



santa fe

Once the capital of Southwestern style, the city that has gone from hippie chic to Zen sophistication dazzles Jackie Cooperman with contemporary art that now adorns adobe walls.

Don't be surprised, while slathered in adobe mud at the Avanyu Spa in Santa Fe, to learn that your beautician was a hippie on a Cambridge, Massachusetts commune and an art director in Milan before settling here to design high-end women's clothing. In Santa Fe, she's not unusual, just one of the many new residents drawn to this mountain city by its pristine air quality and its increasingly international community of artists, dealers and monied collectors.

Often associated with New Age nuttiness and Navajo kitsch, Santa Fe now follows only New York as the US city with the largest volume of art gallery sales (\$200m last year). It is a city from which you will return after a long, luxurious weekend sampling first-rate contemporary art galleries, restaurants and boutiques, very likely owning more beautiful things than you did on arrival.

Radiating out from the central Plaza, where Native Americans sell their pottery and silver crafts, the heart of this 62,000-person city is easily traversed on foot. While Santa Fe's adobe buildings tend to blur together (the locals joke that you can paint your home any colour, as long as it's brown), inner courtyards, arcades and atria are full of surprises. A case in point is also

the most appealing and convenient place to stay: The Inn of the Five Graces is an intimate hotel with a traditional adobe exterior and East-meets-West, rococo interiors.

Located on East De Vargas, the city's oldest street, The Inn's 22 rooms are reached through adobe courtyards. Niall Reid, the affable new general manager, used to be at The Savoy in London and the Mandarin Oriental in Hong Kong, and he's bringing that cosmopolitan sensibility to The Inn, offering treats for guests' pets, hosting nightly wine and cheese tastings, and arranging privately guided city tours. Though the outside of The Inn has a quintessentially Southwestern look, the interiors have hand-painted Mexican tile tubs and throw rugs from the Far East.

For those who prefer an even quieter location and don't mind being a 10-minute drive northeast of the town's centre, the Japanese-inspired Ten Thousand Waves is a sybaritic but low-key mountainside option. Opened in 1981 as a collection of traditional outdoor Japanese teak soaking tubs, it now offers

spa treatments – herbal wraps, salt scrubs, facials, massages – and 12 immaculate guest suites spread among juniper, crab apple and pine trees. Buddha-shaped chocolates lie on the pillows and luminous bathrooms have the spa's own yuzu fruit-based toiletries. The most attractive of the suites, Suigetsu, is decorated with antique kimonos and handmade Japanese screens. Still, the spa has not forgotten its sense of place, and even here, in Zen-heaven, the entrance is hung each season with the town's ubiquitous chain of dried red peppers, called *ristra*.

Though its increasingly international bent gives Santa Fe a dynamic and sophisticated feel (and lures part-time residents such as Gene Hackman), those characteristics have long

been ingrained in the city, which was settled by the Spanish in 1610. In the 1920s, artists and their affluent East Coast patrons such as Mabel Dodge Luhan came to Santa Fe and nearby Taos, and you can get a glimpse of their bohemian lives in the first-floor permanent collection of The Museum of Fine Arts on Palace Avenue. Note the photographs of Luhan and her circle: woodblock printmaker Gustave Baumann, painter Georgia O'Keefe and photographers Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, Edward Weston and Alfred Stieglitz.

After the museum, Café Pasqual's, named after the Mexican patron saint of the kitchen and serving breakfast until 3pm, provides leisurely refreshment. Decorated with Mexican tiles and paper cut-outs and with clay pots lining the shelves, Pasqual's is a Santa Fe institution. Locals gossip around a communal table in the centre of the room or sit at smaller tables in front of large windows looking at the brilliant red geraniums planted along Don Gaspar Street.

The restaurant uses organic eggs, beef and pork and makes its own sausage, so if you're feeling like a hearty American-sized breakfast, try the El Presidente – beef strips and smoked poblano chillis on white corn tortillas, with two eggs and

Above: Santa Fe's adobe skyline. Below: rococo style at The Inn of the Five Graces.



