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FRENCH RIVIERA

10 TRIPS
OF A LIFETIME

Color Outside the Lines

New Mexico's curious arts capital shrugs off its conventions. BY AARON GULLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEN JUDGE



STEP INTO MEOW WOLF, a newly opened art space inside a repurposed bowling alley in southwest Santa Fe, and the facade of a Victorian house that greets you in turn opens into an *Alice in Wonderland* world. In the warren behind the fridge door and fireplace is a room fashioned from a fake mastodon skeleton, a cave of stalactites that make music when you hug them, and an inverted school bus with a windshield laser light show. It's unusual and interactive art – an “immersive storytelling experience in a science-fiction novel,” as cofounder Vince Kadlubek puts it. It's also the flash point for a creative energy infusing New Mexico's capital.

“People aren't traveling here to buy high-priced art any more. They are traveling to experience it,” Kadlubek says of the campy, hands-on space, which is partially funded by *Game of Thrones* author and Santa Fe transplant George R.R. Martin.

A trip to Santa Fe, with its blocky adobe architecture and

Santa Fe native Willy Bo Richardson's *Music to Drive By* in his studio.

Quick Escape

refined restaurant scene has always been a bit like tumbling down a rabbit hole. A magnet for artists and free spirits since the 1880s, the city radiates from a Mexican-style, cottonwood-shaded central plaza in a tangle of narrow streets and alleyways. Its circuitous, almost European-feeling jumble is part of the charm. Museums and shops huddle in the low cinnamon-colored buildings of downtown and wooded Canyon Road, which houses the highest concentration of the city's approximately 250 galleries, a short walk away.

Santa Fe's curious mix of culture and Wild West cavalier – Noam Chomsky, John Wayne, Jackson Pollock, and *The Big Lebowski* all wrapped up into one out-of-the-way, confounding place – lured me to move here more than a decade ago. Summer is the prime time to experience it, especially with its parade of festivals from Independence Day until the leaves begin to fall. There's the juried Art Santa Fe and the International



Bright lights, old city: Meow Wolf and (right) nineteenth-century Loretto Chapel, now a museum and event venue. Below: An asadero and cotija chile relleno from Joseph's Culinary Pub.

“The quaint notion of going to Santa Fe to buy howling coyote art is – thankfully – disappearing.”



Folk Art Market, with crafts, food, and music from nearly 60 countries in early July; the Santa Fe Opera, showing Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* this season; and the Santa Fe Indian Market, which will celebrate its 95th edition of Native American arts in August.

Young artists, chefs, and entrepreneurs, including Kadlubek and his Meow Wolf cadre, have already made their mark. “Galleries are scrambling toward nationally relevant contemporary art,” says Willy Bo Richardson, a Santa Fe-born painter whose internationally acclaimed canvases of fluid vertical strokes hang at Canyon Road's Turner Carroll Gallery. “The quaint notion of going to Santa Fe to buy howling coyote art is – thankfully – disappearing.”

IN 2003, WHEN THEN NEW MEXICO GOVERNOR Bill Richardson announced plans for a commuter rail line to connect Santa Fe

and Albuquerque, everyone thought he was mad as a hatter. Yet the the completed line's terminus has become one of the hottest spots in town. At the heart of the newly appointed Railyard Arts District, the Santa Fe Farmers' Market draws crowds with food and art vendors, live music, and a carnival atmosphere. And behind a scrum of galleries, the Santa Fe Railyard park is a leafy retreat with rotating public art; recent pieces include sculptor Don Kennell's two-story *Green Coyote* (you can't completely forsake your past).

A few blocks south in a shady lot on Cerillos Road, Modern General stocks tools, books, kitchen equipment, and staples such as locally grown and milled flours and beans. The bright space, with wooden floors and bouquets of oregano and Russian sage drying in the rafters, is a perfect spot for whiling away the afternoon over mugs of coffee or steaming bone broth

and a fruit kolacky made from the owner's grandmother's recipe.

A scattering of hot restaurants has popped up around the Railyard. In a cozy adobe with viga ceilings and murals, Joseph's Culinary Pub serves beautiful yet unfussy items such as grilled lamb from the Jemez Mountains that's caramelized with fennel and goat milk. Around the corner, Radish & Rye's fried green tomatoes with pimento cheese is a must, but many locals' *real* reason to visit is to sip from New Mexico's largest selection of bourbon. And just down the street, State Capital Kitchen bills itself as "an artisanal American dim sum" joint, which may sound affected until you pluck a small plate of rabbit pappardelle with wild mushrooms off carts circulating around the room.

