

## Three Perfect Days in Santa Fe, New Mexico

Santa Fe, known as 'The City Different,' is 7,200 feet above sea level. It therefore possesses the exact geography of having the highest altitude of any U.S. state capital. Santa Fe is also the oldest capital city in the country – founded in 1610 by Don Pedro de Peralta.

With its storied history, signature pueblo-style architecture, abundant art galleries and museums, and innovative, world-class restaurants, spending a few days in this charming city is an excellent choice. That Santa Fe has over 300 sunny days a year and very friendly residents – perhaps those last two things are related – makes Santa Fe even better.

While Santa Fe has a municipal airport, from the coasts it's often simpler to fly to Albuquerque, New Mexico's largest city, and arrive to its sparkling, modern and efficient airport. From Albuquerque, it's an easy, one-hour highway jaunt to downtown Santa Fe. And the 75-mph speed limit is an automobilist joy for those used to crawling on crowded urban freeways.



### The bed

In perhaps Santa Fe's premier location, The Terrace at La Fonda has 15 luxe rooms and suites on its concierge wing attached to the main hotel, La Fonda on the Plaza. Each unique room at The Terrace has original art, handcrafted furnishings and enormous balconies. My room faced the legendary and Moorish influenced Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, and other rooms face either the Loretto Chapel – housing the landmark "miraculous" circular staircase – or the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, which is the beginning of the Rocky Mountain range.

Perhaps most importantly, my room had high count Egyptian cotton sheets on a very comfortable bed, a bear claw bathtub, a Kuerig coffee maker and a traditional, wood-burning fireplace. Fortunately for the urbanists among us – who wouldn't know what to do with a tree and an axe if life depended on it – there is a dedicated fireplace butler who quickly arrived and had my fireplace roaring in two minutes with delightfully scented logs.

The dedicated Terrace concierge was friendly and very handy for maps and suggestions. However it is entirely possible that my in-depth questions and abiding affection may also have had something to do with the fact that the concierge desk was within reaching distance to a table of scrumptious house made lemon bars, brownies and chocolate chip cookies.

The original La Fonda on the Plaza – to which the Terrace is attached – has 180 rooms and is a member of the Historic Hotels of America, has a pool, gym, Jacuzzi and spa, several nice shops with Southwestern items and live music at the lobby La Fiesta Lounge. As there is significant art at La Fonda, there is also a daily, docent-led art tour that is complementary and open to the public. Tel 800/523-5002 or 505/982-5511, [www.lafondasantafe.com](http://www.lafondasantafe.com)

## **The meals**

Without a doubt, Santa Fe is a locale for eating. In this city of around 80,000, there are over 400 restaurants of every conceivable cuisine type, and several James Beard nominees and semi-finalists. Then there are those ubiquitous red and green signature chiles – spelled with an “e” not an “i” that are as much a food item as cultural moniker. And did I mention the Margarita Trail? Started two years ago, there are now 31 restaurants and bars participating in the Trail, each with their own unique recipe for this satisfying libation. [www.SantaFe.org/Margarita\\_Trail](http://www.SantaFe.org/Margarita_Trail)

Brunch at Sweetwater Harvest Kitchen is a treat and has several gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian friendly dishes served in a large airy space or on the terrace. The paleo pumpkin pancakes were delicately scrumptious and the turkey tortilla soup was marvelous. [www.sweetwatersf.com](http://www.sweetwatersf.com)

For Northern New Mexican comfort food, Tomasita's, owned by the same family for 40 years, serves traditional, satisfying comfort food in a 100-year-old red brick building, once home to the famous Chile Railroad Line. In this Railyard district eatery try Tomasita's tasty blue corn chicken enchiladas. Their Gold Coin high-octane margarita, Number 31 on the Trail, is a very good excuse to go even if you're not hungry – and this may happen if you sample every delectable item, including pupusas and raspberry chile ginger jam at the outstanding Santa Fe Farmer's Market nearby. [www.tomasitas.com](http://www.tomasitas.com) and [www.santafefarmersmarket.com](http://www.santafefarmersmarket.com)

For perhaps the most unique and delightfully piquant margarita in town, enjoy a 'Betty's Smoking Jalapeno' – Number 27 on the Trail – at The Bar at the Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantando Santa Fe while viewing a majestic sunset over scenic vistas. Then have dinner at Terra and try Executive Chef Kai Autenreith's award-winning chowder with candied bacon, cilantro and green chili corn, the striped bass with braised kale, and if you're lucky enough to be there on a Friday, his tender prime rib served with chorizo and manchego mashed potatoes.

[www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com)

The culinary piece de resistance was dinner at Restaurant Martin. Located a pleasant 15-minute walk from downtown, James Beard nominated Chef Martin Rios will wow you with dishes presented like divine art creations. The apple cashew butter, umezuke glazed roasted Duroc pork belly was so flavorful it was nearly a religious experience. The yellow fin tuna tartar with Za'atar oil and Yuzu Kosho curd was transporting and the truffled orzo macaroni & cheese drove home that "diet" might be the worst four letter word in the English language. Without doubt, Santa Fe is lucky to have the enormously gifted Chef Rios reside in its city.

[www.restaurantmartin.com](http://www.restaurantmartin.com)

## **The finds**

Art is everywhere in Santa Fe. Just a short walk from the Plaza, the famous Canyon Road, has about 100 galleries of all genres. A standout was the Horndeski Contemporary, where artist owner Gregory Horndeski – whose thesis for his 1973 PhD in applied mathematics resulted in the Horndeski Scalar-Tensor Theory cited over 1,000 times in physics' articles – creates gorgeous complex acrylic depictions on canvas, some with Beethoven inspired, intricately hand-painted frames and some with working pin-ball features.

[www.HorndeskiContemporary.com](http://www.HorndeskiContemporary.com)

Two other Canyon Road favorites were the Longworth Gallery that had a good selection of Vladimir Kush gicleés [www.TheLongworthGallery.com](http://www.TheLongworthGallery.com) and the Matthews Gallery with an excellent selection of European and American masters. [www.themattthewsgallery.com](http://www.themattthewsgallery.com)

In downtown Santa Fe and at the Railyard, there are another 150 galleries.

At the Railyard's Site Santa Fe, there are such innovative contemporary art exhibitions in its remodeled modern space, gratitude abounded that such a platform exists for artistic exploration and unique curatorial concepts. [www.sitesantafe.org](http://www.sitesantafe.org)



One could spend several days visiting the many wonderful museums in Santa Fe. But choices have to be made. The IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts downtown is dedicated to advancing contemporary Native art for all audiences and houses a fantastic collection, including those of rising stars from its Institute of American Indian Arts, such as Brandon Varela and LaShawn Medicine Horn. [www.iaia.edu/iaia-museum-of-contemporary-native-arts/](http://www.iaia.edu/iaia-museum-of-contemporary-native-arts/)

Make sure and stop by the impeccably restored La Posada de Santa Fe Hotel and peruse this grand historical property. Its rooms have period furnishings and its walls are adorned with an impressive art collection. There are several oil paintings by the talented Jill Pankey (feature photo). At its Spa Sage, treat yourself to a 'Spirit of Santa Fe' treatment where talented masseuses exfoliate with blue corn and use desert sage essential oils to rejuvenate. [www.laposadadesantafe.com](http://www.laposadadesantafe.com)

### The lessons learned

Stoddard King, Jr. once said, "There's a long, long trail a winding into the land of my dreams." That may well be true. What is also true is that you have to love a place where the official state question is "Red or green chile?" and the answer is Christmas.





