a saucer and sled down the dunes at White Sands National Monument.

around for the banjo-picking and world-champion yodeling of the Flying J Wranglers Western Music Show.

SEE

Midway between Ruidoso and Las Cruces, White Sands National Monument is an awe-inspiring piece of natural landscape. If you're expecting typical desert scenery, think again. The dunes are made up of pristine white crystals that gleam from every direction. It's the perfect place for a sunset stroll, and you can camp out nearby.

DO

While you might think of Ski Apache strictly as a winter destination, it's the place to be regardless of the season. Warmer months bring gondola rides, hiking treks, and mountain biking in the Sierra Blanca range. Don't miss the



Apache Wind Rider ZipTour, the highest zip-line tour in the U.S., which offers a 360-degree aerial view of the Apache Bowl, an intermediate ski run on the west side of the mountain. If you come back in the winter, get geared up (Ski Apache's rental shop is your source for skis, boards, boots, and poles) and play in fresh powder. First time on the slopes? The ski school's instructors will have you parallel turning in no time.

STAY

As soon as you walk into the lobby at Inn of the Mountain Gods, just 4 miles from Ruidoso, you're greeted with astonishing views of White Mountain. But the perks don't stop there. A brand-new tap house, Las Vegas-style gaming, sophisticated restaurants, a jam-packed lineup of comedy shows and concerts, championship golf, and fishing excursions—it's all here. When you're ready to turn in for the evening, the inn's luxuriously appointed rooms are just as impressive.



ALBUQUERQUE

New Mexico's largest city is always ready to entertain and satisfy. From the newly revitalized downtown area to the historic Old Town district, you'll discover endless examples of Hispanic culture and even more natural beauty.

SIP

For some of the best rooftop views in town, check out the trendy Apothecary Lounge atop the Hotel Parq Central, a renovated 1926 hospital. Snuggle up with someone special on the double-size lounge chairs and imbibe a Jazz Age cocktail. Or order a pitcher of mojitos or prickly pear margaritas to share.

SEE

If you enjoy aerial views, riding the Sandia Peak Tramway is a must. This ride runs from the northeast edge of Albuquerque to the Sandia



Mountains, making it the third-longest single-span tram in the world. Deep canyons and rugged terrain pass beneath you for nearly 3 miles until you reach Sandia Peak itself in Cibola National Forest. Enjoy panoramic views of the Rio Grande Valley from your 10,378-foot perch.

DO

Set aside a full day to explore the National Hispanic Cultural Center downtown. The 20-acre campus contains an education center, three theaters, an art museum, and an ever-growing list of community events—all of which promote the culture of the Spanish-speaking world. On any given weekend, the theaters could be showing a traditional Spanish dance troupe or a local play, catering to visitors of all ages.

STAY

Just two blocks from historic Old Town, Hotel Andaluz provides travelers with upscale rooms and a relaxing rooftop bar. Munch on

Spanish tapas as you take in the early 1900s architecture of one of the city's top boutique hotels.

STAY

For delightful sights—and scents—book a room at Los Poblanos, a historic inn and organic farm located on 25 acres of lavender fields. Designed in 1932, the estate features 20 guest rooms and a restaurant serving delectable farm-to-table meals. Much of the menu is rooted in the produce grown on-site.

SHOP

Historic Old Town has been Albuquerque's focal point since the city was founded in 1706. Former homes and government offices now house quirky art galleries, shops, and restaurants. As you explore, take note of the Pueblo-Spanish architecture: The flat-roofed buildings and adobe structures conjure up images of New Mexico's early settlers. History buffs, don't miss San Felipe de Neri Church, the city's oldest building, constructed in 1793.

The National Hispanic Cultural Center presents artist panels, dance classes, film screenings, theatrical performances, and more.

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