WILDSAM

DESERT SOUTHWEST

FIELD GUIDES

AMERICAN ROAD TRIP SERIES

VOL. 2

THE TRAVELERS AT WILDSAM BRING YOU THE SIGHTS, STORIES AND ROAD TRIP SECRETS OF THE SOUTHWEST.

Founded in 2012, Wildsam is a modern travel brand with a bygone sense of place. Similar to their acclaimed city guides, the new American Road Trip Series explores iconic regions through the lens of story. The field guides are offbeat, inviting and packed with smart intel for unforgettable journeys.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Itineraries for classic adventures across the Southwest

Interviews with astronomers, shamans and river guides

Tips from park rangers, agave experts and vintage dealers

PRAISE FOR WILDSAM

"For tireless seekers of the authentic."
The Wall Street Journal

"Charmingly throwback."
National Geographic Traveler

"People don't take trips—
trips take people."

John Steinbeck, the writer who first inspired WILDSAM, wrote those words in his American epic, *Travels with Charley*. They capture the core belief of the book you now hold in your hands: That unforgettable experiences are born from the unexpected. And road trips, most especially, beg the traveler to write plans in pencil and trace routes on the fly. May the stories in these pages stoke this kind of adventure.

WILDSAM
FIELD GUIDES

Deep thanks to the National Park Service, Arizona Historical Society, Hubbard Museum of the American West, Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, Chinati Foundation, Morgan Matthews, Ryan Heffernan, Claudia Morrisson, Zion Adventure Company, Slab City Hostel, Brandi Jessup, Taos Clay Studio, Bret Collier at Big Bend Saddlery, Elaine Thacher, Maggie Zakri, Neon Museum, Scott Corey, Elizabeth Hutchison, John Shocklee, Norman Maktima, Tey Marianna Nunn, Todd Wells Alessandro Bressan, Buck Johnson, Camp Bosworth and Marshall McKinney—thank you!

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Portions of Hampton Sides' essay were adapted from his book *Blood and Thunder: An Epic of the American West*, as well as from essays he previously published in *Preservation*, *Outside*, *American Cowboy* and *New Mexico Magazine*.

CONTENTS

WELCOME

IN OCTOBER 1936, a seasoned newspaper editor named Randall Henderson sat down at his typewriter in tiny El Centro, California. Though a short train ride from Los Angeles and within walking distance of Mexico, El Centro was way out there. But in his 25 years in Imperial County, Henderson had come to see beyond the landscape's first impression. That morning, at his desk, he typed a simple sentence that would define the remainder of his life's work. "There are two deserts," he wrote.

Henderson's sentiment not only launched the cult-favorite *Desert Magazine,* which debuted a year later in November 1937, but it also defined the enduring secret of the Southwest region. There *are* two deserts. "One is a grim wasteland," Henderson explains, "the desert seen by the stranger speeding along the highway. The other Desert—the real Desert—is not for the eyes of the superficial observer, or the fearful soul or the cynic. It is a land, the character of which is hidden except to those who come with friendliness and understanding."

This "other Desert" is the place of ancient heritage and geological grandeur. It's the Desert of solace and inspiration and reinvention, the one of New Age seekers and counterculture visionaries, of tribes of artists and poets and scientists. Even of families of parked RVs and wide-eyed kids on the rim of the Grand Canyon, thinking the same thoughts that Teddy Roosevelt spoke in 1903—"The ages have been at work."

Color. Light. Space. Time. From its burnt-orange days to the night skies pitched with a million stars, the Southwest brings to stage wonder and awe. Two deserts, yes. Each containing multitudes and beyond.

ESSENTIALS

Transportation, Lodging, Annual Events,
Notable Geography, Foodways, Media,
Current Issues, State Icons and more

PLANNING

TRANSPORT

MOTORCYCLES
Eaglerider
El Paso, TX
eaglerider.com

AIRSTREAM
Airstream 2 Go
Las Vegas, NV
airstream2go.com

HOT AIR BALLOON
Rainbow Ryders
Albuquerque, NM
rainbowryders.com

PONTOON BOAT
Navajo Lake Marina
Navajo State Park, NM
navajomarina.com

HELICOPTER
Sundance Helicopter
Grand Canyon Sunset
Las Vegas, NV
sundancehelicopters.com

VINTAGE CONVERTIBLE
Fantasy Car Rentals
Las Vegas, NV
fantasycarrentals.com

ROAD BIKE
Absolute Bikes
Sedona, AZ
absolutebikes.net

CLIMATE

Heavily influenced by elevation, Southwestern climate conditions fluctuate between bone-dry desert and snowcapped mountains. It's the hottest region in the U.S., with 2001-2010 the warmest recorded period in history. Drought is common, except during monsoon season [July-September], when rainstorms quench the earth and keep wildfires at bay.

CALENDAR

JAN Sundance Film Festival
Park City, UT

FEB 24 Hours in the Old Pueblo
bike race, Tucson, AZ

MAR Chimayo Pilgrimage
Chimayo, NM

APR Scottsdale Culinary Festival
Scottsdale, AZ

MAY Native American Arts
Auction, Ganado, AZ

JUN FIBArk Whitewater
Festival, Salida, CO

JUL Taos Pueblo Pow Wow,
Taos, NM

AUG Jazz Festival, Telluride, CO

SEP Hatch Valley Chile Festival
Hatch, NM

OCT International Balloon
Fiesta , Albuquerque, NM

NOV Terlingua Chili Cook Off
Terlingua, TX

DEC National Finals Rodeo
Las Vegas, NV

GEOGRAPHY

Notable terrain formations and where to find them.

