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HOME & AWAY

Santa Fe for the Artist

With its spectacular sunsets, adobe architecture and crisp light, this New Mexico town has provided inspiration for generations of artists.

By Michelle Newman

Artists started coming to Santa Fe and New Mexico in the 1920s, drawn by the dry, temperate climate. They stayed for the amazing light, high altitude and thin air that creates rich coloring in the landscape.

They soon spread word of the place to their contemporaries, and creative colonies developed in Taos and Santa Fe. Santa Fe's spectacular setting and creative freedom provided the basis for the town's development as a world-class destination for creative spirits, collectors and connoisseurs.

The sophisticated town, ranked as the U.S.' third-most-important art market behind New York and Los Angeles, attracts celebrities and serious art collectors. It's easy to be seduced by one primo gallery after another, 200 at last count. Handmade silver jewelry, strands of turquoise, black pottery and other items can also be purchased directly from artists who sell their wares beneath the portal outside the Palace of the Governors.



Artists with their wares line up along the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe's town plaza
iStock.com / csfotoimages

Museum Scene

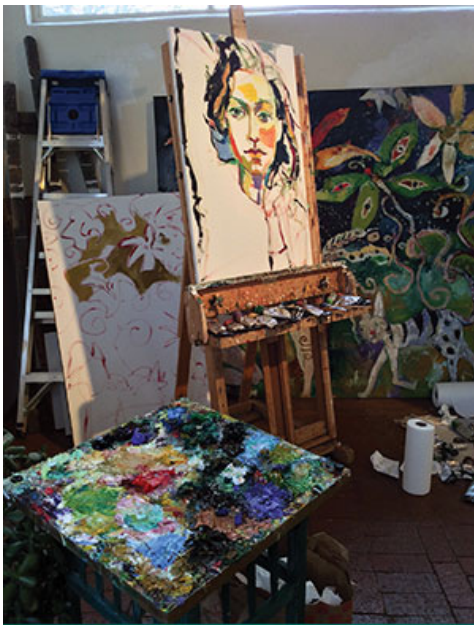
With a city population of 80,000, Santa Fe boasts 14 world-class museums. A day browsing Museum Hill should begin with a docent tour of Alexander Girard's obsessive, mind-boggling collection of folk art, dolls, ethnic textiles, pottery, puppets, dollhouses and silver amulets at the Museum of International Folk Art.

At the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, the Center for the Study of Southwestern Jewelry is the most comprehensive collection of Navajo and Pueblo ornamentation in the world. It's impossible not to be impressed by the impeccable craftsmanship and detail of the squash blossom necklaces, bolo ties and concho belts. The museum's Case Trading Post is a replica of an old-time trading post selling authentic pawn jewelry, kachinas and Navajo weavings.

The intimate Museum of Spanish Colonial Art features a well-curated collection of weavings, tinwork, decorative arts, furniture and religious art.

Back in town, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum is dedicated to the life, art and legacy of one of America's greatest artists. The museum's impressive collection goes beyond O'Keeffe's signature skulls, flowers and Ghost Ranch landscapes. The collection includes more than 15,000 of her personal objects, including her Ferragamo shoes and the tubes of paints and brushes she used to create her masterpieces.

The IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts' collection showcases prints, glass, photography and fiber art by American Indian artists.



Brad Smith's intense colors and bold strokes can be seen in his portraits.

Michelle Newman

Canyon Road

Historic Canyon Road, Santa Fe's most famous street and one of America's most impressive art districts, leads to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. A thriving artists' colony from the 1920s to the '40s, Canyon Road boasts nearly 100 galleries along a one-mile stretch. Historical adobe buildings provide the perfect venue for exhibiting contemporary crafts, jewelry, pottery, fiber art, Spanish colonial art, Navajo blankets, Latino art, traditional Western art and antiques.

At Waxlander Gallery, Phyllis Kapp's bold and dramatic watercolor landscapes capture the essence of Southwestern desert, mountains and skies. The Carol LaRoches Gallery displays her powerful pastels of wolves, dogs and bears with haunting, piercing eyes. Brad Smith's 300-year-old adobe gallery is where he paints with a palette knife to build texture on the canvas. Smith is known for his intense colors and expressive style.

Inner Artist

Instead of just buying art, visitors to Santa Fe can try their hand at making art. About a dozen artists who work in various media, from ceramics, mixed media and drawing to plein-air painting and encaustic layered wax, give private lessons in their studios.