how to spend it

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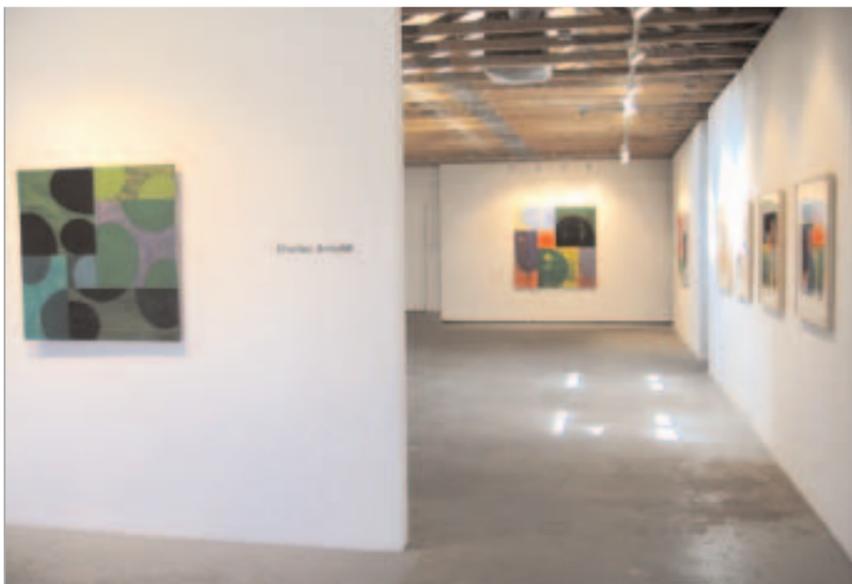
pinto beans. A somewhat daintier selection, the sweet corn and raisin *tamal dulce* (a steamed cornmeal cake) comes elegantly wrapped in emerald-coloured banana leaves with black beans, accompanied by fresh fruit. Even better, it's served with a tall glass of Mexican hot chocolate, perfectly spiced with a generous dash of cinnamon and completely different from the cloying versions found elsewhere.

If a late breakfast puts you in the mood to shop for local Native American craft, walk down Don Gaspar to the small Keshi boutique ("keshi" is a traditional greeting of the Zuni people). Opened in 1981 by a co-operative of teachers from a Zuni reservation, it is now run by Bronwyn Fox, the daughter of one of the founding members. Fair-haired and bright-eyed, Bronwyn can explain the intricacies of the traditional animal fetish carvings; "petitpoint" turquoise jewellery, in which each stone is set in an individually hand-cut bezel; carved sandstone Cochiti figures, and Acoma and pueblo pottery.

Equally fetching but not indigenous, the luminous Patina Gallery on West Palace Avenue specialises in international jewellery, wood work, ceramics and textiles. Look for Michael Zobel's flamboyant, dramatic precious jewellery, and Danish artist Marete Larson's finely turned wooden vessels. A few doors down, the William Siegal Galleries are pre-eminent dealers in tribal, Asian and South American art, and have the world's largest collection of Andean Aymara textiles, primarily from Bolivia.

Walking east, James Reid is the shop for bespoke belts and silver and gold accessories. Reid's artisans can make virtually any belt buckle design and render it in silver or gold, with or without gem stones, and on a wide variety of leathers, from calf skin to ostrich.

A minute away, Todos Santos Chocolates & Confections is a decadent indulgence of a shop tucked into an arcade on East Palace Street. Owner Hayward Simoneaux



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makes his own chocolates, melting down Valrhona and decorating it by hand, in gold or silver leaf, before packaging it in fanciful Mexican papier mâché boxes.

After strolling the streets around the central Plaza, brace yourself for the visual overload that is Canyon Road. With a third of the city's 200 galleries lining a stretch a mile long, it's an exhausting but ultimately exhilarating spectacle.

"We've worked hard to change the perception of Santa Fe," says Michael Carroll, an animated dealer who opened the Turner Carroll Gallery with his wife, Tonya Turner, in 1991. "What's unique here is we have this mantle

– figuration, romance and beauty – but with such a level of quality, and the best dealers." Through the efforts of dealers such as Carroll and Turner, the city's art market has shifted its focus to contemporary, international artists, with 85 per cent of the art sold in Santa Fe now coming from non-New Mexican artists.

If buying art gives you an appetite, The Compound is the place to seek suitably inspired restoration. The restaurant is set in a series of white-walled, airy rooms once part of the McComb Compound, a group of houses built in the mid-1800s, and rented by seclusion-seeking



moguls and movie stars. Chef Mark Kiffin uses local ingredients to compose beautiful dishes such as sweetbreads and foie gras, tuna tartare with Osetra caviar and preserved lemon, and New Mexican lamb strip loin. The wine list features a good selection of international choices, but also some local vintages, including the pleasantly dry Gruet sparkling wine, produced by a French émigré to New Mexico.

For a lighter meal, try The Teahouse, a bright five-room café opened in 2003 by Dionne Christianne, an interior designer formerly based in Indonesia. During her

years in Asia, Christianne studied with Singaporean *chai* masters, and the place smells deliciously of her favourite spices. The Teahouse offers more than 100 loose-leaf teas plus a generous assortment of salads, sandwiches, biscuits and homemade ice cream. On a sunny day, tables are laid out in the cheerful garden which provides a majestic view of the mountains and Santa Fe's famed "big sky".

Restored after your Canyon Road venture, you are now ready to take your quest for art off the beaten track. A 10-minute drive south-west of the city centre, into what looks like an unpromising warehouse neighbourhood, brings a great treasure: The Dwight Hackett Projects, a contemporary art gallery housed in a former foundry.

