

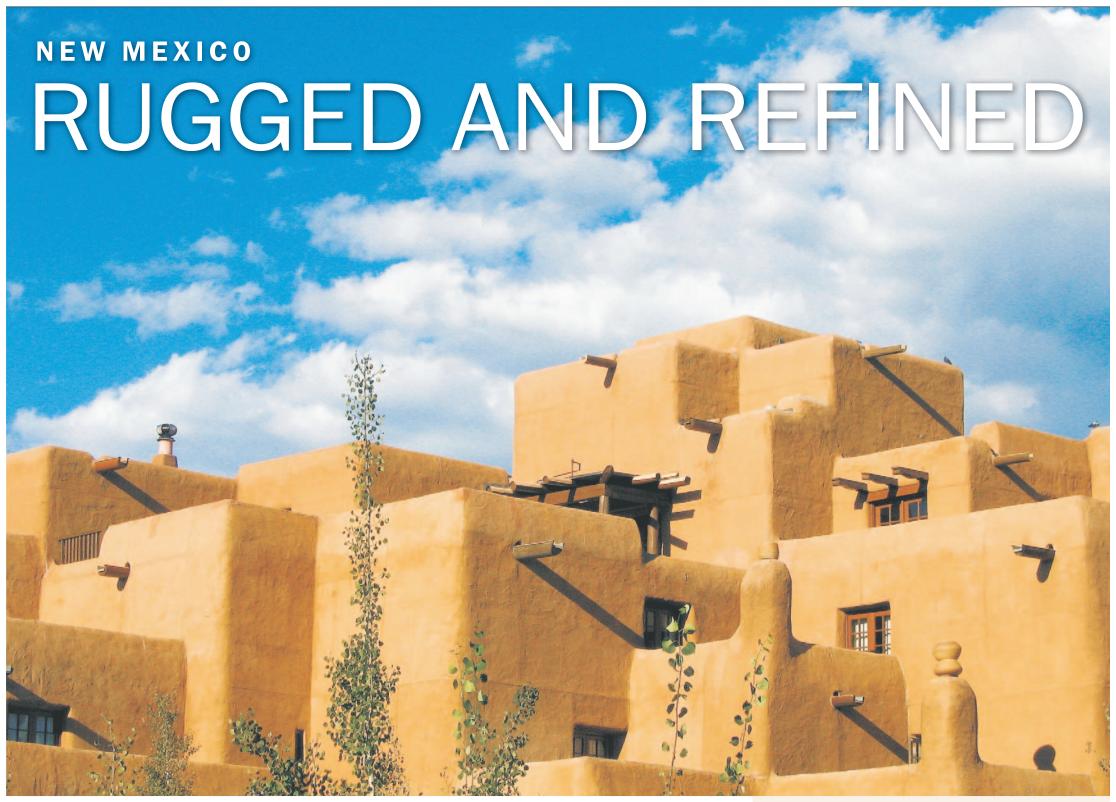
TODAY'S QUOTE

"In the magnificent fierce morning of New Mexico one sprang awake, a new part of the soul woke up suddenly, and the old world gave way to a new." — **Novelist D.H. Lawrence**



COMING NEXT WEEK

Fall Color: Where and when to find autumn's blaze of glory.



Photographs by Chris Welsch/Star Tribund The Inn at Loretto, a block from the Santa Fe Plaza, was built in 1975 to resemble Taos Pueblo; Santa Fe's building code requires new buildings to maintain the city's unique architectural style, a combination of Indian and Spanish colonial influences.

SANTA FE: One of America's oldest cities has an ongoing battle between its tourist veneer and its venerable core. In ways large and small, our correspondent finds the substance beneath the style.