"When people come to my studio, I want them to feel they can go wild and crazy," said award-winning artist, author and instructor Nancy Reyner, who teaches art from her Santa Fe studio. She encourages her students to experiment and welcomes individuals or groups into her studio for hands-on painting and mixed-media workshops. She tailors lessons to her students' level of experience and needs. Reyner demonstrates techniques, which often include color blending or ombres and building layered, textured surfaces, old master painting techniques and gold leafing.

Artist Lisa Flynn offers classes at the Inn on the Alameda. Nestled in the heart of Santa Fe half a block from Canyon Road, the inn is a favorite place for art lovers to stay. Guests wanting a unique Santa Fe experience can book a class with Flynn and spend an afternoon immersed in the community of artists.

With sketchbooks and paints in hand, five of us set out for a plein-air painting adventure on Canyon Road.

"There's plenty of inspiration within two blocks of the inn," Flynn said. "Just open your eyes and see what calls out to you and grabs your attention. That's what you'll want to paint."

She instructed us to look for interesting lines and angles for our compositions. She pointed out architectural details of historical adobe houses such as ancient doors, stepped stucco walls, *latillas* (sticks used between beams in traditional Southwestern ceilings) and vigas to draw upon. She explained color theory basics, positive and negative space, and vanishing points.

Heidi Loewen brings a touch of glamour to the Santa Fe art scene with her avant-garde porcelain sculptural creations embellished with gold leaf, crystals and fur. Loewen invites visitors into her studio for private pottery classes. No prior art experience is needed.

Hotel Collections

Even some of Santa Fe's hotels are an extension of the town's thriving art scene. At the legendary La Fonda on the Plaza, guests are surrounded by art and quintessential Southwest architecture. The hotel is like a private museum. Its vast, priceless art collection includes pieces from some of the most important contemporary and traditional American Indian and Pueblo artists.

La Fonda's light-filled La Plazuela restaurant, with 400 whimsical hand-painted glass panels, is one of Santa Fe's most charming spots. One-hour complimentary La Fonda Art and History tours are open to the public. A former Harvey House, built in 1922 and now a historic landmark, LaFonda is known as "the inn at the end of the Santa Fe Trail."

Santa Fe Markets, Events

Santa Fe Studio Tour

The Santa Fe Studio Tour is two art-filled weekends.

During the free, self-guided tour, visitors can tour any number of open studios.

santafestudiotour.com



Heidi Loewen embellishes her porcelain ceramics with such items as crystals and fur.

Michelle Newman

Traditional Spanish Market

The Traditional Spanish Market features handmade artwork in the traditional Spanish colonial style by hundreds of local artists. There's also live music, dance, art demonstrations and regional cuisine. spanishcolonial.org

Contemporary Hispanic Market

The Contemporary Hispanic Market showcases original paintings, printmaking, sculpture, photography, furniture, jewelry, ceramics, weaving and more.

contemporaryhispanicmarketinc.com

Santa Fe Indian Market

Organized by the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts, the market celebrated its 95th anniversary in 2016 and is the largest event of its kind. The market draws more than 100,000 collectors and gallery owners to Santa Fe's historic downtown plaza as they meet with thousands of artists representing dozens of tribes. Artwork includes jewelry, textiles, baskets, beadwork, quillwork, pueblo wooden carvings, sculptures, drums, hides, leather goods and more. There's also a live auction gala, American Indian fashion show, native cinema showcase, and performances of indigenous music, dance, storytelling and comedy.

swaia.org

International Folk Art Market | Santa Fe

The world's largest folk art festival features more than 50 artists from around the world. The market, juried by two panels of experts, is curated to represent the highest quality of folk art made by individual artists, family enterprises and community artist cooperatives.

folkartalliance.org

ART Santa Fe

ART Santa Fe offers an all-encompassing experience that includes a high-class mix of contemporary galleries from all over the globe, cutting-edge art installations, and emerging artists and dealers. artsantafe.com

Objects of Art Santa Fe

Featuring more than 60 exhibitors with material ranging from contemporary to historical, the show includes paintings, sculpture, fine art, furniture, books, fashion, jewelry, textiles, and tribal, folk, American Indian, and African and Asian art. objectsofartsantafe.com

Whitehawk Annual Antique & Ethnographic Art Shows

More than 125 dealers from around the world are featured. whitehawkshows.com

SEEDS: An Indigenous Art Celebration

The three-day event held at the Santa Fe Railyard features juried contemporary and traditional indigenous art as well as music, dance, fashion and culinary art.

weartheseedsart.com

Planning Your Trip

For more information on visiting Santa Fe, call (800) 777-2489 or go to santafe.org. Contact your AAA Travel agent or visit AAA.com/travel for vacation-planning assistance.

Michelle Newman is a freelance writer and designer from San Antonio.

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