

EXPLORING ALBUQUERQUE

Celebrating this historic city along the Rio Grande

By Ashley M. Biggers

» Growing up in Albuquerque, I spent many afternoons visiting Native American pueblos across the state. As I tore bite-size pieces of fry bread, my fingers sticky from the honey-covered crispy dough, I'd watch tribal members moving to ancestral rhythms.

Today, I walk out my back door and travel a short distance to the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, where, on weekends, dance groups share their traditions. On a recent afternoon, the White Eagle Dance Group from Zuni Pueblo performed a deer dance. A duo held staffs in their hands and moved to mimic the four-legged creatures they honored. Ropes of turquoise beads rippled from their necks, while feathers and antlers were attached to their headdresses—all part of their stately regalia. The steady beat of an animal-hide drum resonated through the circular courtyard bedecked with a dozen murals by Native artists such as Pablita Velarde and Helen Hardin (her daughter) of the Santa Clara Pueblo.

The drum represents Mother Earth's beating heart. However, as I felt its vibrations deep in my chest, it became for me the beating heart of the Pueblo peoples. The state's 19 Pueblos collectively own the center, where their cultures come alive through history and art exhibits, a store and the Pueblo Harvest Cafe. The cafe is a center for local Native cuisine, with dishes that meld traditional and modern recipes, such as *poynha*, Native American meatloaf made with bison meat.

My favorite treat remains the cafe's fry bread. I always buy a piece of the sticky bread to enjoy while I watch the presenta-



NEAR & FAR»



» Clockwise, from left: A Native dancer performs the deer dance. Old Town offers charming gardens and shops. Ernest L. Blumenschein's painting, Star Road and White Sun. A bowl of hazruquive stew from the Pueblo Harvest Cafe.

tions of rhythmic dancing that are full of tradition and history.

Exploring History

Home to many Native American communities, the Albuquerque area was at different times part of Spain and Mexico before joining the United States. The Albuquerque Museum explores this multicultural history and its varied influences. The museum's art and sculptures offer selections from Southwestern artists, including Ernest L. Blumenschein, Peter Hurd and Georgia O'Keeffe.

The museum sits on the edge of Old Town, where the city was founded more than 300 years ago as a Spanish Colonial farming community and military outpost. Today, the historic neighborhood is a bustling location full of boutiques, art galleries, museums and restaurants.

Old Town is located in southwest Albuquerque, next to the Rio Grande, with Central Avenue—a section of the original Route 66—running through the neighborhood. The famous roadway still boasts many neon signs beckoning visitors to stop at local restaurants, businesses and hotels in the city.

Route 66 runs through the Downtown Albuquerque Arts and Cultural District, an area known for its art galleries, breweries, coffee shops and public art. A favorite district museum is 516 Arts, which produces contemporary art exhibitions throughout the year and has a role, along with the city's robust public art program, in creating the colorful murals that can be seen in the neighborhood.

Craft beer can be found throughout the district, from the well-known Marble Brewery, with its award-winning pilsner,



ERNEST BLUMENSCHHEIN, STAR ROAD AND WHITE SUN, CA. 1920, ALBUQUERQUE MUSEUM



» Hundreds of hot-air balloons, left, fill the skies during the annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. Flamenco dancers, above, perform at the National Hispanic Cultural Center.

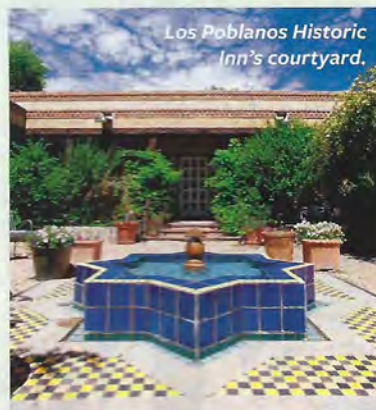
to the lesser-known Monks' Corner Taproom, where the beer is made by Benedictine monks using homegrown native hops.

In the Barelas District, south of downtown, you'll find the world-class National Hispanic Cultural Center, which celebrates Hispanic and Latin cultures with a visual-arts museum and a calendar of events as spicy as the city's chili, including plays, live music and flamenco dancing. Its plaza hosts iGlobalquerque!, a world music festival held each September.

Albuquerque is also known as one of the top cities in the world for hot-air balloons. The annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, which is usually held during the first week of October, boasts one of the largest collections of hot-air balloons—more than 500—in the world. The event offers spectacular visuals as balloons of every imaginable shape, size and color float across the landscape, and attendees can also go for rides during the fiesta. Those interested in taking flight

Lodging and Dining

Los Poblanos Historic Inn & Organic Farm: Located on 25 acres of lush gardens along the Rio Grande, the inn offers 50 restored and newly built guestrooms, some with patios that open onto lavender fields. The plant is used to make a line of body salves and lotions. James Beard Award semifinalist chef Jonathan Perno helms the field-to-fork restaurant, Campo, which is known for its modern take on indigenous Southwest ingredients.



