

giving thanks in santa fe

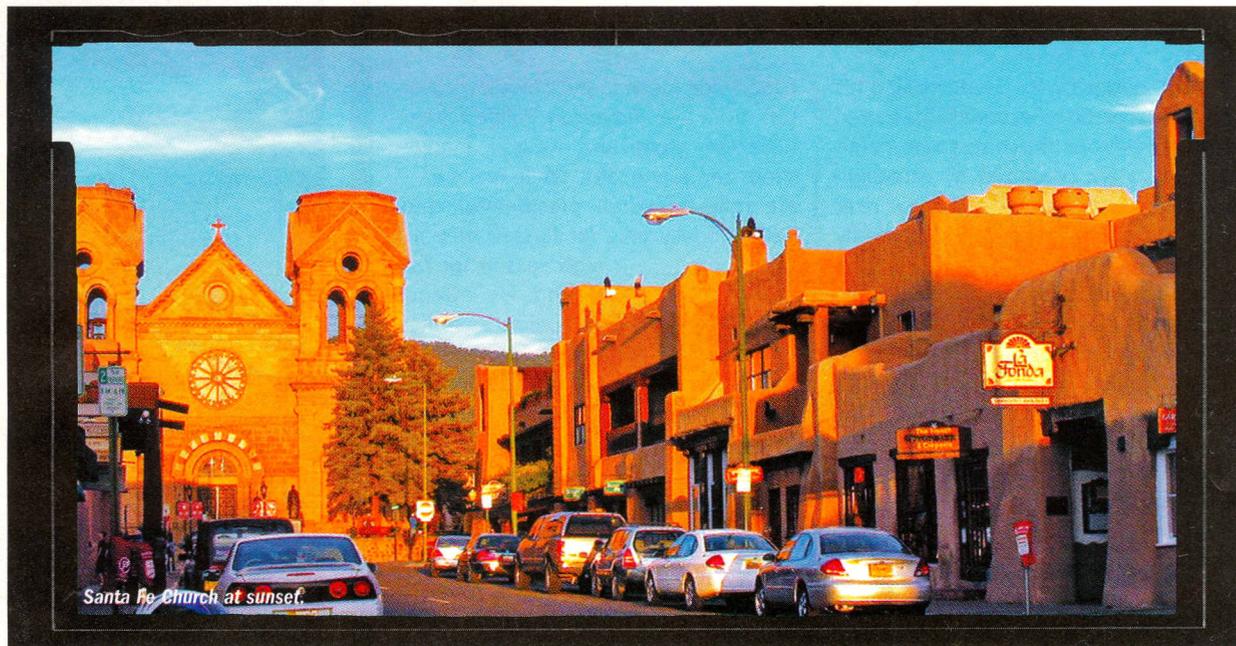


Photo courtesy City Data

You'll want to gobble up more than the Southwest landscape and this city's annual festivals. From its earthy beauty to its artistic displays, **Santa Fe, N.M.**, is also a place to enjoy an alternative to the traditional Thanksgiving meal. BY JUDITH EVANSTHOMAS

On a recent trip to San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, I was reminded by my traveling companions, Jayne and Glenn Levant, that they had moved to an equally, if not more beautiful, locale here in the United States. Jayne, an acclaimed Los Angeles artist, took a trip to Santa Fe a few years back and never left. As she explains on her Web site, jaynelevant.com, her love of the organic and natural beauty of the Southwest landscape has become a motivating force in her paintings since moving to Santa Fe.

Jayne is not the first artist to become inspired by New Mexico's rich colors, desert flowers and mountains. Georgia O'Keeffe (okeeffemuseum.org) spent the last part of her life painting the earthy landscapes of New Mexico, and many Native American artists (jaia.edu) who have been inspired by this part of the country have become sought after internationally for their interpretations of this beautiful land.

Part of what makes Santa Fe so appealing to artists is the grandeur of its setting and clarity of light. Located 7,000 feet above sea level, the city and surrounding area sit in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range. Driving in any direction, you will encounter rolling hills peppered with cactus, juniper and scrub brush; forests dense with Aspen trees, and mesas outlined in their starkness against blazing orange sunsets. Because Santa Fe is in the high desert, it enjoys four distinct seasons. Spring brings an explosion of desert wild-

flowers of every hue, summer the stark beauty of desert cactus and fall the shimmering gold aspen groves. There is even snow in the winter and skiing close to the center of the city (skisantafe.com).

Santa Fe (santafe.org), the oldest state capital city in the United States, is currently celebrating its 400th anniversary with festivals and festivities. In order to get a feel for the history and culture of Santa Fe, start your morning with a stroll through Santa Fe Plaza. At the northern end sits the Palace of the Governors, built in 1610, which hosts a daily Native American artisan fair (palaceofthegovernors.org), or if beautiful handmade gourds, drums and pottery pique your interest, a visit to one of the Indian pueblos surrounding Santa Fe is a must. One of the closest, Tesuque Pueblo, celebrates San Diego Feast Day (Nov. 12) with

ceremonial dances and a community feast. Tesuque Pueblo is also famous for its incredible flea market, so plan to stay late.

Also in November the La Cienega Studio Tour (lacienegastudiotour.com) allows visitors to visit 20-plus artist studios and galleries. If you are the hiking, nature-loving type, join in at the Festival of the Cranes (friendsofthebosque.org/cranel), which brings bird lovers from around the country to the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge to celebrate the sandhill cranes' migration. They, along with more than 340 other species of birds, put on quite a show.

And speaking of birds, one of the best reasons to go to Santa Fe in November is that you can save a turkey, or better yet, adopt a turkey (adoptaturkey.org) through the Farm Sanctuary's Adopt-A-Turkey Project. A good chile relleno or chalupa will be just as filling as turkey and stuffing, and you won't feel guilty about the poor gobbler. As Dave Barry would say, "I'm not making this up." PM

Santa Fe Facts

Visitsantafe.com

Santafean.com

Santa Fean magazine

Newmexico.org: New Mexico Department of Tourism visitor center: Lamy Bldg., 491 Old Santa Fe Trail; 87501; 505/827-7400 or 800/545-2070.

Santafe.org: Santa Fe Convention and Visitors Bureau: 60 E. San Francisco St., No. 312, Santa Fe; mailing address: Box 909, Santa Fe, N.M., 87504.

GETTINGHERE

Most visitors fly into New Mexico's main airport in Albuquerque, about an hour away.

WHERE TO STAY

- **Inn of the Five Graces:** An award-winning property located in the heart of town. 150 E. De Vargas St.; 505/992-0957; fivegraces.com.
- **Eldorado Hotel and Spa:** Luxurious accommodations in downtown Santa Fe. 309 W. San Francisco St.; 505/988-4455; eldoradohotel.com.

For more on Judith Evans Thomas' trip to Santa Fe, N.M., visit pittsburghmagazine.com.