

# Arizona and New Mexico

By Pam Davis  
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The main focus of the Albuquerque trip was to see the Balloon Fiesta. On the last weekend of the festival, held just north of the city in a large open area, there were activities on Saturday night and the final event on Sunday morning. There were 700 participants this year, and on Saturday night there was a "night show" where the balloons all lit up simultaneously with all the colors and patterns which was actually quite beautiful. On Sunday morning there was meant to have been a final mass balloon flight where all 700 balloons would have gone up in a wave. Unfortunately a big thunderstorm moved in, with rain and lightening, and the event was rained out.

Albuquerque has some excellent museums which we visited. There is a Native American Museum with displays of all the various cultural groups in the state. There is also a large area set aside to the west of the city to preserve petroglyphs estimated to have been carved before 1100ad. There are several walks on the preserve past the petroglyph sites, the longest about 3 miles. There is also an interesting historic center in Albuquerque where there are a number of preserved Spanish Colonial buildings surrounding a main plaza.

We continued to Santa Fe, which was quite cold. It is 7000 feet above sea level, and there was a dusting of snow on the surrounding hillsides. Santa Fe has a number of excellent museums. Around the main plaza in the Spanish Colonial area, there is a History Museum in the original pueblo building and a Fine Arts museum about a block away. Outside the city center is a Museum of Spanish Colonial Art, a Native American Art Museum, and a Museum of Folk Arts. These museums cost about \$7 each to enter, but a far better value is a 4-day museum pass that can be purchased for \$15. This allows you to enter all the museums any time within the 4 days. These museums are all run by the State of New Mexico, and are closed on Mondays.

There is also the Georgia O'Keefe Museum, privately owned, with an admission price of \$8. This was small, but an excellent display of her works. Her former home called Ghost Ranch, located about 20 miles north of Santa Fe, is now used as an artist-in-residence center where people can apply for grants to go and work for a year. It can be visited, but only by appointment.

In addition to these museums, the hallways of the New Mexico Capitol Building are full of works by New Mexico artists. You can enter the Capitol Building and wander floor-to-floor to look at the works there as well.

And if this wasn't enough, Santa Fe is full of private galleries as well. Lots to do in the city for art lovers.

Santa Fe is also surrounded by Hopi pueblos. The word pueblo is a bit of a misnomer – it conjures up images of adobe buildings on top of a mesa, but in fact it is used today by the Native Americans as just a word for their town. This can be modern buildings, or historic. Each of the pueblos has a separate pottery art tradition, very different from one another, and these can be purchased from shops either in the individual pueblos or from

vendors who line the plaza in Santa Fe. Some pueblos charge admission for entry. I visited San Ildefonso Pueblo, somewhat of a modern one but with excellent artwork.

On the drive back from Santa Fe I visited a number of sites along the way. About 20 miles south of the freeway near Grants, New Mexico (about halfway between Albuquerque and Flagstaff, Arizona) you can see the Pueblo of Acoma. This is another Hopi group, and their pueblo is quite traditional. They charge a \$10 per person admission fee, with an extra \$10 if you want to take photos, but this money goes directly to their Head Start and Scholarship programs. They drive a road up the back side of a very steep-sided mesa, with traditional adobe buildings on the top. There is no electricity or running water in the pueblo, and there are about 25 full-time residents. The houses are owned by families who live nearer the freeway and use them from time-to-time for ceremonial days, etc. The site has been occupied continuously since 1100ad. It was interesting learning about their culture – they are matrilineal so all the material goods pass through the women's line, and the tradition is that the youngest daughter inherits everything. The reasoning is that she will live longer than her older siblings, and she in turn takes the responsibility for caring for her older parents and grandparents. Each family is part of a clan, and marriage can take place only between certain clans. At the end of the tour you can either take the bus back to their visitor center, or you can walk down the traditional path. I opted for the traditional path, which was really a series of very steep stairs cut into the rock, with some handholds also cut into the rock. A little scary at times, but gave you a lot of respect for the people who had built up there in the first place. According to their oral history, they used to use a series of ladders to get to the top of an adjacent mesa where there are still older ruins. Once in a thunderstorm the ladders washed away, and everybody on the top died of starvation since the people who were in the valley tending the crops were unable to reach them. This is when they migrated to the present site of the Pueblo and put in the hand-holds so they could get in and out, although it was still quite difficult.

Drove through Petrified Forest National Park which was quite interesting, and ended the trip in Sedona, Arizona. Sedona is spectacularly beautiful, with red rock canyons and cliffs. They have an excellent system of hiking trails, well marked, with maps available at the visitor's center. You do have to purchase a "Red Rock Pass" to park at any of the trail heads, but this can be done anyplace. It is \$5/day, \$15/week, or you can purchase a 1-year pass for \$20 if you live anywhere close enough to make use of it. There are also a number of trails set aside for mountain bikes. Sedona also has a number of art galleries and shops.