

New Mexico Fall Fiesta

October 2 - 10, 2008
9 Days ~ 13 meals

For nine days in October, the New Mexico skies are painted as hundreds of balloons lift off from Albuquerque's Balloon Fiesta Park. Nothing rivals the power of Mass Ascension on crisp early mornings as these graceful giants leave the ground to take their place in the cerulean desert sky. The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is a pilgrimage offering something for everyone. . . whimsical special shapes filled with equal parts hot air and wonder, and balloon glows that create a magical night landscape. The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta will leave you awestruck and wanting more.



Day 1 - Thursday, October 2: This is the day we begin our fall fiesta. Today is a travel day filled with get-to-know-your-neighbor activities, entertainment, fun games, and breaks along the way. Overnight lodging is in Oklahoma City, OK.

Day 2 - Friday, October 3: After a good hot breakfast buffet, we continue our travel to New Mexico. Our destination and overnight lodging for the next three nights is Albuquerque, NM. *Included meals: Breakfast*

Day 3 - Saturday, October 4: Today we are up bright and early to witness the first day's opening ceremonies and mass balloon ascension at the Balloon Fiesta Park. After the Dawn Patrol checks out the day's weather and gives the green light, hundreds of balloons rise in waves above the fields of spectators. The most exciting thing is that you get to walk among the balloons as they inflate. You get to meet the pilots, ask questions and maybe even assist with the inflation if the crew asks. Later in the morning, we take a guided historical tour of Old Town Albuquerque, one of the oldest towns in North America. After lunch you will have free time to visit the picturesque adobe shops and galleries of historic Old Town. Evening entertainment will be dinner at Sandiago's Mexican Grill at the base of Sandia Peak Tram and a ride to the top of the 10,000 foot high Sandia Mountain for a panoramic view of the city lights below. *Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner*



Day 4 - Sunday, October 5: After breakfast, we visit the Albuquerque Aquarium for an aquatic "journey down the Rio Grande" from Albuquerque to its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico. Then we tour the lush and peaceful Rio Grande Botanic Garden oasis in the desert. Next comes a little free time for lunch and shopping on the historic old Route 66. Before attending the evening Balloon Glow, we visit the Albuquerque International Balloon Museum to learn about the history of balloons and how they really fly. Then we return to the Park for what is said to be the most spectacular single moment in all of the Balloon Fiesta. It is the Balloon Glow when all of the balloons are lit from within like giant holiday ornaments creating a breathtaking "glow" in the evening sky. And yes, there are food vendors at Balloon Fiesta Park serving a variety of foods. There is over 1/3 of a mile of concessions on the field. *Included meals: Breakfast*



Day 5 - Monday, October 6: After breakfast, we take a scenic drive up to Santa Fe, the 400-year-old capital city of New Mexico. We start our tour with a visit to the famous Loretto Chapel and its mysterious spiral staircase. Then enjoy an 8-mile guided trolley tour through some of the most important historic areas of Santa Fe. After lunch in the Ore House on the Plaza, we visit the oldest public building in our nation, the Palace of the Governors; the oldest church in North America, the San Miguel Mission; and the "oldest house." You even have time to do some shopping on the Plaza while we are here. Tonight's lodging is in Santa Fe, NM. *Included meals: Breakfast and Lunch*

Day 6 - Tuesday, October 7: After breakfast, we drive to Bandelier National Monument. The ancestors of modern Pueblo people built thriving communities here about 600 years ago. Several thousand Ancestral Pueblo dwellings are still found among the pink mesas and sheer-walled canyons. Next we drive to Taos, another historical town settled by the Spanish over 300 years ago. You will have time for lunch and shopping in the Heart of Taos, the Old Plaza area, before we tour La Hacienda De Los Martinez, one of the few remaining New Mexico style "Great Houses." The Hacienda provides the visitor with a rare glimpse of the rugged frontier life and times of the early 1800s. Tonight we have an authentic, Mexican cuisine, buffet dinner at Ogelvies in the historic Taos Plaza. Overnight lodging is in Taos, NM. *Included meals: Breakfast and Dinner*



Day 7 - Wednesday, October 8: After breakfast, we visit Taos Pueblo; the only living Native American community designated both a World Heritage Site and a National Historic Landmark. The multi-storied adobe buildings have been continuously inhabited for over 1000 years. Approximately 150 people still live within the Pueblo full time. They have no electricity and drink water from the river. Then we visit The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, the second highest cantilever truss bridge in the United States, with a span of 1280 feet across and 650 feet above the wild and remote Rio Grande River. After a walk across the bridge, if you dare, we return to Santa Fe for lunch in the Museum Hill Café and a visit to the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian. Shaped like a traditional octagonal Navajo Hogan, the museum displays 19th and 20th century crafts and paintings. Tonight's lodging is in Tucumcari, NM. *Included meals: Breakfast and Lunch*

Days 8-9 – Thursday-Friday, October 9-10: These days are for traveling home, with breaks along the way, as we relax and reminisce about the land of enchantment and the spectacular balloon fiesta. Overnight lodging is in Tulsa, OK. *Included meals: Breakfast each morning*

Package and Pricing: Includes deluxe motorcoach transportation; lodging and baggage handling; sightseeing, meals and gratuities per itinerary; trip journal; and a professional and friendly tour guide.

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