By Chris Welsch, Star Tribune Staff Writer

woke up in an old adobe inn where at various times Ansel Adams, D.H. Lawrence and Edna St. Vincent Millay had slept. They'd probably stared at the same ceiling of ancient pine logs anchored in red mud and had no doubt been charmed too. * From the historic pictures displayed at the Inn of the Turquoise Bear, not much had changed since the building was owned by Witter Bynner, friend of some of America's finest artists and writers. Then as now, beautiful wool rugs and eclectic art from all over the world adorned the walls. * After breakfast, I walked down the Old Santa Fe Trail toward the plaza. New Mexico's beauty is not subtle. It hits you over the head like a hammer. The sky was a shade of blue so deep and luminous that it seemed to pull my soul to the surface of my skin. At an altitude of 7,000 feet, the sunlight is utterly unhindered by humidity, providing a clarity and sharpness to everything. The trees throw shadows on the ground that are as black as ink. * A block from the plaza, I came across a white Dodge van with a uniquely Santa Fean load. The roof rack bore two dozen freshly bleached cow skulls, and the trailer behind was loaded with as many newly minted pueblo ladders. Nice little Georgia O'Keeffe touches for any new home, which according to the building code have to look like adobe, even if they aren't. * I had my doubts about returning to Santa Fe. I was there for the first time when I was 6 years old, in 1969. My uncle had married the daughter of a local rancher. It was a formative travel experience. I heard Spanish spoken for the first time, rode my first horse and reveled in flavors from exotic foods such as green chile and cinnamon-sugared sopapillas. Santa Fe continues on G4



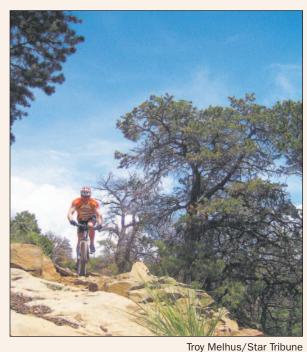
Above: Isabel Naranjo of Chimayo, N.M., sells flowers at the Santa Fe Farmers Market. The market allows only local producers who sell their own wares.



In a souvenir shop just off the plaza, Day of the Dead puppets cast shadows on an adobe wall.



After chiles are harvested, just about every Santa Fe doorway sports a ristra, or string of peppers. They reputedly bring good luck as well as good spice.



Northern New Mexico boasts dozens of challenging mountain bike trails like this one, west of Taos, for everyone from the beginner to expert.

TAOS: Encounters with the land (away from land-seeking investors) by bike.

By Troy Melhus, $Star\ Tribune\ Staff\ Writer$

The heavens look different from Taos. Peer up on a clear, cloudless midnight, and the galaxies aren't just boundless, they're mystical.

The same might be said for the biking trails. I'd come looking for something new. After spending four days mountain biking near Denver, I wanted to return to my birth state and re-explore the Sangre de Cristo range of mountains near Taos, north of Santa Fe. Armed with a book called "Mountain Biking in Northern New Mexico," I picked about a half-dozen trails that I thought worth riding, and figured I'd deal with lodging when the need arose.

I pulled into town shortly after sunset, rented a room at the Casa Benavides bed-and-breakfast, and within an hour was walking the streets of Taos, gazing up at a full moon and stars, and drinking in the place: its churches, its tourist shops, its pubs, its solace. Part hippy, part Hollywood, Taos combines the feel of an artist colony, a tourist destination, a haunting, Stephen King-esque middle-of-nowhere overnight stop, and a westward rush for land investors all in one.

TAOS continues on G4



Chris Welsch/Star Tribune Zozobra, an effigy representing the troubles and demons of the year, is a highlight of the Santa Fe Fiesta. People are invited to write their troubles and regrets on pieces of paper, toss them in and watch them go up in flames with the monster.

SANTA FE from G1

Farmers market offers taste of local life, produce

Then, Santa Fe was a cowboy town where Hispanic surnames were most common. It had been discovered by a handful of hippies, artists and seekers of Native spirituality; it was not an A-list destination. Since then, I feared, it had become a magnificent, overpriced parody of itself.

