

# Cultural Tapestry

Private tours reveal Santa Fe's hidden beauty and storied past. BY CASANDRA KARPIAK

**C**rimson Chile ristras hung from the Plaza's arcades as turquoise jewelry glistened and piñon smoke curled in the air. "The Plaza was the end point of both trails," said my guide, Amy Fredericks, noting how the Missouri Trail ended here and the Camino Real stretched another 600 miles into Mexico.

My tour began at the Cross of the Martyrs, where a panoramic view stretched across the city of Santa Fe, New Mexico. A tradition dating to 1717 honors 21 priests killed in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Each September, the statue of Mary, dressed in one of her hundreds of handmade gowns, is carried from the Basilica in procession to mark the start of Fiestas de Santa Fe, the nation's oldest continuously run festival.

Inside San Miguel Chapel, where the cool air smelled faintly of candle wax, Fredericks gestured toward the uneven planks beneath our feet. "This is the original floor from 1610," she noted, where centuries of worshippers have left their mark. At the Loretto Chapel, her voice dropped before the famed staircase: "No nails, all wood pegs," she whispered, the spiral rising skyward with inexplicable grace.

On Canyon Road, galleries spill one after another, yet the real surprises hide behind thick walls. A courtyard opens to reveal nearly an acre of lawns and rose gardens, where bronze figures keep watch over a quiet pond invisible from the street. "It can be overwhelming," Fredericks admitted, noting Santa Fe's art scene ranks third in the nation, an astonishing scale for a city its size. "That's why I like to give people a preview first, so you know what's here and can come back to explore."

I booked my private city walk through Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado's Adventure Center, where adventure architect Hans Lochr has led the program since 2013. What began with hikes to the Rio en Medio waterfall now includes Jeep excursions across red-rock mesas; e-biking through Georgia O'Keeffe country; and the new Los Alamos "Secret City" tour, a timely look at J. Robert Oppenheimer's legacy.

Four Seasons staff guide every Adventure Center tour, but for others visiting the City Different, providers such as Historic Walks of Santa Fe, Santa Fe School of Cooking and Food Tour New Mexico offer their own way into the city. However you explore, Santa Fe reveals itself layer by layer through courtyards, chapels and plazas still alive with stories.



**Santa Fe Sights:** Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado's Adventure Center tour of Santa Fe (above), and bronze statue of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Native American saint, located outside the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe (left)

PHOTOS: © FOUR SEASONS RESORT RANCHO ENCANTADO, © CASANDRA KARPIAK