

# GreatESCAPES

## *The insider's guide to Taos and the high road to Santa Fe*

THE INSIDERS' GUIDE TO THE HOTTEST VACATION DESTINATIONS



PHOTO: CHRIS CORRIE

**THE LURE** Do your once-rainbow-colored days seem to be dunked in olive drab? Does your mental inbox feel full and horribly spammed? Well then, it's time to hit the open road to points south, to exotic Taos and the High Road to Santa Fe, where life flies bright piñata colors and folks step lively to a mariachi beat.

**THE FACTS** Just a few hours from the Denver area, Taos long ago acquired its magical aura from the intertwined exuberance of three cultures: Pueblo Indian, Hispanic and Anglo. The Indians were here first, building their multistoried adobe Taos Pueblo about a thousand years ago.

In 1540, the Indians' peaceful farming life was disturbed by Conquistador Hernando de Alvarado, who was following the Rio Grande north. Seeing the sun shining on the adobe straw at Taos Pueblo, he thought he had found the famed Cities of Gold: Wrong. You will, however, find a wealth of art and history in this area.

**AN ART MAGNET** The vibrant Taos reputation as a bohemian artist colony began with a road trip mishap involving two New York illustrators in 1898. Ernest Blumenschein and Bert Phillips were on their way from Denver to Mexico when their horse-drawn

**IMMERSE  
YOURSELF IN  
HISTORY AND ART  
ON A ROAD TRIP  
TO TAOS AND  
SANTA FE**

surrey shattered a rear wheel on the rocky road. On horseback, Blumenschein took the broken wheel into Taos for repair, finding a valley "green with trees and fields of alfalfa populated by dark skinned people who greeted me pleasantly."

Struck by the amazingly luminous quality of the light, the ravishing mountain landscape and the opportunity to paint authentic American Indians, the two soon attracted their painter friends to Taos. By 1915, this seething hotbed of talent had blossomed into the Taos Society of Artists, whose members included such celebrated painters as Joseph Henry Sharp, E. Irving Couse, Herbert Dunton, Oscar Berninghaus and Victor Higgins.

**HACIENDA DEL SOL B&B** In 1917, wealthy New York socialite and art maven Mabel Dodge dropped into Taos and stayed, eventually shedding her husband and marrying Tony Luhan, a Taos Pueblo

STORY: JOY OVERBECK



PHOTO: CHRIS CORRIE

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PHOTO: CHRIS CORRIE

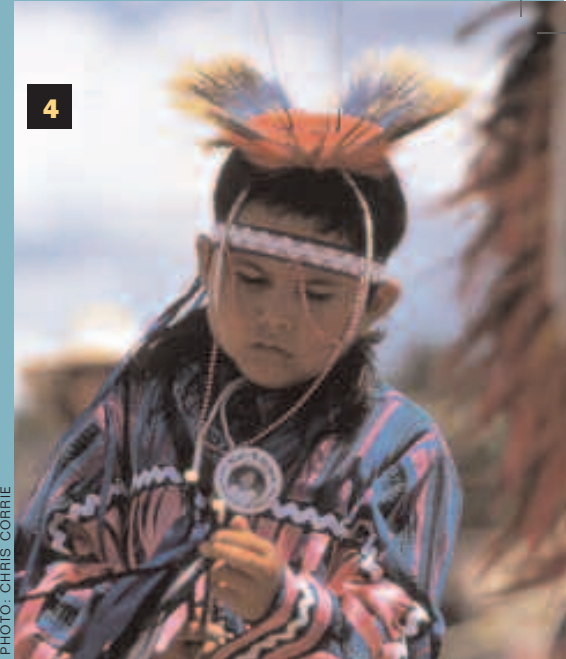


PHOTO: CHRIS CORRIE

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**TAOS PUEBLO**

**THE OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY OCCUPIED STRUCTURE** IN THE UNITED STATES, THIS ANCIENT VILLAGE COULD WELL BE THE PROTOTYPE CONCEPT FOR TODAY'S CONDOS.