I spent nearly a week last September reacquainting myself with the city. I decided I was right. In some ways, Santa Fe is a magnificent, overpriced parody of itself. In other ways, it's as real as the red dirt walls of its old adobe buildings.

And the walls aren't a bad place to start.

"Santa Fe, or Holy Faith, was founded in 1610, same year that wall you're leaning on was built, 10 years before the landing at Plymouth Rock," said Jerry Nelson, a docent at the Governor's Palace, Santa Fe's oldest building. He was speaking to a group of tourists, sitting along an adobe wall under a shady arcade, just off the plaza, the heart of Santa Fe.

Nelson (strangely enough, a retiree from Pine City, Minn.) led us on a walk through Santa Fe's past. We saw America's oldest Éuropean church, its oldest European house and the New Mexico State Capitol, which is built to look like a kiva, the circular ceremonial structure of the Pueblo Indians. "They call said. "You can chase your legislator around all day without catching him."

Conquistadors remembered

Nelson told us about the Spaniards' efforts to subjugate the Indians of the surrounding pueblos (Spanish for village), and the Pueblo Indians' successful revolt in 1680, when the Indian communities banded together, killed 400 Spaniards and drove the rest of them south into Mexico. The Indians burned all the buildings except the Governor's Palace.

The Santa Fe Fiesta was in its second day, and the plaza was set up with food booths, craft vendors and a stage. Nelson said the fiesta was a living reminder of those times. It celebrates the peaceful re-occupation of the city by the Spaniards in 1692. It's America's oldest continuous civic celebration, dating to 1712.

I made a circuit of the plaza, stopping in stores along the way. There were tourists, but most of the crowd seemed to be locals with their kids, and fiesta royalty dressed up as conquistadors, complete with metal helmets and wool capes.

The stores around the plaza reflect what Santa Fe has become; it's not central to locals' lives anymore — in a utilitarian fashion, anyway. The Governor's Palace is a museum. There are jewelry stores, art and souvenir shops. At Onorato, a high-end bed and bath shop, I picked up some shaving soap from Florence, Italy, and chatted with the manager, one of the few native Santa Feans I met during my time there.

"Santa Fe has changed a lot," said Laura Gallegos as she packed up my purchase. "But it's nice that we've been able to maintain the feel of the place. And fiesta is a great time. We locals get to reclaim the plaza for a little while."

Art and artifice

I left the plaza to the locals and began exploring Santa Fe's art galleries.

I started with the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum. If any one person is to blame for making Santa Fe into an internationally known brand, it's her.

The exhibit on hand was scinating. It paired O'Keeffe paintings of New Mexican landscapes with photos of those same places. When you see an O'Keeffe, her bold colors and surreal shapes can strike you as the product of a fertile imagination. In context, you see that's not so; O'Keeffe did not stray far from her source material.

Take the painting "Part of the Cliffs," for example. Blue sky, silver peak, bright yellow stripe in the middle, orangered flanks, all rising from a scrubby stand of silver-green Russian olive trees. The colors and forms seemed too intoxicatingly vivid to be real. Right next to it, however, a photo of the same scene showed the exact same perspective, tones, luminescence and deep saturation of color. In case after case the comparison showed O'Keeffe celebrating reality, not

distorting it. Even O'Keeffe feared the changes that her ravishing paintings might inspire. In 1977, she said of New Mexico, "As soon as I saw it, that was my country.... The sky is different, the wind is different. I shouldn't say too much about it because other people will

other people interested." That sentiment was too late even in 1977, when the population of Santa Fe was approaching 90,000. Now it's home to nearly twice that number. And a lot of them are artists.

get interested and I don't want

On my walk up Canyon Road, Santa Fe's museum mile, these are some of the things I saw: Life-size bronze of curious grizzly encountering pixie-ish Indian boy. Giant iron cactus painted in gaudy colors. Lots of winged naked women stretching. Navajo rugs. Amazing Pueblo pottery. Fairies in various poses (often topless). Giant turquoise bear. Giant cute rabbit. A gloomy Kafkaesque video about persecution by an Iranian woman. Splashes of icy blue acrylic paint on Lucite panels. Works by an Indian artist whose *oeuvre* is photos of white tourists taking pictures of Indians at powwows.