RAIN SHADOW
Dry land sheltered from storm winds by mountainous coverage, stifling plant growth. *Black Rock Desert, NV*

NATURAL ARCHES
Soft sediment dissolves, leaving a curved bridge connecting two cliff walls. *Arches National Park, UT*

HOT SPRINGS
Water body heated by the earth's core, ranging in temps from pleasant to past boiling. *Gila Hot Springs, NM*

SLOT CANYON
Confined openings formed by water's gradual wearing of lime/sandstone cracks. *Antelope Canyon, AZ*

BUTTE
Secluded hill formed by caprock's resilient protection against wind and time. *Courthouse Butte, AZ*

HOODOO
Volcanic-sedimentary totems, 5 to 150 feet, formed by frost wedging and acidic rain. *Boynton Canyon, AZ*

FOODWAYS

History, culture and tradition in a dish.

Green Chile Stew — New Mexico's green chile brings soft heat to slow-cooked stew, savored best during the September harvest season. *The Pink Adobe, Santa Fe, NM*

Fry Bread — Thick and chewy Native American dough eaten as tacos, alongside chili, or dusted with powdered sugar. *The Fry Bread House, Phoenix, AZ*

Asado — Native to West Texas, this ancho chile—stewed pork dish is cooked on a wok-like plough disc called a "disco." *Bienvenidos, Fort Stockton, TX*

Biscochito — Lard-based, cinnamon-and-anise-flavored state cookie of New Mexico, popular at weddings and baptisms. *Tesuque Village Market, Albuquerque, NM*

Bison — Whether grilled as steaks or chopped and tossed in a Colorado chili, the lean meat is a favorite in the Rockies. *Diamond Belle Saloon, Durango, CO*

HISTORY

1300 .....Drought pushes Ancestral Puebloans out of Four Corners.
1598 .....Juan de Oñate establishes Colony of New Mexico.
1680.....Native Americans of New Mexico fight to drive out Spaniards in Pueblo Revolt.
1847 .....Taos Revolt against U.S. occupation of northern NM during Mexican-American War.
1877 .....Army scout discovers copper in present-day Bisbee, AZ.
1881 .....Cowboys and lawmen swap bullets at the O.K. Corral, Tombstone, AZ.
1886.....Geronimo surrenders southern AZ, ends Apache Tribe resistance to the U.S. Army.
1906.....Railroad planners of Las Vegas set aside Block 16 for liquor sales and prostitution.
1914.....San Marcos Golf Course becomes the first green grass course in Arizona.
1919.....President Wilson signs Grand Canyon as National Park into law.
1929 .....Oasis Café on Fremont Street hangs first neon sign in Las Vegas.
1940.....Georgia O'Keeffe moves to Ghost Ranch near Abiquiú, NM.
1945 .....First atomic bomb detonated at Trinity Site in central NM.
1963.....Final concrete poured on controversial Glen Canyon Dam in UT.
1967 .....Evel Knievel crash-lands after attempting 141-foot jump over Caesars Palace fountains.
1969 .....Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper star in motorcycle odyssey, *Easy Rider*.
1973.....Gram Parsons found dead at the Joshua Tree Inn.
1975 .....Bill Gates and Paul Allen co-found Microsoft in Albuquerque.
1991.....Larry Harvey's Burning Man festival moves from San Francisco to Black Rock Desert, NV.
1997 .....Mysterious "Lights Over Phoenix" spotted by thousands of spectators in AZ and Mexico.
2011.....Wallow Fire, started by an abandoned campfire, burns 841 square miles, sets AZ record.
2012 .....Colorado Amendment 64 legalizes recreational marijuana usage.
2015 .....NM becomes 17th state to generate 1,000& megawatts of wind energy.

MEDIA

FILM	MUSIC
Thelma & Louise	Gram Parsons
Leaving Las Vegas	The Killers
Raising Arizona	Lalo Guerrero
No Country For Old Men	Jenny Lewis
127 Hours	Yawning Man
There Will Be Blood	El Miradors
Paris, Texas	The Mars Volta
3 Godfathers	Beirut
Natural Born Killers	Meat Puppets
Little Miss Sunshine	Queens of the Stone Age

BOOKS

- *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey: A sage of the Southwest, Abbey's fourth book is an autobiographical account of his time as a park ranger at Arches National Monument.

- *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S. Thompson: Squinting at the American Dream through a drug-induced cloud, this is Thompson's thinly-veiled fictionalization of a Vegas story assignment.

- *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons* by John Wesley Powell: This log documents Powell's three-month boating expedition down the Colorado and through the Grand Canyon.

- *Blood Meridian* by Cormac McCarthy: His novel set in the Southwest follows a runaway kid and a violent band of Comanches in sparse, brooding prose. David Foster Wallace called it the most horrifying book of the century.

- *Face of an Angel* by Denise Chávez: A fictitious New Mexico town comes to life through the eyes of protagonist Soveida Dosamantes, whose depiction won Chávez an American Book Award.

- *House of Rain* by Craig Childs: Part adventure travelogue, part historical pursuit to unravel the mysterious disappearance of the Ancestral Puebloans people from Chaco Canyon.

LODGING

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

The Inn of the Five Graces

Santa Fe, NM

fivegraces.com

Adobe village inn adorned with colorful tilework and kiva fireplaces.

AIRSTREAMS

El Cosmico

Marfa, TX

elcosmico.com

West Texas starlight shines brightly on these retro-fitted accommodations.

NATIONAL PARK

29 Palms Inn

Twentynine Palms, CA

29palmsinn.com

Unassuming Joshua Tree refuge with 1930s bungalows and cabins.