Hotel Chaco: Opening its doors in April 2017, the hotel became the first newly built lodging in Old Town Albuquerque in several decades. Inspired by the pueblo great houses found in northwest New Mexico, the hotel abounds with Native American art. Its rooftop bar and restaurant, Level 5, has great city views, cocktails and indigenous-inspired cuisine.

Green Jeans Farmery: The food court in midtown Albuquerque consists of shipping containers that have been redesigned as restaurants, food shops, a craft brewery and a distillery. You'll find possibly the city's best green-chile cheeseburgers at Rustic on the Green.

Sadie's of New Mexico: With three locations in the city, this restaurant serves plates of classic New Mexican cuisine with spicy red- and green-chile sauce. To try both varieties, ask for your meal "Christmas."—A.M.B.

» DID YOU KNOW? Spanish settlers founded the modern-day city of Albuquerque in 1706 as "Villa de Alburquerque," named after Spain's 10th Duke of Alburquerque—earning the city its nickname as the "Duke City." That extra "r" in "Alburquerque" has been lost to time, but you'll occasionally see it crop up in names of heritage events, such as June's Festival Flamenco Internacional de Alburquerque, which attracts dancers and musicians from around the world.

FREEDOM TO EXPLORE... YOUR WAY

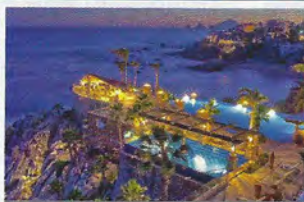
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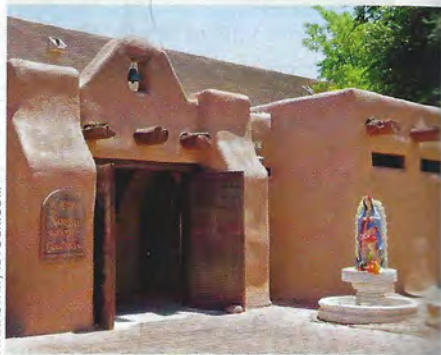


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will find plenty of hot-air-balloon pilots ready to take them up any time of the year. The city is also home to the Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum, which tells the history of

A POET'S VIEW OF DUKE CITY

Albuquerque native Manuel Gonzalez is the city's poet laureate through 2018. "To me, Albuquerque is more than just green chiles and desert. It's seeing the value of our *familia*, our community, our traditions and our culture," he says. Here are some of Gonzalez's favorite places around town:



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Chapel of Our Lady of

Guadalupe: Gonzalez says the intimate chapel located just east of the plaza at historic Old Town is what represents "Burque" [a nickname for Albuquerque].

El Chante: Casa de Cultura: This historic home in the Downtown Albuquerque Arts and Cultural District hosts writers' workshops and an art gallery.

Sunsets: "At the magic moment of dusk, the Sandia Mountains turn pink to earn their name. *Sandía* is Spanish for 'watermelon.' The entire city is bathed in a warm golden glow, towered over and protected by these pink mountains. It happens almost every day, but only for a few minutes." —A.M.B.

ballooning and showcases local pilots who have made record-breaking flights.

Other outdoor experiences in the area include exploring the Petroglyph National Monument. Hiking trails meander past black basalt boulders, where generations of Native American and Spanish settlers have etched designs in the rock.

The 50-Mile Activity Loop encircles the city with a network of multiuse trails and bike lanes that pass by the riverside forests of the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, as well as the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, the first urban wildlife refuge in the Southwest. About 70 miles west of Albuquerque, you will find Sky City, the traditional home of the Acoma Pueblo tribe of Native Americans. Dating back to 1150, it is one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in North America. Official tours are the only way to explore

» Visitors explore Sky City, home to the Acoma Pueblo tribe and one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in North America.



the mesa-top village, and include a visit to the San Estevan del Rey Mission Church, built in 1629.

Northwest of Albuquerque, the Jemez Mountain Trail, a National Scenic Byway, winds past red-rock cliffs to the village of Jemez Springs, where hot springs burble to the surface allowing for a relaxing soak in various mineral pools. Outside of town

you can hike to a series of natural pools in nearby hills. A soothing stop here is a great way to end a tour of Albuquerque. ✕

Ashley M. Biggers writes from Albuquerque.

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