But nowhere exemplifies Santa Fe's verve better than Eloisa, John Rivera Sedlar's eatery that garnered a James Beard Best New Restaurant nomination this year. (A personal favorite: the two-bite blue corn pas-trami tacos.) "Santa Fe is a crazy, incredible,



Palace Street's centuries-old adobe architecture and (right) the fresh look of Santa Fe Collective.



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Quick Escape



tip

"Plan for **at least one hike** on the trails near town. My favorite time is autumn, when the aspen meadows turn from whispering green to a golden orange – nature will not disappoint."

– Freda Anderson,
Virtuoso travel advisor,
Santa Fe

spiritual, and really weird city," says Sedlar, who makes the most of the free license afforded its chefs. Eloisa's dishes are sculptural, and the special Georgia O'Keeffe tasting menu – Sedlar's great-aunt was the artist's personal chef – is served on trays crafted from glass and cow skulls that are reminiscent of O'Keeffe still lifes.

It's complex, delicious, consciously beautiful, and, well, wonderfully weird – which pretty much sums up Santa Fe. Perhaps we can't help it. As the Cheshire Cat said of Wonderland, we're all a bit mad here.



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THE ART OF ENJOYING SANTA FE

Eat, see, love – how to fall under the spell of New Mexico's capital city.

STAY A block off Santa Fe Plaza, 136-room **Inn and Spa at Loretto** taps into the local scene with a daily artist-in-residence program and rotating artworks from Santa Fe galleries. *Doubles from \$179, including breakfast daily, upgrade at time of booking, a \$100 dining credit, and two tickets to the adjacent Loretto Chapel museum.*

Local designers Ira and Sylvia Seret, owners of Seret & Sons importers a few blocks away, hand-selected the antiques, rugs, and textiles for each of the **Inn of the Five Graces'** 24 rooms during their travels through Afghanistan and central Asia. *Doubles from \$425, including breakfast daily and a \$100 spa credit.*

In a historic adobe adjacent to Santa Fe Plaza, 58-room **Rosewood Inn of the Anasazi** channels its Southwestern heritage with bright Pendleton blankets and pillows to complement muted linens and handcrafted terra-cotta ceramics. *Doubles from \$315, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

Ten minutes north of town amid piñon pines and juniper bushes, **Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado's** 65 casitas have kiva fireplaces and timber-shaded portals above their private patios. *Doubles from \$700, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.*

Set on 550 acres of the Santa Ana Pueblo 45 minutes' drive outside Santa Fe, 350-room **Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa** connects guests to the landscape with guided horse-back rides and nature hikes, and cultural activities such as pottery workshops. *Doubles from \$159, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.*

EXPLORE **Turner Carroll Gallery** stands out from Canyon Road's top-tier dealers for progressive paintings, sculptures, and photography. *725 Canyon Road; turnercarrollgallery.com.*

Meow Wolf's 33,000-square-foot interactive art space feels like a cross between a sci-fi novel and

an acid trip. Adults will be entertained, and kids won't want to leave. *1352 Rufina Circle; meowwolf.com.*

Santa Fe Collective focuses on paintings, photos, sculptures, and mixed-media works that are \$500 or less. *1114 Hickox Street; santafecollective.com.*

One of the most respected contemporary galleries in town, **David Richard** now devotes a separate space to up-and-coming local artists. *1570 Pacheco Street; davidrichardgallery.com.*

Modern General is perhaps the only place in town where you can get a good book on simple living, a high-quality garden trowel, and a French press of strong coffee all at once. *637 Cerrillos Road; moderngeneralnm.com.*

EAT John Sedlar's **Eloisa** plates some of the most forward-thinking Southwestern cuisine going. Don't miss its rooftop bar with views over downtown. *228 E. Palace Avenue; eloisasantafe.com.*

The bar menu at **Joseph's Culinary Pub**, featuring a great lamb burger and perhaps the best chile relleno you'll ever eat, is just as good as the main restaurant's, but half the price. *428 Agua Fria Street; josephsofsantafe.com.*

Drop by **Radish & Rye** for Southern-inspired, farm-to-table comfort food – as well as more than 70 varieties of bourbon. *548 Agua Fria Street; radishandrye.com.*

State Capital Kitchen's American "dim sum" is perfect for informal dinners and groups. *500 Sandoval Street; statecapitalkitchen.com.*

Longtime local chef Fernando Olea turns out Oaxacan-inspired mole specials at upscale **Sazón**, set in a cozy adobe with crackling kiva fireplaces. *221 Shelby Street; sazonsantafe.com.* **VI.**

From left: Radish & Rye's fried green tomatoes with pimento cheese, the Railyard district, and Inn of the Five Graces.

