

Classy & classic

Breakfast at La Plazuela answers our morning prayers



EDDIE MOORE/JOURNAL

La Plazuela at La Fonda: The food is great and it remains the most beautiful setting in town.

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FOR JOURNAL NORTH

Le t us now praise famous hotel lobbies and restaurants.

Not again, says the Faithful Reader! Didn't I just do that in the last episode of Restaurant Rants? Yes, and speaking of which, my words should never be trusted again if I did not retract those, as a return visit to afore-referenced pricey upscale-lobby-restaurant, from the service to the fare, was found absolutely abysmal. How can that be, from one day to the next?

Restauranting is a tricky business ... but we digest.

We dig hotel lobbies and the restaurants in them.

Random, romantic stuff happens in lobbies. Part public space and part private, old friends, enemies, stars and celebrities must come through the lobby. There goes Gary Cooper! There goes Georgia O'Keeffe! There's your ex-husband! There's Beyoncé!

An added pleasure of being a local lounging in a local hotel lobby is that of observing out-of-towners in the thrall of travel — the lazy human's mysticism. The

Wandering Turista with that blissed-out, 1,000-yard stare.

In Santa Fe, the only hotel lobby — the omphalos, if you will — is that of La Fonda, the hotel at the end of the Old Santa Fe Trail and the beginning of the Chihuahua Trail. And hands down, the best hotel lobby restaurant is La Plazuela.

The venerable La Fonda underwent a rehab a while back and raised comment, but plus ça change. And some things can't be changed much, anyway.

A recent visit to La Fonda and La Plazuela for breakfast with Our Dear Friends (ODF), life-long residents of La Villa Real, elicited this wise comment:

"Put sentimental qualms aside," says he. "La Fonda's remodeled lobby retains the Mary Coulter clubbiness of old, complete with that familiar dark wood, leathery seating, so perfect for turista-watching."

OK? 'Nuf said. And the ornately glass-enclosed (oh, those great, hand-painted panes of fenestration surrounding us) La Plazuela is a year-round, courtyard garden setting, none more beautiful in town, suffused in natural light, potted arboring, ceramic fountain, open,

spacious, yet intimate, too.

For years, ODF have praised LP's Huevos Rancheros (\$12 with pork posole!) as "the best in town." Perversely then, however, and with a foolish consistency, we ordered up Eggs Benedict (\$13) and perfectly prepared they were, too, with a straightforward, house-made sauce Hollandaise, Canadian bacon, grilled tomatillos (!) and grilled breakfast potatoes. Just what we ordered!

ODF were so thrilled to find Chile Relleno con Huevos de Cualquier Estilo (\$13) that they eschewed the Rancheros, as well. And the report: "It's about time that La Plazuela's famously perfecto chile rellenos made it on to their always perfecto breakfast list, but now — lightly battered with a green chile sauce and served with a savory pile of frijoles negros topped with a pair of any-style eggs — our morning relleno prayers are answered."

So there you have it.

Oh, and adult beverages are available from the great La Fiesta Lounge.

And the turista-watching was first rate!

LA PLAZUELA AT LA FONDA ON THE PLAZA

★★★ 3/4

LOCATION: 100 East San Francisco St., Santa Fe, NM 87501

INFO: 505-982-5511; [www.lafondasantafe.com/la-plazuela](http://lafondasantafe.com/la-plazuela)

HOURS: Breakfast: 7 a.m.-11:30 a.m. daily

FOOD: Creative twists on classic Southwest specialties

ATMOSPHERE: Classy, classic Santa Fe.

SERVICE: Excellent. And anything you need in the great La Fiesta Lounge.