

New Mexico 2005

Santa Fe

We stayed two blocks from the historic Plaza in Santa Fe so we could walk to the attractions. Our first night we ordered room service and had a fire going – it was very cozy and warm compared to the brisk weather outside. The next day we visited the Georgia O’Keefe museum, the Fine Art museum and the Palace of the Governors. The Georgia O’Keefe museum was especially interesting as a video there showed her paintings of the New Mexican landscapes juxtaposed with the actual scenes. Then, when we were driving back to Albuquerque, we were able to recognize some of them. The Palace of the Governors was a striking adobe building on the Plaza. We were impressed by the density of art galleries in Santa Fe, particularly Canyon Road. In addition to south western designs, we also saw lots of garden inspired bronzes and wind sculpture. We even bought a tiny bronze horse sculpture at one of the galleries.

Taos

All too soon our day and a half ended in Santa Fe and we drove down to Taos where I was occupied during the next 4 days at my workshop. It was cold and there was even ice on the grass in the mornings. One afternoon we took a tour that allowed us to see the gorge that had been carved by the Rio Grande river. It was awesome to me having not seen the Grand Canyon in real life. The suspension bridge across the gorge is the second highest bridge in the US and when vehicles drove over it we felt as though we were experiencing an earthquake. We also visited the Millicent Rogers museum where her collection of art, native American artifacts and jewelry and textiles were displayed.

We tried to go to the Taos Pueblo which is a living pueblo, but they were closed for religious observances. Keeb observed that the casino was in full swing, nonetheless. Instead, we visited a gallery run by the photographer Chuck Henningsen. The building was impressive with lots of spaces for display. He would use some of his photographs to create collages that were eventually back lit and looked like stained glass pieces when framed. Others were sepia so I figured they would appeal to Keeb. He also had in addition to his collection an original stunning photograph of the New Mexico at night by Ansel Adams with a gigantic, eerie moon floating overhead.

We visited the Mabel Dodge Luhan bed and breakfast which hosted such famous guests as Georgia O’Keefe and D. H. Lawrence. It was very cozy. At the back of the building was a cross that our guide told us was in a painting by Georgia, so I made Keeb take a photo of it.

We drove by a very forward-thinking community with houses made of recycled materials, insulated with soil. They had a folksy yet space-age quality. Their occupants collect used cooking oil from nearby hotels and restaurants and use it as diesel. They called their settlement an “Earthship Community”. I was reminded of Daniel Day Lewis’ movie “The Ballad of Jack and Rose”.

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We visited a St. Francis of Assisi church which was an adobe structure studded with straw. The Spanish would choose the site where the Native Americans were already praying to set up their own churches. We also heard the story of Pope, a native American, who rallied the various tribes to rise up against the Spanish. Because they all did not have a common calendar or mathematical basis, he gave them ropes with equal numbers of knots tied in them and told them each night to untie one knot and on the night that all the knots had been untied they would then all converge on the Spanish. They managed to give the Spanish a run for their money.

We had some great meals in Taos, they served salsas and chili with everything including breakfast. Two restaurants that stood out were Lamberts and Joseph's Table. At Lamberts, we were a little unnerved by the waiter, since he stared up at the ceiling to tell us the specials but when he did the same to the couple next to us, we realised it was not us in particular, he must somehow be able to remember them better that way.

Albuquerque

After my workshop we drove back to Albuquerque and hit a comedy club that night. It was fun and the headliner, Tommy Savitt, was entertaining. It was a bit like having one of the Sopranos zinging one-liners at us. The next day we did not have to get to the airport until the afternoon so we hit the Natural History and Science Museum and ogled "Sues" bones – a 90% complete T-rex skeleton and checked out a replica of the probe sent to Mars. We then did a bit of shopping. Despite our access to online bookstores, there's something about those gargantuan brick and mortar bookstores in the US that grabs us whenever we get near one of them.