DUDE RANCH

Tanque Verde Ranch

Tucson, AZ

tanqueverderanch.com

Travelers hit the dusty trails at this 60,000-acre cowboy compound in the Catalina foothills.

HOUSEBOAT

Antelope Point Marina

Lake Powell, AZ

foreverhouseboats.com

Float with friends in cushy overnight quarters on the ultimate waterbed.

DESERT LUXURY

Amangiri

Canyon Point, UT

aman.com

This desert escape's modern looks and otherworldly views are worth the big-time splurge.

SPA

Ojo Caliente

Ojo Caliente, NM

ojospa.com

Stay in the world's only hot spring to offer four types of mineral water.

ROADSIDE MOTEL

Siesta Motel

Durango, CO

durangosiestamotel.com

The Haddon family has helmed this dog-friendly charmer since 1975.

ORGANIC FARM

Los Poblanos Historic Inn

Albuquerque, NM

lospoblanos.com

Idyllic hacienda with thriving farm and lavender fields.

HISTORIC

Gage Hotel

Marathon, TX

gagehotel.com

An 89-year-old Mission-style estate constructed for weary ranchers.

MOUNTAIN LUXURY

Dunton Hot Springs

Outside Telluride, CO

duntonhotsprings.com

Hand-hewn cabins set in an old ghost town in San Juan National Forest.

RETRO

Ace Hotel & Swim Club

Palm Springs, CA

acehotel.com

The former Howard Johnson property gets a funky 50s-chic makeover.

PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

Lesser-known state and national territories and the prime lookouts within.

ARIZONA

Vermilion Cliffs — *Paria Canyon Wilderness, Soap Creek trail*
Unspoiled red rock grandeur favored by adventurous hikers for unmarked trails and peaceful vistas.

CALIFORNIA

Mojave Desert — *Calico Peaks, Antelope Valley, Poppy Reserve*
North America's driest desert supports its Joshua trees on roughly 13 inches of rain per year.

COLORADO

Mesa Verde — *Petroglyph Point trail, Far View House*
The "Green Table" provided for Ancestral Pueblo whose dwellings remain etched into these cliffs.

NEW MEXICO

Lincoln National Forest — *Bluff Springs Waterfall, Dog Canyon trail*
Encompassing three mountain ranges, Lincoln is home to an awesome diversity of plant life.

TEXAS

Balmorhea State Park — *Natural pool, Indian Lodge in Davis Mountains*
The world's largest spring-fed swimming pool between cobalt skies and miles of glorious nothing.

NEVADA

Valley of Fire State Park — *Rainbow Vista trail, Prospect trail*
Nevada's oldest and largest state park shows off springtime blooms of desert marigolds and indigo bush.

UTAH

Glen Canyon Recreation Area — *Lone Rock Beach, Rainbow Bridge*
The waters of Lake Powell shimmer in the rugged Grand Staircase terrain, best explored by boat.

ISSUES

Land Rights

Nominally protected public lands are increasingly threatened by corporate and state-level energy and mineral extraction. In 2015, Utah's governor opposed additional protection for Cedar Mesa, jeopardizing 500,000 acres.
EXPERT: *Bob Keiter, University of Utah*

Border Patrol

During a recent two-year period, agents were involved in 64 shooting incidents, resulting in 19 deaths. Despite having roughly 44,000 officers, Customs and Border Protection has only 207 internal affairs personnel.
EXPERT: *Vicki Gaubeca, ACLU-NM Center for Border Rights*

Water

Increased levels of consumption [agricultural, industrial, municipal] and drought have severely depleted the once-mighty Colorado River. Ineffective management of the river flow and resource allocation adds complexity.
EXPERT: *Brad Udall, Colorado Water Institute*

Mining

From 1944-1986, nearly 4 million tons of radioactive uranium was mined by Navajo men for U.S. companies on reservation land, leading to major health issues. As of 2014, 521 abandoned mines remained unclosed on Navajo land.
EXPERT: *Chris Shuey, Uranium Impact Assessment Program*

STATISTICS

125 ..... Age when a Saguaro cactus is considered an adult
74 ..... UFO sightings reported in New Mexico in 2015
134 ..... Temperature in Death Valley on July 10, 1913
8 ..... Dark-Sky Parks with "gold tier" rating found in SW
36,000,000 ..... People estimated to receive water from the Colorado River

TEXAS

EST. 1845 **MOTTO:** *Friendship*

STATE BIRD
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD

STATE FLOWER
BLUEBONNET

STATE GEM
TOPAZ

STATE SONG
"TEXAS, OUR TEXAS"

SMALL FESTIVAL
Chinati Weekend
Marfa
chinati.org

RESTAURANT
L & J Café
El Paso
landjcafe.com

BAR
White Buffalo Bar
Marathon
gagehotel.com

SCENIC DRIVE
Davis Mountains Scenic Loop
From Fort Davis

OFFBEAT ATTRACTION
Prada Marfa
Valentine
ballroommarfa.org

MEMENTO
Landscape photograph
James Evans Gallery
jamesevans.com

NEW MEXICO

EST. 1912 **MOTTO:** *It Grows As It Goes*

STATE BIRD
GREATER ROADRUNNER

STATE FLOWER
YUCCA FLOWER

STATE GEM
TURQUOISE

STATE SONG
"O FAIR NEW MEXICO"

