

# Our Favorite Memories

## Santa Fe & Taos, New Mexico

By Tour Leader Karin Sokel

It is said that we are attracted to a place—or recoil from it—for that matter, because we can feel its energy. In April of 2009, I led a WTT tour to New Mexico to experience the sites, sounds and energy of Santa Fe, Taos and the 26th annual Gathering of Nations Pow Wow in Albuquerque.

Santa Fe gave us our first stunning sense of this powerful attraction. Santa Fe, which means “Holy Faith,” was founded in 1610 and is the second oldest town in the United States. It’s full name and New Mexico’s state capitol is “The Royal City of the Holy Faith of Saint Francis of Assisi.” Four hundred years of association to what is holy and sacred, while surrounded by remnants of a 2,000-year old Pueblo civilization, helped me understand why Santa Fe drew us in, energetically and emotionally. It didn’t take long for us to feel the mysterious pull that has attracted mystics, healers, freedom seekers, musicians, artists, and so many others from all walks of life over the years.

A simple walking tour of Santa Fe was an energetic walk back in time...with the gentle play of light and shadow on the smooth lines of its adobe buildings. We learned the fascinating history of the infamous central Plaza, the site of bullfights, public floggings, gunfights, battles, political rallies and promenades. We took in the charming ambience of the Native American marketplace, where vendors gather daily under the portal of the Palace of Governors to sell their authentic, beautiful crafts. Many of us found the perfect piece to take home, one that will forever remind us of our special moments and our own connection to this enchanting New Mexican town.

Throughout our days in Santa Fe and Taos we visited museums, historic churches, galleries, Santa Fe’s gorgeous State House and of course, wonderful restaurants. We visited the famous San Francisco de Asis Church in Ranchos de Taos, surrounded by rugged landscape and magnificent quality of color and light on its massive exterior. Here, we got to see the eyes of Georgia O’Keefe and why she was so drawn to this land. On the High Road to Taos, we visited El Santuario de Chimayo, a small frontier adobe church, where since 1816, thousands of ailing believers have come to seek the healing power of the earth from a pit within its walls.

How does one describe the energy of Bandalier National Monument, where several thousand ancestral Pueblo dwellings are found among the pink mesas and sheer-walled canyons? Inhabited from the 1100s into the mid 1500s, we imagined life here with its incredible challenges and quiet simplicity as we walked the trails, occasionally entering a cliff dwelling by climbing long wooden ladders.

Next it was onto Taos Pueblo. This amazing place is considered to be the oldest continuously inhabited community in the U.S. The



Francisco de Asis Church



Outside Taos Pueblo

huge North House and South House adobe structures (which are actually many individual homes) are believed to be well over 1000 years old. With families still living on this land today, the Pueblo maintains a restriction of NO ELECTRICITY and NO RUNNING WATER. Incredible!

What fun we had traveling along The Turquoise Trail, the breathtaking route from Santa Fe to Albuquerque. Our all day journey took us through the unique mountain towns of Golden, Madrid and Cerrillos, each with its own locals, charming shops and art galleries. And will we ever forget wild and wonderful, one-of-a-kind Tinkertown! You have to see it to believe it!

Once down the Turquoise Trail, we saved the most thrilling experience for last. We lucky “women traveling together” got to experience The Gathering of Nations Pow Wow, hailed as the #1 folk festival in the world. Over 3,000 American Indian singers, dancers and drummers from over 500 tribes converged and performed in “the Pit” on the University of New Mexico’s campus along with 800 artists, craftsmen and traders displaying their wares. I watched stunned with my camera flashing away, pinching myself as I felt the electricity. I’m getting chills just writing about it...

If you’re looking for a bit of inspiring and uplifting energy in your life, look no further than the splendor of New Mexico! ❖



Scene from the Gathering of Nations.

## WHAT IS TINKERTOWN?



**“I did this all while you were watching TV.”**

**TINKERTOWN** is a 22-room museum outside Albuquerque, New Mexico. Built by Ross Ward, it is packed with Ward’s art as well as his eccentric collections of American ephemera. The museum itself is a curiosity built out of 50,000 glass bottles. A true labor of love, it took Ward four decades to build, collect and stock the Tinkertown museum. Wagon wheels, old fashioned store fronts, and western memorabilia also make Tinkertown’s exterior as much a part of the museum as the wonders within.

Ross Ward began carving wood in junior high. His first piece was a miniature wooden circus. This was to the first of many thousands of carvings, paintings, etchings, and drawings he would complete in his lifetime. His first carving was a fitting one: Ward eventually gained employment as a carnival backdrop painter and for over 30 years he traveled with the circus, exhibiting his self-taught paintings and carved miniatures around the world.

Among the many other items the museum features, besides Ward’s art, are thousands of wedding cake couples, antique tools, and much, much more. Other highlights include Otto the one-man-band and a 35-foot-long antique wooden sailboat that braved a 10 year voyage around the world displayed in the backyard.

A testament to just how much one man can accomplish in his life, in the words of Ross Ward: “I did this all while you were watching TV.” ❖