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Where Texpats hang out in Santa Fe



Evening Star No. VI is among the watercolors Georgia O'Keeffe painted while living in Texas from 1916 to 1918.

SANTA FE, N.M. — A hundred years ago, Georgia O'Keeffe was a Texan. She stayed two years, teaching and painting.

But it was New Mexico that stole her heart. Thus Texans must troop to Santa Fe to see “Georgia O'Keeffe's Far Wide Texas,” an exhibition of watercolors she created in Canyon, Texas, from 1916 to 1918.

The exhibition opens Friday at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe. Not that Texans need an excuse to haul out the turquoise and head west, right? Texans are everywhere in the City Different.

Jenny Wise Kimball, chairman of the board of La Fonda on the Plaza, was born in Dallas and has only ever lived there and in Santa Fe.

“I will die in Santa Fe but I will always be a TEXAN!” she says via email.

Santa Fe, she says, has huge vistas, with “gorgeous sunsets and the bluest sky — often the same color as our beloved bluebonnets.”

Kimball has some standard recommendations for friends and guests from the Lone Star State, among them the Santa Fe Botanical Garden and the International Folk Art Museum on Museum Hill, and of course the O’Keeffe.

Immerse yourself in O’Keeffe-ness with a La Fonda hotel package that includes a room with two museum passes and breakfast for two. Details at lafondasantafe.com.

La Fonda, comfortably situated at one corner of the Plaza, is wrapping up a multiyear update. Check the cocktails in the remade La Fiesta Lounge, just off the lobby. The fifth-floor Bell Tower Bar, the place to go for sunset sipping, opens for the season on May 1.

Both are part of the Santa Fe Margarita Trail, a new promotion that encourages (sensible) sampling of the many margarita variations offered around town and nearby. The trail kicks off May 5.

Dee Miller Rush, a retired Dallas County district judge, finally settled in Santa Fe in September 2013 after she and her husband kept a house here for several years. She puts in a vote for Café Pasqual’s: “You meet the most interesting people there.”

Kimball also recommends a cooking class. The Santa Fe School of Cooking obliges with “Cooking Inspired by Georgia O’Keeffe,” a recurring three-hour class that includes a meal. It’s a demonstration class, which means you can kick back and just pretend to take notes. Then eat.

Artist Sharon Beard Chastain, who moved to Santa Fe from Fort Worth in June 2015, found a group of kindred Texspats in the League of Women Voters, of all places. They can vouch for the bar at Georgia (also on the Margarita Trail) near the museum, as well as at Eldorado Hotel & Spa, also nearby. The Eldorado recently added a wedding chapel, but book ahead if that’s your plan. This isn’t Vegas.

Lest you think these women are barflies, Chastain says her guests always want to visit Bandelier National Monument, near Los Alamos. Note that during the summer, daytime visitors have to take the park shuttle from nearby White Rock visitor center. Even in the wilds of New Mexico, parking can be a problem.

After a day’s hiking, relax at old fave Ten Thousand Waves. Rush loves the restaurant there and says this is her favorite spa, not just in Santa Fe, but anywhere.

Probably the biggest news in Santa Fe is Meow Wolf, the over-the-top multimedia art complex that opened this year off Cerrillos Road. Don’t confuse it with a gallery.

Game of Thrones mastermind George R.R. Martin had a hand in turning an old bowling alley into an interactive art space that demands to be experienced.

So there's your plan. Bookend your Santa Fe getaway with O'Keeffe's gentle Texas watercolors and the rowdy unpredictability of Meow Wolf, with lots of green and red chile and margaritas along the way.

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Georgia O'Keeffe's Far Wide Texas

The exhibit includes 28 of 51 watercolors O'Keeffe painted in Texas. It runs April 29-Oct. 30 at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe. Check okeeffemuseum.org for related tours and lectures. Find more activities at santafe.org.



The Santa Fe Botanical Garden is an oasis of calm. Dress in layers -- the sun can be fierce, even in spring.

"Georgia O'Keeffe's Far Wide Texas" opens Friday



Nude Series VIII was painted in 1917.

Train at Night in the Desert was painted in 1916.