SMALL FESTIVAL
Festival of the Cranes
San Antonio
festivalofthecranes.com

CLASSIC RESTAURANT
The Shed
Santa Fe
sfshed.com

BAR
Silva's Saloon
Bernalillo

SCENIC DRIVE
Jemez Mountain Trail
Coronado Monument to Bandelier Monument

OFFBEAT ATTRACTION
The Very Large Array
Socorro
vla.nrao.edu

MEMENTO
Chimayo Blanket
Centinela Arts
chimayoweavers.com

ARIZONA

EST. 1912 **MOTTO:** *God Enriches*


STATE BIRD
CACTUS WREN


STATE FLOWER
SAGUARO


STATE GEM
TURQUOISE


STATE SONG
"THE ARIZONA MARCH SONG"

SMALL FESTIVAL
World's Oldest Rodeo
Prescott
worldsoldestrodeo.com

RESTAURANT
El Molino Mexican Café
Scottsdale
elmolinocafe.com

BAR
Hotel Congress
Tucson
hotelcongress.com

SCENIC DRIVE
U.S. Route 163
Navajo Nation

OFFBEAT ATTRACTION
Wigwam Motel
Holbrook
sleepinawigwam.com

MEMENTO
Soleri Windbells
Arcosanti
arcosanti.org

UTAH

EST. 1896 **MOTTO:** *Industry*


STATE BIRD
CALIFORNIA GULL


STATE FLOWER
SEGO LILY


STATE GEM
TOPAZ


STATE SONG
"UTAH, THIS IS THE PLACE"

SMALL FESTIVAL
Grand Circle Trail Fest
Kanab
thetrailfest.com

RESTAURANT
Milt's Stop and Eat
Moab
miltsstopandeat.com

BAR
Zion Canyon Brew Pub
Springdale
zionbrewery.com

SCENIC DRIVE
Burr Trail switchbacks
Bullfrog to Boulder

OFFBEAT ATTRACTION
Bryce Canyon hoodoos
Bryce Canyon National Park
nps.gov

MEMENTO
Turqouise cabochon
Twin Rocks Trading Post
twinrocks.com

COLORADO

EST. 1876 **MOTTO:** *Nothing Without Providence*

STATE BIRD
LARK BUNTING

STATE FLOWER
COLORADO BLUE COLUMBINE

STATE GEM
AQUAMARINE

STATE SONG
"WHERE THE COLUMBINES GROW"

RESTAURANT
La Marmotte
Telluride

SCENIC DRIVE
Million Dollar Highway
U.S. 550, Silverton to Ouray

MEMENTO
Shed antlers
Traders Rendezvous
coloradoantlers.com

CALIFORNIA

EST. 1850 **MOTTO:** *Eureka*

STATE BIRD
CALIFORNIA QUAIL

STATE FLOWER
CALIFORNIA POPPY

STATE GEM
BENITOITE

STATE SONG
"I LOVE YOU, CALIFORNIA"

RESTAURANT
Mr. Lyons
Palm Springs

SCENIC DRIVE
Palms to Pines Highway

MEMENTO
Wonder Valley olive oil
BKB Ceramics
bkbceramics.com

NEVADA

EST. 1864 **MOTTO:** *All For Our Country*

STATE BIRD
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD

STATE FLOWER
BIG SAGEBUSH

STATE GEM
VIRGIN VALLEY BLACK FIRE OPAL

STATE SONG
"HOME MEANS NEVADA"

RESTAURANT
Bob Taylor's Ranch House
Las Vegas

SCENIC DRIVE
Red Rock Canyon
13-mile scenic loop

MEMENTO
$1 Chip from The Flamingo
Las Vegas

CITIES & TOWNS

Marfa, Taos, Albuquerque, Tucson, Sedona, Durango, Las Vegas and Joshua Tree.

MARFA, TX

POPULATION 1,981
SIZE 1.6 SQ MILES
ELEVATION 4,685 FT
SUNSHINE 281 DAYS

NOTED RESIDENTS:
Donald Judd, Liz Lambert, Adam Bork

COFFEE:
Do Your Thing, Frama

The magic of Marfa is its comingling of opposites—bygone and avant-garde, railroad charm and cosmopolitan edge, John Wayne and James Dean. A magnet for the stylish sort, EL COSMICO is a 21-acre compound of refurbished Airstreams and yurts, as well as host to the Trans-Pecos Festival of Music and Love. Just as Marfa attracts roamers and short-term citizens, businesses too can be transient. JETT'S GRILL, the patio restaurant at the Hotel Paisano, is a trusty mainstay. Another delicious daytime option is MARFA BURRITO. And there's a Dairy Queen, too, aka the West Texas stop sign. Consider starting an early morning with a dawn tour at the CHINATI FOUNDATION, when sunrise illuminates patron-saint Donald Judd's 100 Untitled Works in Mill Aluminum. In town, two modern Marfa favorites are COBRA ROCK BOOT COMPANY, hand-stitched in a Dean Street studio, and three blocks away, GARZA MARFA, whose leather furniture minimalism is peppered around town. No matter its global attention, Marfa retains an eerie quiet, a feeling of magic that prickles the neck, day or starry night.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"Ours may be a town of less than 2,000 people, but so often we have these surreal, beautiful, could-never-happen-anywhere-else moments in Marfa. It's the best small town in America."
— BUCK JOHNSTON AND CAMP BOSWORTH,
artists and owners of the Wrong Store