There are more than 100 private galleries in Santa Fe, most of them on Canyon Road. The art-and-culture industry in town generates one out of every six jobs and \$1 billion annually, according to a report in the Santa Fe New Mexican. Nationally, Santa Fe ranks second in art sales to New York.

'There is no industry here. Art is it," said Janine Stern, director of Tadu Contemporary you find artists waiting tables, pumping gas and working in

galleries. While it's difficult to sort out what is art and what is artificial in Santa Fe's gallery scene, there are places where the city tends to its local rhythms without much regard for appearances or outsiders.

lastes of Santa Fe

One of the best places to see that is at the Santa Fe Farmers Market, where producers sell their fruits and vegetables out of the back of pickups or at card tables by the railyard.

I bought a homemade burrito stuffed with scrambled eggs, fresh roasted peppers, tomatoes and beans — all locally grown. I ate it as I admired the peaches, peppers, honey, and many other delicacies for sale.

Don Bustos, a stout, bearded fellow, sweated as he turned a wire cage full of chiles over a

roaring propane torch.

"We're roasting Big Jim peppers, getting the skin off, so you can refrigerate or freeze them," he said.

Bustos, president of the Santa Fe Farmers Market board, said all the produce at the market has to be grown within 15 counties of Northern New Mexico. "Not only that, to sell it here, you have to be the one who grew it," Bustos said.

Dispelling gloom

The Santa Fe Fiesta also works to preserve its local flavor. The royalty tends to come from the older, Spanish families, some of whom can trace their roots back further than the wannabes whose ancestors landed in the Mayflower. Fiesta events — like the children's pet parade — are designed to celebrate locals, not entertain tourists. (Although the pet parade was very entertaining).

The pinnacle of the festival is the burning of a giant effigy called Zozobra, which means gloom in Spanish. The event used to be on Saturday night, but too many people from Albuquerque came, so the city moved it to Thursday night to reclaim a lower-key, more local flavor, said Jerry Nelson, the tour guide from Pine City.

"Zozobra was the invention of a local artist named Will Shuster," Nelson said. He was inspired by seeing a Yaqui Indian ceremony in which an effigy of Judas was blown up with firecrackers. He burned the first Zozobra in 1924, for family and friends, as a way to protest what he considered the com-

The first Zozobra was only 6 feet tall. Over the years, he grew. The model I saw at the Fort Marcy softball fields was about 50 feet tall, an elaborate puppet with a sour expression and glowering eyes.

The party starts in the late afternoon. There are food stands, rock bands and a ritual special to Santa Fe. Tables are set up with scraps of paper for "Gloom Boxes." Anyone can record a dark chapter in their life from the previous year — any regret, anger or grief - and have it loaded into the effigy.

At about 9 p.m., after much loud groaning, flailing of arms and flapping of his giant chin, Zozobra was consumed in flames, and so were all those grievances, annoyances and fears. Twenty thousand Santa Feans sent up a mighty cheer.

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In step with Santa Fe style

Ten Thousand Waves

A visit to Ten Thousand Waves, a Japanese-style health spa in the Santa Fe hills, dispels lassitude of any sort. The spa itself combines the Zen style of a Japanese hot-spring bath with the best elements of Santa Fe style. I had a \$300 package that included one night's lodging, breakfast, an hour in a private outdoor hot tub, a Japanese-style head-and-neck massage, a "salt glow" and an hourlong massage. From the hot tub I had an unhindered view of mountain and sky, and close at hand, a hummingbird at a feeder in a Russian olive tree. The salt-glow — a vigorous rubbing with rock salt was a bit much (I felt like a coffee table under a belt sander), but the massage was transporting. Lodging is in small, private cottages artfully arranged on the mountainside with private gardens. A visit doesn't have to break the bank; entrance to one of the communal tubs is only \$14 (1-505-982-9304; www .tenthousandwaves.com).