**TRIBAL ARTISANS WELCOME YOU** INTO THEIR ANCESTRAL HOMES AND OFFER BEAUTIFUL CUSTOM SILVER JEWELRY, STONE SCULPTURE, POTTERY AND MANY VARIETIES OF HANDMADE DRUMS. THEY LOVE TO CHAT WITH VISITORS WHILE THEY PRACTICE THEIR ANCIENT CRAFTS, SO DON'T BE SHY.

**CEREMONIAL DANCES AND FEAST DAYS** OCCUR THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER, WITH THE ANNUAL TAOS PUEBLO POWWOW BRINGING MANY TRIBES TOGETHER JULY 8-10.

**SEE THE WEBSITE AT [WWW.TAOSPUEBLO.COM](http://WWW.TAOSPUEBLO.COM) FOR INFORMATION.**

- 1** PEEK THROUGH THE GARDEN GATEWAY IN SANTA FE
- 2** WEAR YOUR WALKING SHOES TO SANTA FE'S INDIAN MARKET
- 3** THE SANTA FE OPERA HOUSE OFFERS OPERA UNDER THE STARS
- 4** DELIGHT IN INDIAN DANCERS

Indian. They lived in a quaint adobe house, built in 1804, that Mabel said "looks like a cottage in a fairy tale," set amid green fields and apple orchards. Her influence on the literary and artistic worlds drew famous

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houseguests such as D.H. Lawrence, Willa Cather, Thornton Wilder, Georgia O'Keefe and Ansel Adams. O'Keefe painted her first sunflower while staying with Mabel, so the story goes.

The little four-room cottage has grown into the Hacienda del Sol ([www.taoshaciendadelsol.com](http://www.taoshaciendadelsol.com)), a bed-and-breakfast unrivaled for Taos history as well as creature comforts. Now consisting of 10 rooms in three adobe buildings, the Hacienda was cited by *USA Today* as among the 10 most romantic inns in the United States. It's a feast of Southwestern flavors, from painted furniture and blue-and-yellow Mexican tiles to whitewashed walls and kiva fireplaces. Remember to duck when you enter the original living room—the arched door is hobbit-size, as were the people 200 years ago.

The two large grassy courtyards, brooded over by giant cottonwoods and opening to glorious views of Taos Mountain, are perfect for afternoon tea or cocktails. Breakfasts, hearty and luscious, display the cook's imagination—and they'll even give you the recipes. Friendly innkeeper Dennis Sheehan knows all the hot dining spots and will be happy to make reservations for you.

One of the best is Joseph's Table, tucked into the historic La Fonda Hotel on the Plaza. The dark, carved beams and golden walls, painted with huge, dreamy flowers, form a dramatic background for truly superb international cuisine. La Fonda itself, the oldest hotel in Taos, was renovated recently and is



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well worth a stay. Ask to see D.H. Lawrence's erotic paintings, banned in London, ensconced in a room off the lobby. But be warned—they're heavier on curiosity value than artistic merit.

After dark, the real action is in rocking out with rowdy local bands and the packed dance floor at the Sagebrush Inn just outside town; be there to join Taos as it kicks up its heels.

**EXPLORE TAOS** It's a constant adventure to walk and explore the town's art galleries, all within a few blocks of each other. Favorites include Total Arts

- 1, 2 RELAX AT THE HACIENDA DEL SOL B&B, ONE OF USA TODAY'S 10 MOST ROMANTIC INNS
- 3 THE SAN GERONIMO IN TAOS

Gallery and the Gallery Elena, showing the colorful work of Viloy Vigil and his two artist sons at 111 Morada Road off Kit Carson Road (U.S. 64). The fabled frontiersman Carson actually lived here with his family in the 1800s and their museum/home filled with artifacts is another stop on his namesake street.

The best bargain in town is the \$20 you'll pay at any museum—allowing you to visit all five. The Ernest Blumenschein

Home and Museum is a favorite, a wonderful time capsule of original furnishings, paintings and memorabilia in the rambling adobe hacienda where the artist and his family lived for 40 years.

