

# New Mexico

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## Best Places to Eat

- » San Marcos Café (p275)
- » Trading Post Cafe (p299)
- » Ellis Store Country Inn (p344)
- » Pie-O-Neer Café (p325)
- » Coyote Café (p273)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Earthships (p293)
- » St James Hotel (p309)
- » Christ in the Desert Monastery (p286)
- » Los Poblanos (p246)
- » La Fonda (p271)

## Why Go?

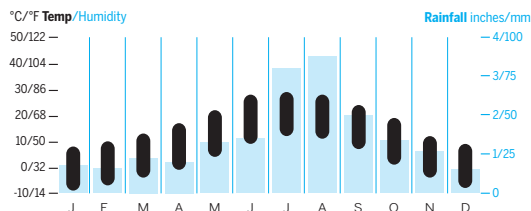
It's called the 'Land Of Enchantment' for a reason. Maybe it's the drama of sunlight and cloud shadow playing out across endlessly rolling juniper-speckled hills; or the traditional mountain villages of horse pastures and adobe homes; or the gentle magnificence of the 13,000-foot Sangre de Cristo range; or the volcanoes, river canyons and vast desert plains spread beneath an even vaster sky. The beauty sneaks up on you, then casts a powerful spell. Mud-brick *santuarios* filled with sacred folk art; ancient and contemporary Indian pueblos; real-life cowboys and legendary outlaws; chile-smothered enchiladas: all add to the distinct vibe of otherness that often makes New Mexico feel like a foreign country.

Maybe the state's indescribable charm is best expressed in the iconic paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe. She herself exclaimed, on her very first visit: 'Well! Well! Well!...This is wonderful! No one told me it was like this.'

But seriously, how could they?

## When to Go

### Santa Fe



### Mid-Aug–mid-Oct

New Mexico at its best: gorgeous weather, wild sunflowers, chile harvest, fiestas.

### Christmas season

Ski the Sangres, walk Canyon Rd on Christmas Eve, join in local holiday traditions.

### June–mid-Aug

Prime time for outdoor activities. But beware the monsoon storms!

## New Mexico Planning

Due to major differences in altitude, when it's comfy in the lower, southern part of the state, it might be freezing in the northern mountains. Likewise, when the weather's perfect in Santa Fe, it's scorching in Carlsbad. If traveling around the state, bring a versatile wardrobe. With rare exception, casual dress is the way to go in New Mexico.

If you're afraid of spicy foods, order your chile (green, red or 'Christmas') on the side – but do try it. If you enjoy hot foods, beware: New Mexican chile is said to have addictive properties!

### DON'T MISS

Steeped in traditional Native American and Hispanic cultures, soulful **Santa Fe** has world-class art, gourmet restaurants and great local food, old adobe architecture and famous festivals. An hour-and-a-half north is **Taos**, the famous artist community and hippy haven, known for the nearby historic Pueblo and world-class ski area. These two towns feel like nowhere else in the USA. Both sit beneath the **Sangre de Cristo Mountains**, which are laced with hiking/biking trails and wilderness backpacking routes.

Further south, tiny **Lincoln**, set in a scenic valley along the meandering Rio Bonito, oozes Wild West history as the former stomping grounds of Billy the Kid.

Among the state's most fantastic natural features are **White Sands National Monument** – where you can play among gleaming white dunes that ripple, swell and curl through the Tularosa Basin – and **Carlsbad Caverns National Park**, where you can walk through a massive underground fantasyland of stalagmites and stalactites. Most beautiful of all might be the **Ghost Ranch** area, where you'll find the landscape that so vividly influenced Georgia O'Keeffe.

## Tips for Drivers

- » New Mexico's main arteries are I-40 – which cuts east-west from Texas to Arizona via Albuquerque – and I-25, running north-south from the Colorado border, through Santa Fe and Albuquerque to Las Cruces. I-40 is occasionally closed in spring due to windstorms; both interstates may close during heavy blizzards in winter.
- » Along highways in the south, you'll hit Border Patrol checkpoints with dogs (hint: think twice before bringing your cannabis prescription down from Denver).
- » Interstate speed limits are 75mph, while state highways may go to 70mph.
- » For road conditions, call 800-432-4269 or visit [www.nmroads.com](http://www.nmroads.com).

## TIME ZONE

New Mexico is on Mountain Time (seven hours behind GMT) and observes daylight savings. During daylight savings, it's one hour ahead of Arizona – otherwise they're the same.

## Fast Facts

- » Population: 2 million
- » Area: 121,599 sq miles
- » Sales tax: 5-8%
- » Albuquerque to Las Cruces: 223 miles, 3½ hours
- » Gallup to Tucumcari: 311 miles, 4½ hours
- » Santa Fe to Taos: 70 miles, 1½ hours

## State Bird

The roadrunner can run nearly 20mph and kills and eats rattlesnakes.

## Resources

- » All About New Mexico: [www.psych.nmsu.edu/~linda/chilepg.htm](http://www.psych.nmsu.edu/~linda/chilepg.htm)
- » New Mexico CultureNet: [www.nmcn.org](http://www.nmcn.org)
- » New Mexico Department of Tourism: [www.newmexico.org](http://www.newmexico.org)