TAOS, NM

POPULATION 5,716
SIZE 5.4 SQ MILES
ELEVATION 6,969 FT
SUNSHINE 281 DAYS

NOTED RESIDENTS:
Dennis Hopper, Millicent Rogers

COFFEE:
World Cup Café

Taos is seriously ancient, even in a region where everything is old. The terraced adobe structures of Taos Pueblo have been occupied for nearly a millennium, and Spanish settlers made camp here more than 500 years ago. Taos appeals to both hardy outdoorsmen and eccentric artists alike. Start with the latter side with a stay at the MABEL DODGE LUHAN HOUSE, where the arts patron entertained guests like Georgia O'Keeffe, Ansel Adams and D.H. Lawrence. Walk to the town plaza in the morning, dropping into the KIT CARSON HOME AND MUSEUM on your way, which the early frontiersman purchased in 1843. Then, drive out to the GORGE BRIDGE, a steel span more than 500 feet above a section of the Taos Gorge doing its best Grand Canyon impression. In late spring and early summer, this section of the Rio Grande is the region's best whitewater run; KOKOPELLI RAFTING ADVENTURES will know whether it's running high enough and be able to set you up with a guide. For dinner, head to the LOVE APPLE, a cozy restaurant in a 19th-century adobe chapel. The artists and Gore-Tex set will both tell you it's the best restaurant in Taos.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"Taos is a magical place where the high desert meets the Rockies, a charming old world town that also has easy access to world-class outdoor recreation—the snow-capped Wheeler Peak at 13,161 feet and the recently designated Rio Grande del Norte National Monument."

— STUART WILDE, Wild Earth Llama Adventures

ALBUQUERQUE, NM

POPULATION 556,500
SIZE 189.5 SQ MILES
ELEVATION 4,830 FT
SUNSHINE 281 DAYS

NOTED RESIDENTS:
Jeff Bezos, Neil Patrick Harris

COFFEE:
Michael Thomas, Prismatic

Founded by Spanish colonists in 1706, New Mexico's biggest city has had a reputation as a dusty, rough-and-tumble town ever since—and that's not a bad thing. But ease into things via Albuquerque's serene, historical side by making your base at LOS POBLANOS, an inn that occupies a complex of adobe ranch buildings on the banks of the Rio Grande. Spend the morning wandering the lavender fields [the inn's farm produces a line of *Vogue*-endorsed soaps] or sitting by the pool, but be sure to keep an eye out for their flock of albino peacocks. When you're ready for some action, head to the Avenida Cesar Chavez area, where you'll find the best Mexican food this side of the border at EL PAISA. Then, take the SANDIA PEAK TRAMWAY up into the ragged granite spires to the east of town. The tram, the longest in the U.S., ascends for 2.7 miles over 15 minutes to 10,000 feet, where you can see heat waves ripple off the desert all the way to Arizona. For a mellow spot to drink, try SIDETRACK BREWING COMPANY down by the train station. Or, return to the rough-and-tumble at the cavernous DIRTY BOURBON DANCEHALL & SALOON and sip on brown water until you're brave enough to give two-stepping a try. You'll get there.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"The art scene in Albuquerque is a little more authentic than other places in the state. Our artists here aren't as typecast. We have everybody from sculptors to muralists to great street artists to painters to fabulous tin artists, cyber artists. I mean, we have it all."
— TEY MARIANNA NUNN, National Hispanic Cultural Center

TUCSON, AZ

POPULATION 526,116
SIZE 236.2 SQ MILES
ELEVATION 2,388 FT
SUNSHINE 286 DAYS

NOTED RESIDENTS:
Edward Abbey, Gabrielle Giffords

COFFEE:
Stella, Exo, Cartel

Sitting in the Santa Catalina Mountains on the edge of the Sonoran Desert, this college town thrives on a fusion of Hispanic, Native American and Anglo influences, with a heavy dose of vaquero grit. Soak up some local lore at HOTEL CONGRESS, where a fire in 1934 led to the arrest of John Dillinger. [The establishment is also notorious for the ghostly residents who wander its retro-chic halls.] And aside from being a great place to bed down, it's also one of the best spots in town to take in live music. For grub, you can't do better than PENCA, a Central Mexico-inspired perch in Tucson's historic downtown. Pull up a seat at the bar and tuck into some *Costillas de Res* [translation: ancho-glazed short ribs] while working your way through more than 30 varieties of mezcal. And for a dose of culture [and some lo-fi photo inspo], hit up the CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY. The icons whose imagery line these walls—Avedon, Cartier-Bresson and a host of others—did just fine without the help of Instagram filters. The assemblage of Ansel Adams's photographic journey through Arizona and the west is especially wanderlust-inducing.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"The quality of light and the landscape here are so seductive, especially if you're an artist or photographer. During monsoon season, huge storm clouds build and are amazing to watch, especially from the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains."
— ANDIE ZELNIO, architect and designer

SEDONA, AZ

POPULATION 10,111
SIZE 19.19 SQ MILES
ELEVATION 4,326 FT
SUNSHINE 278 DAYS

NOTED RESIDENTS:
John McCain, Max Ernst, Michelle Branch

COFFEE:
Java Love, Theia's

It's hard not to be bewitched by the natural majesty of Sedona, whose peaks and canyons have long been a mecca for free spirits as well as seasoned ranchers. Head here for epic hikes, recondite swimming holes and sacred sites upon towering cliffs. Short of pitching a tent, you couldn't get closer to staying amongst the red rocks than ENCHANTMENT if you tried. Luckily there's no chance of roughing it at this cluster of luxury casitas and world-class spa [MII AMO], secreted within BOYNTON CANYON. For a more extended view, hit the open road, specifically the pine-scented stretch of 89A between Sedona and Flagstaff. Fuel up at INDIAN GARDENS CAFÉ & MARKET, an unassuming pit-stop in Oak Creek Canyon that peddles a stellar breakfast. Order the Mrs. Crunchy—grilled sourdough topped with Beeler's ham, gruyere, bechamel and a sunny-side up egg. Wash it down with a cold brew made with a custom roast from nearby Firecreek Coffee. Then, hit the WEST FORK TRAIL—the local's favorite. There'll be a pile of sturdy sticks leaning against the sign at the head of the trail. Take one; you'll need it to stay upright while leaping between stones as the trail winds its way back and forth numerous times across the creek.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"It doesn't matter which way you enter Sedona—it opens itself out in such a remarkable way, slowly revealing itself to you. Riding horses over this land is amazing. Or, if you're a runner, head out for a run along Bear Mountain Trail."