Food

Gleanings from my Santa Fe culinary adventures: The famous Coyote Cafe was crowded, expensive and, I think, a little overrated (132 W. Water St.). Pueblo-Indian-inspired fare at Amaya in the Hotel Santa Fe was interesting, flavorful and profits benefit the Picuris Pueblo, which owns the hotel and restaurant. For fast, good and cheap New Mexican food, try the Cowgirl (319 S. Guadalupe St.). For traditional Mexican, try Mucho Gusto (839 Paseo de Peralta, close to Canvon Road). Best meal: A long evening of tapas at El Farol, a Spanish restaurant (808 Canyon Road). My favorite place for lunch or just hanging out was the Teahouse (821 Canyon Road), which has both shady and sunny outdoor seating areas and a relaxed, comfortable dining room. Excellent sandwiches and breakfasts.

More food

Some of the best and cheapest fare in town can be had at the Santa Fe Farmers Market. Plan on breakfasting while you shop. I brought home a basket of luscious peaches and a peck of tart, crisp apples that lasted two weeks. The market is held Tuesdays and Saturdays 7 a.m. to noon at the railyards (walkable from the plaza) and 3 to 6 p.m. Thursdays at the Rodeo Fairgrounds, which is farther (www.santafefarmersma rket.com).

Art awakenings

Start with the top-flight public museums, such as the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum and the Institute of American Arts Museum (both near the Plaza in downtown Santa Fe), and then head for the more than 100 private galleries. Most of them are on a milelong stretch of Canyon Road (where you'll find some of the best restaurants and coffee houses). Half of the fun is finding your own favorites. Some of mine: For contemporary, Evo, Tadu and Chiascuro. For photography, Photo-eye Gallery (just off Canyon Road on Garcia Street). Don't miss the Photo-eye Bookstore a few doors down on Garcia. For folk art with cowboy flair, visit Ed Larson's Studio and Gallery in the Stables on Canyon Road (where you can find 16 other artists at work

IF YOU GO

in a ramshackle collection of outbuildings). The Awakening Museum is an unexpected surprise: It's one massive mural that covers four walls and the ceiling of a gym-size gallery at 125 N. Guadalupe St. French artist Jean-Claude Gaugy made the painting as an expression of his love for God — the room embraces viewers in an explosion of color, form and imagistic storytelling.

Keshi

Finding a piece of art you can call your own in Santa Fe is a challenge. The cheap stuff is almost inevitably bad and kitschy (howling coyotes, kokopelli figures playing a flute and hump-backed turquoise bears). Most of the contemporary, original work is priced for bond traders from New York or the Gene Hackman-types who have adobe homes up in the hills. For the rest of us, there's Keshi, a gallery that sells beautifully hand-made fetishes from the Zuni Pueblo. Fetishes are the small, stone animal figures that represent the spirit of the animal. Hawks, bears, wolves, horses, frogs, dragonflies and corn maidens, usually no more than 3 inches long, populate the shelves. The gallery represents more than 400 artists from the pueblo. Prices range from \$40 to several hundred, although most seemed to be less than \$100 (227 Don Gaspar, walking distance from the plaza; www.keshi.com).

Inn of the Turquoise Bear

This sprawling adobe compound has an important place in Santa Fe's history. The former home of bon vivant Witter Bynner, it played host to most of the literary and artistic lights who came to Santa Fe for inspiration during the early part of the last century. Bynner was friend to Georgia O'Keeffe, Willa Cather, D.H. Lawrence, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Ansel Adams, among others. Hosts Ralph Bolton and Robert Frost were very helpful and generous with advice. The rooms, with viga beams, kiva fireplaces and tasteful artworks, were comfortable and stylish. Rates range from about \$100 (for a room with shared bath) to more than \$200 for a suite (www.turquoisebear.com; 1-800-396-4104). For a listing of Santa Fe lodgings, go to www.santafe.org or call the visitors bureau at 1-800-777-2489.

