Love exploring the great outdoors? Want to experience unique art and culture? Have a hankering for spicy food? Look no further than the place they call the Land of Enchantment.
There’s a reason New Mexico is nicknamed the Land of Enchantment. Its boasts a culture steeped in time-honored traditions and native folklore. Its climate is a mostly arid one packed with plenty of sunshine and relatively low humidity. And its lush landscape includes everything from cactus-strewn deserts to limestone caverns to snow-capped peaks. All of this, combined with its vibrant cities, plentiful attractions, spectacular cuisine, and myriad other attributes, makes New Mexico an ideal destination for the traveler with almost any interest you can fathom.

CULTURE

Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, Gallup, August 10-14, 2011

This yearly celebration of Native American arts, foods, and traditions is celebrating its 50th birthday this year. Tribes from across the U.S. honor their heritage in parades, ceremonial dances, craft demonstrations, a juried art show, rodeo, and more.

New Mexico has been inhabited by various Native American populations—primarily Navajo and Pueblo—for centuries, and their ways and customs have long been a part of the state’s rich culture. Their influence and lifestyle can be explored at any of the small settlements—that are scattered across the state, where tribe members still farm, worship, cook, and live much as their ancestors once did.

Or you can head toward the historic Old Town section of Albuquerque for a visit to the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. The complex includes a museum displaying Native American artifacts, an art gallery, children’s area, restaurant, and gift shop. Traditional Native American music and dances are performed each weekend, rain or shine.

There’s a heavy Spanish influence in New Mexico, as well. The first Spanish colonial settlement was founded here in 1598, and the Spaniards quickly went on to establish a series of missions, such as the Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Zia outside of Albuquerque and San Loren-
Some of the missions are preserved as ruins, and others are still in daily use and open to the public for services or tours. Another top spot devoted to preserving the area’s Spanish legacy is the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, which presents dozens of exhibitions and programs in the visual, performing, and literary arts.

OUTDOORS
Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Albuquerque, October 1-9, 2011
Thanks to a condition known as the Albuquerque Box, Albuquerque boasts the ideal climate for hot air ballooning, and each October, hundreds of balloonists flock to this annual festival, a spectacle of color and flight that, not surprisingly, is the most photographed event in the world.

New Mexico’s diverse landscape affords outdoor adventure at every turn, whether it’s white-water rafting on the Rio Grande, hiking alongside 1,000-year-old petroglyphs at Boca Negra Canyon, hang gliding over scenic Sandia Crest, inspecting ancient limestone formations at Carlsbad Caverns, or tackling the tubing hill at Angel Fire.

New Mexico’s healing waters are another big draw. The mineral springs at Ojo Caliente, for example, flow from a subterranean volcanic aquifer and are legendary for not only soothing sore muscles, but supposedly offering relief for everything from stomach ulcers to skin conditions.

Golf has a hold here as well, with more than 70 courses to choose from. Sneak in a quick nine during your visit to Albuquerque at the par-three executive course at Los Alamos or linger over 18 holes designed around sandstone foothills and natural arroyos at the Black Mesa Golf Club near Espanola.
“Visitors can savor exotic foods, jam to international tunes, and buy folk art from around the globe.”

The Arts

The Albuquerque Museum

Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, Santa Fe, July 8-10, 2011
This, the world’s largest international folk art market, attracts more than 150 artists from countries as diverse as Cuba and Kazakhstan. Visitors can savor exotic foods, jam to international tunes, and buy folk art from around the globe.
Georgia O’Keeffe painted some of her best pieces here. D.H. Lawrence wrote a number of manuscripts here. New Mexico has always had a large and active artistic community that includes names like Laura Gilpin, Olive Rush, Bruce Nauman, and Peter Hurd. Their fine works can be viewed at places like the Albuquerque Museum of Art & History and New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe, as well as at their former residences turned monuments such as the D.H. Lawrence Ranch, located about 20 miles northwest of Taos and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Georgia O’Keeffe House, a walled compound in Abiquiu that offers guided tours by appointment.

If you’d rather hear great art than see it, make a point to catch a performance of the world-renowned Santa Fe Opera. There’s nothing quite like sitting out under the stars in the open-air theater, enjoying a crisp summer night as singers belt out their best. This is, the world’s largest international folk art market, attracts more than 150 artists from countries as diverse as Cuba and Kazakhstan. Visitors can savor exotic foods, jam to international tunes, and buy folk art from around the globe.