— KATE HAWKES, co-artistic director of Red Earth Theatre

DURANGO, CO

POPULATION **17,557**
SIZE **6.8 SQ MILES**
ELEVATION **6,522 FT**
SUNSHINE **266 DAYS**

NOTED RESIDENTS:
Tom Tully, Louis L'Amour

COFFEE:
81301 *Coffee, Durango Coffee Co.*

First settled as a company town for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad in the 1880s, Durango hasn't been taken over by the Davos jet-set—so you're never going to forget you're way out West here. That's certainly true at the STRATER HOTEL, elegant digs in a boomtown Victorian downtown. Even if you don't book a room, be sure to get a beer and take in some off-kilter ragtime piano at its DIAMOND BELLE SALOON, which still has bullets in the walls from olden-day shootouts. Want to get closer to the universe-class mountain biking on the COLORADO TRAIL, which runs from here 486 miles through the mountains all the way to Denver? Camping right by the trailhead at JUNCTION CREEK in the warmer months will have you rolling minutes after waking up. No matter where you crash, the spot for lunch is Bread for sandwiches. Later, swing by SKA BREWING, a 100-percent-wind-powered operation that slings pizzas out of a converted shipping container in its beer garden. In the morning, take the NARROW GAUGE RAILROAD to Silverton and back. The scenery is a trip—before you go, stop by ANIMAS HERBAL, a cozy pot shop on the eponymous river, to make it that much trippier.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"In Durango, we have the Tuesday Night World Championship ride. When I first moved out here it was a who's who of mountain biking at the time, but now it's open to all different abilities: There are four or five different groups that all leave at the same time."
— TODD WELLS, three-time Olympic mountain biker

LAS VEGAS, NV

POPULATION 603,500
SIZE 140 SQ MILES
ELEVATION 2,001 FT
SUNSHINE 294 DAYS

NOTED RESIDENTS:
Penn & Teller, Nicolas Cage, Celine Dion

COFFEE:
Sunrise Coffee, Makers and Finders

Las Vegas is synonymous with games of chance for good reason—the city licensed its first casino and got its first paved road in the same year, 1931. The town boomed to accommodate workers on the then under-construction Hoover Dam; gaming parlors, showgirl theaters, and organized crime boomed with it. Even if you're just passing through, you've got options for trying your luck: Ante up in the tense poker room at the GOLDEN NUGGET, go upscale playing Baccarat alongside Russian high-rollers at the WYNN, or just wager a quarter on the Sigma Derby, a vintage mechanical horse race at THE D CASINO. Crash at the OASIS AT GOLD SPIKE, a renovated hotel downtown with gobs of retro charm. Then, eat like Henry VIII at the endless projects by celebrity chefs: JOËL ROBUCHON is great if you've got the scratch. Or eat all you can at faux-luxe casino buffet BACCHANAL at CAESARS PALACE, which serves oysters on the half shell and made-to-order dishes out of nine kitchens. This much indulgence weighs on a man's soul, so take a moment of contemplation at AKHOB, an immersive piece of art by the Southwest's master of light, James Turrell. This being Vegas, you'll find it on the second floor of the Louis Vuitton store.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"Las Vegas markets itself as the city where you can do anything. And it's true! You can come drive a Ferrari or Lamborghini or Porsche with us, at speed. That's something you really can't do anywhere else."

— ALESSANDRO BRESSAN, instructor at Dream Racing

JOSHUA TREE, CA

POPULATION 7,414
SIZE 37 SQ MILES
ELEVATION 2,736 FT
SUNSHINE 282 DAYS

NOTED RESIDENTS:
Noah Purifoy, Donovan, Josh Homme

COFFEE:
Joshua Tree Coffee Co., Frontier Café

Venture a hundred miles east of Los Angeles and you'll find the high desert hub of Joshua Tree, the grittier antithesis to the manicured, pool-laden lower desert of Palm Springs. Made famous by the National Park, U2 and the death of Gram Parsons, the expansive landscape here, peppered with endless wild-armed Joshua trees, is home to a unique cross section of artists, rock climbers, outlaws and spiritual healers. Start your visit with breakfast at LA COPINE. This newcomer, opened by a couple of free-wheeling transplants who bought the building for next to nothing on their first trip to the desert, is easily the best morning spot around, and a gathering place for locals. Hit up PAPPY & HARRIETS, an iconic old biker gang outpost, for barbecue and live music. Playing the stage here is a rite of passage for touring bands. For shopping, you can't beat BKB CERAMICS, where ceramist Brian Bosworth sells his creations alongside a host of other desert-dweller brands and artist offerings. Finally, end the day at MOJAVE SANDS MOTEL, a modern oasis of a motel with five rooms and breezy courtyards. There's no TV or wifi, but connection isn't an issue: guests hang fireside at night around one of the three outdoor fireplaces.

LOCAL TO KNOW

"I love this place. I've never felt more able to be myself. For me, life in Joshua Tree is like we've boiled off all the extra, like I'm a reduction in a way—exactly who I am all the time. I've never experienced that anywhere else."
— SUE BURNETT, owner, Mojave Sands Motel

ALMANAC

Navajo Heritage, Rodeo Champions,
Desert Flora, Southwest Architecture,
Monument Valley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Zane Grey,
Outlaws of Note, Bomb Testing and more.