Another is the Harwood Museum of Art down the street, highlighting the works of Taos' remarkable artists, past and present, as well as historic Hispanic art. At the Millicent Rogers Museum, you'll see the incredible collection of this Standard Oil heiress and jewelry designer. A Lauren Bacall-type stunner, she had her heart broken by Clark



PHOTO: LARRY MESSIN

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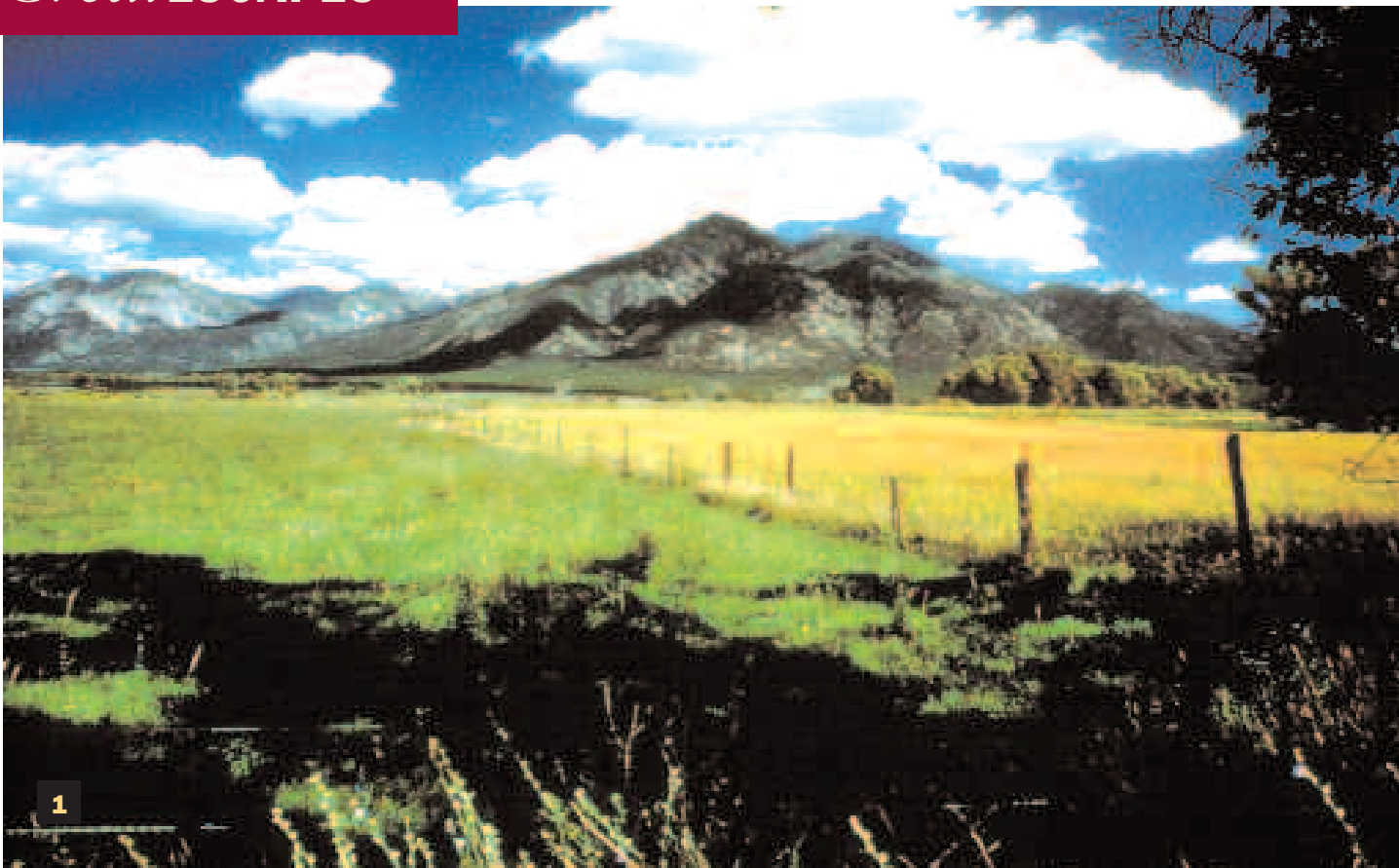


PHOTO: DON LAINE

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**1 VIEWS OF THE BREATHTAKING TAOS MOUNTAINS AROUND 2 CHILE RISTRAS GRACE DOORWAYS IN THE SOUTHWEST**



PHOTO: CHRIS CORRIE

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sure to sip a margarita on the patio of the Adobe Bar at the popular Taos Inn and watch the ever-flamboyant local world go by. Who knows, Julia Roberts may even stroll her twins down the street—she and her husband have a ranch near town.