Cuisine
Hatch Chile Festival, Hatch, September 3-4, 2011
Things heat up here each fall in honor of Hatch’s world-famous green chile crop. Now in its 40th year, the event attracts some 30,000 visitors and features chile-eating contests, a chile cookoff, the crowning of the Chile Queen, and more.

New Mexico’s largest crop, the chile pepper, has an added kick to it courtesy of the local climate (it increases its level of capsaicin, which gives peppers their hotness). Which may help explain why chiles, especially green chiles, are so prevalent in New Mexican cooking. The green chile cheeseburger is such a popular fixture, in fact, that the governor holds a Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge during the State Fair each year and the New Mexico Tourism Department has created a Green Chile Cheeseburger Trail (newmexico.org/greenchilecheeseburger/index.php) directing you to the best places across the state to sample the spicy dish.

Oenophiles will love New Mexico, too. The first grapevines ever planted in the U.S. were grown here, and today the state produces some 700,000 gallons of wine each year. Visitors can vineyard-hop on their own between the state’s 42 wineries and tasting rooms, or join an organized tour led by an area expert.

Mayor Richard J. Berry invites you to enjoy the rich palette of landscape, art and culture that embodies our dynamic city.

Old Town – New Fun
Shop, feast and unwind in historic Old Town Plaza.
The Albuquerque Museum
Artistic works of New Mexico and the world.
The Albuquerque Balloon Museum
International and national exhibits showcasing lighter-than-air flight.
ABQ BioPark:
Rio Grande Zoo
One of New Mexico’s top visitor destinations.
Albuquerque Aquarium
See the moray eel tunnel, stingrays, jellyfish and giant shark tank.
Rio Grande Botanic Garden
A lush state-of-the-art conservatory showcase.

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Find your essence
3 STELLAR STAYS
These top New Mexico resorts offer a little something for everyone.

SANDIA RESORT & CASINO
You might want to break out the Red Bulls, because we’re not sure how much sleep you’re going to get at this happening property on the far north end of Albuquerque. There’s the Vegas-style gaming, including more than 2,000 slots and the state’s largest poker room; the 7,722-yard, 18-hole golf course that boasts the beautiful Sandia Mountains as its backdrop; the 12,000-square-foot spa and fitness center; the heated pool, where even here you can get free Wi-Fi, live music at two lounges and an outdoor amphitheater that seats 4,200; and multiple dining destinations, most notably a rooftop steakhouse with killer views. The hotel itself was fashioned after a traditional New Mexico pueblo and flaunts a decidedly Native American decor punctuated with Southwestern pottery and artwork.
www.sandiaresort.com

INN OF THE MOUNTAIN GODS RESORT & CASINO
Fore! With a championship course labeled “One of the top 50 golf courses nationally” by GolfWeek magazine, this luxury resort just outside Ruidoso can clearly list golf as a go-to activity. But the fun doesn’t stop there. A stay at this luxury mountain retreat affords easy access to everything from hunting for bear and bull elk to some of the best warm-weather powder skiing in the country. The property is ideal for reunions, meetings, weddings, or other social gatherings. The hotel incorporates a host of indigenous ingredients such as the Pojoaque Pueblo, Buffalo Thunder permeates Native American sensibility and style throughout, and feels a thousand miles away despite the fact it’s only a 15-minute trek from Santa Fe.
www.buffalothunderresort.com

BUFFALO THUNDER RESORT & CASINO
Exerted yourself too much on the golf course? Sipped up too late at the slots? Partied too hard listening to one of your favorite bands? Wash it all away at this sprawling resort’s Southwest-inspired spa, which incorporates a host of indigenous ingredients like juniper, sage, warmed desert rocks, and even tiny bits of turquoise in its signature treatments. Owned by the Pojoaque Pueblo, Buffalo Thunder permeates Native American sensibility and style throughout, and feels a thousand miles away despite the fact it’s only a 15-minute trek from Santa Fe.
www.buffalothunderresort.com

Package for Two Includes:
Two Night Stay for Two at New Mexico’s Premier Mountain Resort
$50 Resort Credit
$25 in Spirit Play for Two
Two Tickets on Southwest Airlines
• Courtesy of Southwest Airlines Spirit magazine.

SWEETS

Go to spiritmag.com to register by May 31, 2011. (Only one entry per person.)