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

1887 ..... Born on a dairy farm near Sun Prairie, WI.

1905 ..... Begins studies at School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

1917 ..... First solo show in New York, first visit to Santa Fe.

1924 ..... Marries long-time paramour and work supporter, Alfred Stieglitz.

1929 ..... Moves to Taos. Mabel Dodge Luhan offers use of a studio.

1930 ..... Debuts paintings of crosses and Taos church at NYC gallery.

1932 ..... Abandons mural commission for Radio City Music Hall.

1934 ..... First visit to Ghost Ranch in AbiquiÚ.

1936 ..... Paints Summer Days, deer skull with flowers in desert setting.

1939 ..... Travels to Hawaii to paint ad campaign for the Dole Company.

1946 ..... First female artist to receive a solo retrospective at MoMA Stieglitz dies, O'Keeffe scatters ashes near Lake George, NY, "Where he could hear the water".

1949 ..... O'Keeffe relocates permanently to New Mexico.

1951 ..... Meets Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo on a trip to Mexico.

1965 ..... Completes *Sky Above Clouds IV* while in her Ghost Ranch garage studio.

1971 ..... When macular degeneration causes near blindness, she begins sculpting.

1977 ..... Honored with Medal of Freedom by President Ford.

1985 ..... Receives the National Medal of Arts from President Reagan.

1986 ..... Dies at the age of 98 in Santa Fe, ashes scattered atop Pedernal Mountain.

1995 ..... Georgia O'Keeffe Museum established in Santa Fe.

2014 ..... *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1* sells for over $44 million.

THE COWBOY HAT

Philip Ashton Rollins, 1922

The wide brim of the hat was not for appearance's sake. It was for use. It defended from a burning sun and shaded the eyes under any conditions, particularly when clearness of vision was vital to a man awake or shelter was desirable for one asleep. In rainy weather it served as an umbrella. The brim, when grasped between the thumb and fingers and bent into a trough, was on its upper surface the only drinking-cup of the outdoors; when pulled down and tied over the ears, it gave complete protection from frost-bite. It fanned into activity every camp-fire started in the open, and enlarged the carrying capacity of the hat when used as a pail to transport water for extinguishing embers. The broad hat swung to right or left of the body or overhead provided conspicuous means of signaling; and, when shoved between one's hip or shoulder and the hard ground, it sometimes hastened the arrival of a nap. Folded, it made a comfortable pillow. No narrow-brimmed creation could have had so many functions.

RODEO

Selected Champions from the World's Oldest Rodeo® in Prescott, Arizona

SADDLE BRONC

Doc Pardee, 1916
Slim Riley, 1924
Tommy Scarlett, 1925
Lawton Champie, 1926
Poog Brenton, 1951
Bud Longbrake, 1990
Jim Bob Custer, 1993
Rawley McFarland, 2004

BULL RIDING

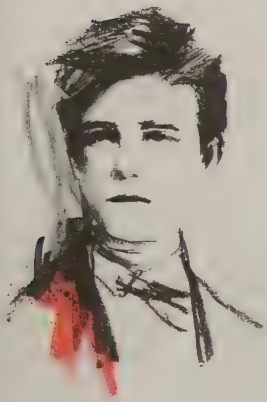
Tot Young, 1901
Cheyenne Kiser, 1920
Sterling Ellis, 1922
Dud Thomas, 1923
Smoky Snyder, 1936
Linden Litten, 1945
Rocky Rutherford, 1950
Wacey Cathey, 1976

CALF ROPING

Ike Rude, 1925
Wid Fuller, 1928
Breezy Cox, 1931
Roy Sneidgar, 1953
Asbury Schell, 1957
Ron Poindexter, 1971
Gary Good, 1974
Buford Neugebauer, 1980
Jerry Jetton, 1983

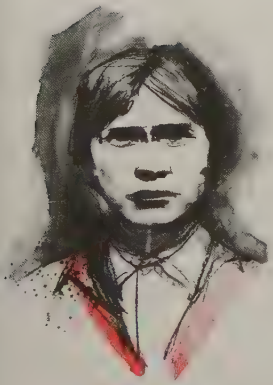
OUTLAWS AND LAWMEN OF NOTE

Hoodoo Brown	*East Las Vegas Justice of the Peace moonlighted as leader of the Dodge City Gang*
Curly Bill Brocius	*Arizona gunslinger and cattle thief had notorious feud with the Earp family*
Butch Cassidy	*When amnesty negotiations failed, the Utah-born offender bolted for Argentina*
Apache Kid	*After murder and mutiny in 1887, gifted Army scout served time in Alcatraz*
Billy the Kid	*Newspapers stoked legend of fearless bandit, whose death was questioned for decades*
Harry Longabaugh	*As member of Cassidy's Wild Bunch, the "Sundance Kid" set bank-robbing records*
Wild Bill Hickok	*First known winner of a quick draw duel, original holder of poker's "Dead Man's Hand"*
Bat Masterson	*Esteemed buffalo hunter and Roosevelt-appointed "White House Gunfighter"*
John Wesley Hardin	*This reckless Texan once killed a man for snoring too loudly in a neighboring hotel room*
Wyatt Earp	*Mustachioed lawman immortalized for role in the 30-second gunfight in Tombstone, AZ*
Doc Holliday	*Quick-draw dentist, a dear friend of Earp, died of Tuberculosis in Glenwood Springs, CO*
Johnny Ringo	*Hot-tempered cowboy once shot a man in Arizona for refusing a shot of whiskey*
Mysterious Dave Mather	*Served as Assistant Marshall, also charged with counterfitting, train robbery and murder*
William J. Brady	*Sheriff during Lincoln County Wars, killed by gang that includes Billy the Kid*
Dick Brewer	*Born in Vermont, first leader of Regulators posse played by Charlie Sheen in Young Guns*

