

# A Surreal Art Maze, a 1,000-Year-Old Pueblo — A 3-Day Santa Fe & Taos Road Trip

New Mexico's high desert runs from a surrealist art collective's black-light labyrinth to a UNESCO pueblo that's been continuously inhabited for over a thousand years, connected by two of the country's most scenic back roads. This 3-day loop drives out of Albuquerque to Santa Fe's Plaza and Meow Wolf, north over the High Road's mountain villages to Taos Pueblo, and back to Santa Fe via the Rio Grande Gorge and the Low Road — real hotels, real green-chile diners, and a rental car doing all the work.

## DURATION

**3 Days**

## BEST TIME TO GO

**September – October**

cool, clear high-desert days in the 60s-70s°F, aspens turning gold above 8,000 feet on the High Road, and the crowds of Santa Fe Indian Market (August) already gone

## FROM

**\$549 USD / person**

for 2 people sharing a rental car, 2 nights of lodging, meals & activities; excludes flights to Albuquerque

## Day 1

### Santa Fe — the Plaza & a Surrealist Art Maze

*Fly into Albuquerque and drive north to Santa Fe, the country's oldest state capital, for an afternoon on the historic Plaza and an evening inside one of the strangest art installations in the Southwest.*

#### Self-Drive: Albuquerque Airport to Santa Fe

~1 hour, 65 miles via I-25 N

A straight shot north on I-25 through the high desert, with the Sandia and Ortiz mountains on the horizon before the highway drops into Santa Fe's south side.

#### Santa Fe Detours Walking Tour

~2.5 hours · \$10 USD / adult, \$5 / child under 12

A leisurely guided walk from the historic Plaza past the Palace of the Governors, San Miguel Mission and Loretto Chapel with its famous spiral staircase, run twice daily by a local outfitter that's led Santa Fe tours since the 1970s.

**Santa Fe Detours** · 505-983-6565 · [sfdetours.com](http://sfdetours.com)

### **Meow Wolf: House of Eternal Return**

*~2 hours · from \$54 USD / adult*

A former bowling alley turned walk-through art installation by the Meow Wolf artist collective — a Victorian house whose closets, refrigerators and fireplaces open into black-lit tunnels, a neon mastodon skeleton and a multi-story climbing structure built around a mystery only regulars fully piece together.

**Meow Wolf Santa Fe** · [meowwolf.com/visit/santa-fe](https://meowwolf.com/visit/santa-fe)

### **Dinner: The Shed**

*~1.5 hours · dinner ~\$20–\$32 USD / person*

A Santa Fe institution since 1953, tucked in a 1692 hacienda a block off the Plaza, serving the red and green chile the city is famous for — order the blue-corn enchiladas "Christmas style" for both.

**The Shed** · 505-982-9030 · [sfshed.com](https://sfshed.com)

### **Check-In: La Fonda on the Plaza**

*From \$219 USD / night, for 2 people*

"The Inn at the End of the Trail" — a hotel has stood on this Plaza corner for over 400 years, with hand-painted furniture, a rooftop bar looking over the cathedral, and the kind of lobby buzz that comes from being the only hotel actually on the Santa Fe Plaza.

**La Fonda on the Plaza** · 505-982-5511 · [lafondasantafe.com](https://lafondasantafe.com)

## **Day 2**

## **The High Road to Taos & a 1,000-Year-Old Pueblo**

*Skip the interstate for the High Road, a two-lane climb through Spanish colonial mountain villages, ending at Taos Pueblo — a UNESCO World Heritage Site that's been continuously lived in for over a millennium.*

### **Self-Drive: Santa Fe to Taos via the High Road**

*~2.5 hours with stops, 70 miles via NM-76 & NM-518*

The scenic alternative to the highway, climbing through Chimayo, Truchas and Las Trampas — adobe villages of orchards, weaving studios and 18th-century churches strung along a ridge with views west to the Jemez Mountains.

### **Santuario de Chimayo**

*~30 minutes · free*

A 1816 adobe chapel known as the "Lourdes of America," where a side room, the posito, holds dirt believed to have healing powers — tens of thousands of pilgrims walk here every Holy Week, and the parking lot fills fast even on an ordinary Saturday.

### **Taos Pueblo**

*~1.5 hours · \$25 USD / adult, \$22 senior/student/military, free under 10*

Multi-story adobe buildings built between 1000 and 1450 AD, still home to Taos Pueblo families with no electricity or running water inside the old walls by tribal choice — wander the plaza, buy fry bread and pottery directly from residents' shopfronts, and cross the Red Willow Creek that splits the pueblo in two.

**Taos Pueblo** · 575-758-1028 · [taospueblo.com](http://taospueblo.com)

### **Dinner: Orlando's New Mexican Cafe**

*~1 hour · dinner ~\$14–\$24 USD / person*

A bright-turquoise roadside spot in El Prado just outside town, considered by locals to have some of the best red chile in Taos — the adovada plate and blue-corn enchiladas draw a line out the door most nights.

**Orlando's New Mexican Cafe** · [taoschamber.com](http://taoschamber.com)

### **Check-In: El Monte Sagrado Living Resort & Spa**

*From \$189 USD / night, for 2 people*

An adobe-style resort a short walk from the Taos Plaza, built around a spring-fed pond and native gardens, with casitas named for the world religions and a spa drawing on the resort's own natural spring water.

**El Monte Sagrado** · [elmontesagrado.com](http://elmontesagrado.com)

## **Day 3**

## **Rio Grande Gorge & the Low Road Home**

*A last look at the gorge that cuts Taos in two, then the Low Road back to Santa Fe along the Rio Grande for a final museum stop before the drive back to Albuquerque.*

### **Rio Grande Gorge Bridge**

*~30 minutes · free*

The second-highest bridge in the US highway system, hanging 565 feet above the Rio Grande — walk out onto the pedestrian lane for the view down into the gorge and, on a still morning, the rafters far below.

### **Self-Drive: Taos to Santa Fe via the Low Road**

*~1.25 hours, 70 miles via NM-68*

The faster, riverside route back, following the Rio Grande through Pilar and Embudo past roadside fruit stands and the Orilla Verde Recreation Area before rejoining US-84/285 into Santa Fe.

### **Georgia O'Keeffe Museum**

*~1.5 hours · from \$20 USD / adult*

The largest collection of O'Keeffe's work anywhere, a few blocks off the Plaza in the downtown galleries — her New Mexico landscapes and bleached desert skulls hang just miles from the high-desert scenery that inspired them.

**Georgia O'Keeffe Museum** · 505-946-1000 · [okeeffemuseum.org](http://okeeffemuseum.org)

### **Self-Drive: Santa Fe to Albuquerque Airport**

*~1 hour, 65 miles via I-25 S*

The same stretch of I-25 in reverse, timed to leave a buffer before an evening flight out of Albuquerque — return the rental car and close out a loop that never repeats a mile of road.