

Sante Fe New Mexico Vacations

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Santa Fe celebrated a venerable 400 birthday last year, and the city continues to mark that through 2010 with many child-friendly activities. While some think of the city as an adult getaway, it's actually a great family place, too.



Together with Taos, about an hour and a half north along the Rio Grande River, the area offers diverse, year-round possibilities for everyone. Santa Fe offers a living link to the past in the city's people, places and traditions," says Steve Lewis, spokesman for the Santa Fe Convention & Visitors Bureau. "It's a great place for kids to learn about centuries of Southwestern history and Native American culture while burning up some energy," he explains.

Central to the experience is the influence of many cultures: Native, Spanish, American. Nearby, the 32,000-acre Bandelier National Monument has Anasazi cliff dwellings and an extensive trail system. In Taos, don't miss the original pueblo, which appears almost as it had 400 years ago when the Spanish passed through here: It's magical.

Santa Fe's many museums celebrate the city's diverse heritage. The Museum of International Folk Art displays more than 10,000 pieces of worldwide folk art, and The Museum of Indian Art and Culture combines poetry, story, song, dance and artifacts to illuminate the art and history of the Americas. A must is The Santa Fe Children's Museum, including an outdoor area with a performance area and a greenhouse.

In addition, The New Mexico History Museum, which opened last May, reveals the legendary stories of New Mexico, and the Discovery Center allows families to participate in self-paced activities. Adjacent is the Palace of the Governors Courtyard on the Santa Fe Plaza—since 1609, the nation's oldest continuously occupied government building. Finally, El Rancho de Las Golondrinas celebrates Spanish Colonial life.

If you decide to fly into Albuquerque, rather than drive, a couple of options for getting between the airport and Santa Fe are available. Sandia Shuttle Express is the longest running airport-to-Santa Fe shuttle and very reliable. "The shuttle picks up and drops off at all Santa Fe lodgers plus some other locations in town," Lewis explains, adding that the schedule can change during slower times, typically November through March.

The New Mexico Rail Runner Express train began service between Santa Fe and Albuquerque in mid-December 2008; it's a scenic run by the Sandia Mountains. A shuttle bus, Route 350, connects air travelers with the northbound train to Santa Fe from the Albuquerque airport on a regular schedule. For a dedicated scenic train, The Santa Fe Southern Railroad leaves from the newly revitalized Railyard District, offering a regular schedule of trips with period dome and outdoor flat cars.

Of course, Santa Fe offers 5,700 rooms, from comfortable chain hotels to more luxurious venues such as the Inn and Spa at Loretto and Encantado: An Auberge Resort. "As train service between the cities has grown, Santa Fe hotels have created ride-and-stay packages around the service," Lewis explains.

So, too, the four-century-old city offers 200-plus restaurants, many offering superb regional cuisine. "Our best suggestion for a New Mexican kid's meal?" Steve asks. "A green chile cheeseburger."

For more information contact the Santa Fe Convention & Visitors Bureau, 800.777.2489 or www.santafe.org.