Walking tours

Governor's Palace Museum offers excellent, cheap, twohour tours to Santa Fe's most historic buildings. They run April through October and start at 10:15 a.m. at the blue gate on the Lincoln Avenue side of the palace. Cost is \$10 (1-505-476-5109, www.palaceofthegov ernors.org).

Chris Welsch



TAOS from G1

After a second chance, a new side of Taos appears

At first, honestly, I didn't think I would find my niche.

During a late-night solo dinner at the Adobe Bar in the historic Taos Inn the first night, I talked with a mother and daughter from out east who were shopping for investment property. They'd heard Taos was hot — Julia Roberts owns a ranch here; Lance Armstrong has trained on its mountains — and they had flown out strictly to survey their odds.

I almost didn't stick around. The next day, I toured Taos Pueblo, a 1,000-plus-year-old Indian village on the northwest edge of town. Now primarily a tourist destination, the village is still home to some 150 Taos Indians who live in tiny adobe buildings with no electricity or

running water.

Humbling. I decided to give Taos a second chance.

From there I called a friend of a friend, who hooked me up with a place to stay — on her couch, last minute — and tips on the best mountain bike trails in the region.

It was there I found a new side of Taos.

Suddenly I was among a group of some 15 transplants from around the country, a community of 20-somethings, all of whom had fled more conventional lives to work lowwage jobs and live in practical communes.

We drank beers at a local brew-pub, Eske's, and ate a southwestern spiced white



Troy Melhus/Star Tribune Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Taos, N.M., at sunset.

chicken chili that still has me thinking about it. We watched an acoustic concert in the historic plaza downtown, part

of a local concert series every Thursday night during the summer, that drew hundreds of locals and could be heard echoing off the downtown buildings well into the night. We then hit the two-lane

highway, out to a dark ranch along the canyon roads southwest of Taos, where we sat around a campfire until 2 a.m. We spent the night gazing at

the star-filled sky, passing bottles and pondering the mean-

ing of life. It made the mountain bike rides the next day all the more fun. Riding up singletrack canyon trails alone, among wildlife and backdrops of nature's wonders, I couldn't help but get lost in those thoughts again.

I still am.

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On and off the trails in Taos **IF YOU GO Mountain biking**

As any avid mountain biker knows, the trick to finding great trails is to visit the local bike shop. That's why I poked my head into Gearing Up Bicycle Shop, which sells maps of local trails and gives expert advice on the trails (1-505-751-0365; www.gearingupbikes.com).

Off the trails

Taos Pueblo, dating to at least the 1600s, is one of the oldest-known American Indian communities in North America. About 150 Indians live in the small village's adobe buildings. It is open daily to tourists from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, 10miles west of Taos on Hwy. 64, stretches some 650 feet above the Rio Grande River below. Walking across the expanse will shake even the steadiest of constitutions.

Where to stay

There's always camping. Or, if that's not your scene, Taos is home to dozens of hotels and bed-and-breakfasts, including the Casa Benavides, where I stayed my first night (1-800-552-1772; www.taoscasabenavides.com). It features quaint, quiet and very private rooms, and an amazing breakfast of southwest cuisine.

Hotel La Fonda de Taos,

boasted as the oldest hotel in Taos, overlooks Taos plaza and is home to nine oil paintings by author D.H. Lawrence (1-505-758-2211; www.hotellafonda.com).

The Taos Inn, listed on the National Historic Registry, features the Adobe Bar with live music late into the evening. (1-888-518-8267; www.taosinn.com).

Troy Melhus