

Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta

Departs: See Dates Below

New Mexico Land of Enchantment

DAY 1 - This morning we'll board our flight to Albuquerque. Upon arrival, we'll pause for lunch (on your own) and browsing through the many shops surrounding historic Old Town Plaza, where the city began in 1706, then we'll embark on a guided afternoon tour including such sights as San Felipe de Neri Church, Rio Grande Park, the University of New Mexico, the Ernie Pyle Home, and handsome residential areas. Late this afternoon we'll check in for an three-night stay at the fine ClubHouse Inn & Suites. To complete the day in style, we'll enjoy a unique Southwestern "welcome" dining experience at El Pinto, where cascading waterfalls, radiant fireplaces and garden patios recreate the ambience of Territorial New Mexico.

DAY 2 - This morning we'll get up early for this morning's "Mass Ascension," at the world-renowned Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta...we'll experience the incredible spectacle of hundreds of colorful hot air balloons moving silently through clear blue New Mexico skies, plus arts, crafts, and a wide variety of food booths along the Midway. Special balloon shapes add to the fun, and the balloon makers come up with new and different shapes each year. Next, we'll take a ride on the Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway to the mountain's 10,378-foot summit, affording thrilling panoramic views of the city and the Rio Grande Valley. Later in the day, we'll also be visiting the fascinating Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, which tells the story of New Mexico's Pueblo Indian culture, including authentic native art, craft, and dance demonstrations. Then, returning to the Fiesta, we'll attend this evening's "Balloon Glow" event, where hundreds of illuminated balloons "light up" against the New Mexico night skyline, forming a dramatic canopy of color and light, a magnificent sight in the desert sunset. Dinner is included at the Fiesta site...choose from numerous alternatives.

DAY 3 - Today we set our sights for Santa Fe, the oldest seat of government in the United States. Famous for its unique mix of Spanish and Indian cultures, the narrow streets of Santa Fe are lined with buildings of distinctive design, adobe houses, and interesting shops. Our guided walking and motorcoach tour of this historic city features the Palace of the Governors and the Mission of San Miguel, both dating from around 1610, the renowned Plaza, New Mexico's circular State Capitol, and the splendid Museum of International Folk Art. There will also be time for browsing this afternoon in the extensive array of downtown shops and galleries. We'll be guests tonight for dinner at the Blue Corn Café, a local favorite, before returning to Albuquerque.

DAY 4 - Motoring northwest from Albuquerque, today's sightseeing highlight is one of the most remote and one of the most incredible units of the National Park Service, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, which was once the center of a complex, flourishing urban civilization, the home of the Chaco Anasazi from the early 10th to the late 12th century A.D. Desolate Chaco Canyon seems an unlikely place for the Anasazi culture to develop, yet researchers estimate that as many as 5,000 persons once lived in some 400 settlements in and around the area. The park contains 13 major greathouse ruins and many smaller ruins, plus ancient roads 30 feet in width which connected Chaco to some 75 communities. You're sure to be humbled by the wild beauty and mystery of this place, uninhabited for some 800 years! Continuing on, we'll also stop to see the impressive Salmon Ruin in Bloomfield, before we arrive in Farmington for dinner and a three-night stay at the Brentwood Inn in the "Four Corners" region of northwest New Mexico.

DAY 5 - One of the highlights of our tour is a full day trip featuring magnificent Mesa Verde National Park, where some of the largest and best preserved Indian cliff dwellings in existence...some 600 structures scattered among nearly 5,000 archaeological sites...have been sheltered for centuries in alcoves eroded in the rock walls. Our guided tour will reveal such fine examples as the Spruce Tree House, Cliff Palace, Sun Temple, and Square Tower House. Before returning to Farmington, we'll also see towering Shiprock and visit a real Indian Trading Post in the Navajo Nation.

DAY 6 - Heading north to Durango, Colorado, this morning we'll board The Silverton for a thrilling trip through the rugged mountains of San Juan National Forest to the colorful "Old West" mining town for which the train was named. This Victorian-style, steam-powered narrow-gauge railroad, in service since 1882, originally carried miners to their labors in the high country. Today it will take you on an extraordinary sightseeing excursion. Upon arrival, you'll have time for lunch and browsing. Next, we re-board our motorcoach and take the famed "Million Dollar Highway" north of Silverton through 11,008-foot Red Mountain Pass to Ouray, the picturesque "Switzerland of America," which is home to Ouray Hot Springs, Cascade Falls and Bear Creek Falls. Returning to Durango through breathtaking mountain scenery, we'll pause for a delicious "farewell" dinner at the historic Strater Hotel before making our way back to Farmington.

DAY 7 - After breakfast, we'll pause to explore Aztec Ruins National Monument, home of the Great Kiva, the only reconstruction of its kind in North America. We'll return to Albuquerque early this afternoon to board our homeward-bound flight.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS: 7 DAYS

- **Quality lodging every night at excellent, AAA-approved hotels and motor inns, especially chosen to offer attractive, well-located group accommodations and full facilities**
- **Tour transportation throughout by chartered, late-model, restroom-equipped luxury touring coach...**
- **Full-time services of an experienced, knowledgeable tour director to provide informative commentary and assure every one's comfort and convenience, plus expert "step-on" tour guides for sightseeing in major cities**
- **Delightful dining experiences to add to the group's enjoyment: daily breakfast (an attractive mix of full American and deluxe continental) plus daily full-course dinner with choice of entree**
- **All admissions and fees for sightseeing and entertainment program indicated (no options will be sold)**
- **Gratuities for handling of one large suit case per guest throughout the trip (bellmen and airport skycaps)**
- **Full-color fliers to help you promote your tour, plus pre-trip itinerary and information packet, name badge, and baggage tag for each tour participant, all customized with your name at no extra charge.**
- **All applicable taxes and tips on tour inclusions**
- **All gratuities for tour director, "step-on" guides, and coach driver**
- **Comprehensive VPS travel insurance, including accident, hospitalization/medical expense, baggage, trip delay, medical evacuation, and trip cancellation/interruption coverage for all tour guests.**

**Departures:
October 7, 11, 2006**

PRICE PER PERSON: Land only

Single:	Double:	Triple:	Quad:
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