**THE HIGH ROAD FROM TAOS TO SANTA FE**

Artistic finds, fascinating history and gorgeous mountain scenery await as the High Road takes you through a string of small adobe villages. Drive out of Taos west on Highway 68, and stop a while in tiny Ranchos de Taos to see the massive adobe St. Francis Assisi

church, made famous by Ansel Adams' black-and-white photographs.

At Ranchos, turn south onto Highway 518. The road takes you through little towns where more than 200 craftspeople of many talents have settled, forming High Road Artisans group. Their shops and galleries dot the landscape from Vadito and Penasco in the north, down the road to Truchas, Cordova and Chimayo.

The towns' rich history intrigues. Las Trampas, founded in 1751, boasts one of New Mexico's colonial-era treasures in the lovely San Jose de Gracia Church. The scenic old Spanish outpost of Truchas was the setting for Robert Redford's film, *The Milagro Beanfield War*, while Cordova is known for the graceful work of its wood carvers.

Gable, and afterwards spent her Taos years amassing vintage Indian rugs, jewelry, exquisite pottery and more.

Before you leave magical Taos, be

For centuries, the town of Chimayo has earned fame for El Santuario de Chimayo, a pretty adobe church built about 1814 and known as the “*Lourdes of the Southwest*” for its miraculous healing dirt, which pilgrims dip from a hole in the floor. Hundreds of thousands visit annually, leaving walls covered with crutches and notes of thanks attesting to the curative powers.

Nambe Pueblo, in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, has been the cultural and religious center for the Pueblo people since the 1300s. Nearby

art shops sell traditional pottery and silver; the July 4th Ceremonial features dances and an arts-and-crafts fair.

Turn onto Highway 286 at the town of Nambe, and travel south to Tesuque Pueblo, settled in about 1200. Tribal artisans create pottery, paintings, sculpture and silver jewelry.

It's just a few miles south to Santa Fe, justly celebrated as a cosmopolitan center of art, culture and cuisine.

**SANTA FE OPERA TURNS 50** This summer, from June 29 to August 26, the Santa Fe Opera celebrates its 50th season of spectacular productions in its architecturally dazzling home in the

foothills near town. The 2006 season presents beloved favorites *Carmen*, *Salome*, *The Magic Flute*, *Cinderella* and *The Tempest* in fresh new stagings.

The opening weekend, June 29 to July 1, sees opera lovers from all over the country return year after year to greet old friends and be a part of the four-day nonstop extravaganza, including a ball, dinners and brunch.

The opera may start at sundown, but the bejeweled and begowned culture hounds like to arrive early to dine and savor the spectacular sunset.

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Traditional tailgate parties vary in menu from elegant champagne and prime rib to downhome fried chicken and biscuits. Others opt for the sumptuous buffet supper served on the beautiful lower rehearsal grounds. With dessert, a well-known musical authority offers insight into the evening's opera.

A Santa Fe Opera anniversary naturally calls for a major premiere, and 2006 brings one of great importance—the first American staging of *The Tempest* by Thomas Adès. Adès is one of today's most talented young composers, and *The Tempest*, which won the prestigious 2004 Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, is his first large-scale stage work.

A Gala Concert on Saturday, August 12, hosted by Frederica von Stade, will celebrate the Apprentice Program for Singers. Many of the program's most distinguished alumni from recent years will perform, accompanied by the Opera Orchestra. The evening is a benefit and proceeds go to the Endowment Fund for the Apprentice Programs.

Visit [www.santafeopera.org](http://www.santafeopera.org) for more information and to make reservations. ●

*Joy Overbeck is a front-range journalist and author who writes often for Colorado Expression and its sister publications, Confetti and Architecture & Design of the West. Her work has also appeared in Redbook, Woman's Day, Parents, Health, Cosmopolitan, Vail Valley Magazine, Vail/Beaver Creek Magazine, and others. She has authored three books, two of them humor books published by Pocket Books division of Simon & Schuster.*