Hackett opened the foundry in 1980, casting pieces for artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Bruce Nauman. In 2000, he converted the low, open space into a gallery for sculptors, ceramicists, photographers and painters. Works by Richard Tuttle flank pieces by less well-known artists such as the New York-based sculptor Bjorn Amelan. On the drive back towards town, take a look into two galleries with hidden courtyards. Located on the south eastern side of the town-centre ring road, both the Gerald Peters and Nedra Matteucci galleries have lush gardens landscaped with bronze and stone sculptures.

Moving westward in time for the sunset, eat dinner in front of the fireplace at Café San Estevan, run by courtly Steve Garcia, an erstwhile Franciscan monk and a rare Santa Fe native. The menu, a refined interpretation of Northern New Mexican cuisine, pays tribute to Garcia's days among the friars, with delicate lamb chops served in a rosemary demi-glace, and the "monastic plate" of cold smoked Pacific salmon and smoked trout from the Villa Tatra in Colorado. It's the sort of sustenance so satisfying to this city's self-exiled aesthetes.

"Santa Fe will always be paradise," says photographer David Scheinbaum, who came here from Brooklyn in 1978 and now runs a photography dealership with his wife, Vivian Russek. "But in the beginning, we had to go to New York or San Francisco for culture or decent restaurants. Now we don't ever have to leave." ♦

Top: The Dwight Hackett Projects, a former foundry turned art space. Above: Nedra Matteucci Galleries with art-bedecked garden. Left: buffalo spirit totem outside the state capital building.



THE HIT LIST

HOTELS

Prices are for a double room with breakfast based on two sharing. **The Inn of The Five Graces**, 150 East DeVargas Street (001505-992 0957; www.garretthotelgroup.com); £156. **Ten Thousand Waves**, 3451 Hyde Park Road (001505-982 9304; www.tenthousandwaves.com); £138.

RESTAURANTS/CAFES

Prices are for a three-course meal for one with a half bottle of wine. **Café Pasqual**, 121 Don Gaspar Ave (001505-983 9340); £42. **Café San Estevan**, 428 Agua Fria St (001505-995 1996); £37. **The Compound**, 653 Canyon Rd (001505-982 4353); £45. **The Teahouse**, 821 Canyon Road (001505-992 0972).

SHOPS/GALLERIES/SPAS

Avanyu Spa, La Posada de Santa Fe, 330 East Palace Avenue (001505-954 9637). **Dwight Hackett Projects**, 2879 All Trades Road (001505-474 4043). **Gerald Peters Gallery**, 1011 Paseo de Peralta (001505-954 5700). **James Reid**, 114 East Palace Avenue (001505-988 1147). **Keshi**, 227 Don Gaspar Avenue (001505-989 8728). **Nedra Matteucci Galleries**, 1075 Paseo de Peralta (001505-982 4631). **Patina Gallery**, 131 West Palace Avenue (001505-986 3432). **Todos Santos Chocolates and Confections**, Suite 31, 125 East Palace Avenue (001505-982 3855). **Turner Carroll Gallery**, 725 Canyon Road (001505-820 3300). **William Siegal Galleries**, 135 West Palace Avenue (001505-820 3300).

SIGHTS

Museum of Fine Arts, 107 West Palace Avenue (001505-476 5072), Tues-Sun 10am-5pm.

LESS THAN AN HOUR AWAY

An easy drive about 50 miles north-west of Santa Fe, **The Bandelier National Monument** has 70 miles of hiking trails of varying degrees of



difficulty. Bandelier is named after the Swiss-born anthropologist Adolph Bandelier who pioneered the study of the Pueblo people whose Anasazi ancestors are thought to have settled here in the 12th century. The 36,000-acre monument is best known for the Frijoles Canyon cliff dwellings (left) and petroglyphs. On the way to or from Bandelier, stop to visit the modern pueblos of San Ildefonso, where craftspeople make beautiful black-on-black pottery.

WHEN TO GO

If you're an opera fan, you may want to visit Santa Fe in the summer, when the outdoor opera season (www.santafeopera.org) is

in full swing. Unfortunately, that is also the most crowded time and the rainy season. In spring and fall, the weather is balmy, skies are blue, and crowds are fewer.

HOW TO GET THERE

The closest major airport to Santa Fe is an hour away, in Albuquerque. Southwest Airlines (001214-792 4223; www.southwest.com) has five direct flights daily from Los Angeles, from £200. There are no direct flights from New York, but United (0845-844 4777; www.unitedairlines.co.uk) has three connections daily from New York LaGuardia via Denver to Albuquerque, from £181. If you prefer not to rent a car, Limotion VIP Limousine (001505-820 0816) provides a car service from Albuquerque airport to Santa Fe.

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