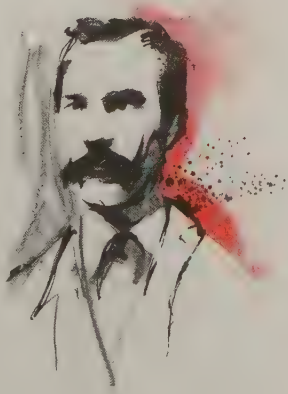


BILLY THE KID

BUTCH CASSIDY



APACHE KID



CURLY BILL BROCIUS

PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Grand Canyon, Arizona
May 6, 1903

"I have come here to see the Grand Canyon of Arizona, because in that Canyon Arizona has a natural wonder which, so far as I know, is in kind absolutely unparalleled throughout the rest of the world. I shall not attempt to describe it because I cannot. I could not choose words that would convey or that could convey to any outsider what that Canyon is. I want to ask you to do one thing in connection with it in your own interest and in the interest of the country — to keep this great wonder of nature as it now is. I was delighted to learn of the wisdom of the Santa Fe railroad people in deciding not to build their hotel on the brink of the Canyon. I hope you will not have a building of any kind, not a summer cottage, a hotel, or anything else, to mar the wonderful grandeur, the sublimity, the great loneliness and beauty of the Canyon. Leave it as it is. You cannot improve on it; not a bit. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it."

STAGECOACH

The New York Times
March 3, 1939

"In one superbly expansive gesture, which we [and the Music Hall] can call *Stagecoach*, John Ford has swept aside ten years of artifice and talkie compromise and has made a motion picture that sings a song of camera. It moves, and how beautifully it moves, across the plains of Arizona, skirting the sky-reaching mesas of Monument Valley, beneath the piled-up cloud banks which every photographer dreams about, and through all the old-fashioned, but never really outdated, periods of prairie travel in the scalp-raising seventies, when Geronimo's Apaches were on the warpath. Here, in a sentence, is a movie of the grand old school, a genuine rib-thumper and a beautiful sight to see."

DESERT PLANTS OF NOTE

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Agave	*Blue or green succulents with, fleshy leaves fanning out in a circle; the core used to make tequila*
Sagebrush	*Aromatic blue-green shrub that provides habitat for grouse and rabbits*
Juniper	*Low, bushy evergreens with blue berries used to flavor gin; some specimens can live more than 1,500 years*
Piñon	*Small, bushy pines that produce pine nuts; prized as aromatic firewood*
Saguaro	*Pronged cactus found only in the Sonoran Desert; specimens without prongs called speara*
Fremont cottonwood	*Large deciduous tree with heart-shaped, ridged leaves; also known as Alamo cottonwood*
Cholla	*Thin tube-shaped branching cactus with yellow fruit and bright pink blooms*
Ocotillo	*Tall thorny sticks that produce small leaves and vibrant red plumes after rainfall*
Tumbleweed	*Multiple species that dry and detach from their root system upon maturation to spread their seeds*
Prickly pear	*Flat pad-shaped cactus, variety of sizes and colors, both with and without spines; egg-shaped fruit used to make jam, pads cooked and eaten as nopal*
Yucca	*Shrubs with sharp, sword-shaped leaves whose stalks produce white flowers; older yucca often sit atop a tower of dried leaves*
Joshua tree	*Species of branched yucca that grows to 50 feet tall, found almost exclusively in the Mojave Desert*
Ponderosa pine	*Towering tree with red bark that smells strongly of vanilla*

REGIONAL NAMESAKES

SURNAME	LOCATION	NAMESAKE
Bent	Bent Street [Taos, NM] Bent's Fort [La Junta, CO]	*Charles Bent, fur trader and first civilian governor of the New Mexico Territory, killed in Pueblo Revolt*
Carson	Carson City [NV] Fort Carson [CO] Carson National Forest [NM]	*Kit Carson, legendary frontiersman, Indian agent and army officer*
Coronado	Coronado National Forest [AZ] Coronado High School [El Paso, Scottsdale, Colorado Springs]	*Francisco Vâquez de Coronado, conquistador who led a Southwest expedition between 1540 and 1542*
Fremont	Fremont Peak [AZ] Fremont County [CO] Fremont River [UT]	*John C. Fremont, military officer and explorer who became the first Republican presidential candidate in 1856*
Humboldt	Humboldt [AZ] Humboldt River [NV] Humboldt Peak [CO]	*Alexander von Humboldt, Prussian naturalist and forefather of environmentalism*
Powell	Lake Powell [AZ] Powell Peak [CO]	*John Wesley Powell, explorer and first known man of European origin to see the Grand Canyon*
Wheeler	Wheeler Peak [NV] Wheeler Peak [NM] Wheeler Geologic Area [CO]	*George Montague Wheeler, cartographer who led surveys of the American West from 1869 to 1879*

CHACO CANYON

Excerpted below is the first English-language description of Chaco Canyon, the most significant Pueblo architectural site in the United States. It appears in an 1844 guide to the Santa Fe Trail by American trader Josiah Gregg.

There is sufficient evidence in the ruins that still exist to show that those regions were once inhabited by a far more enlightened people than are now to be found among the aborigines. Of such character are the ruins of Pueblo Bonito, in the direction of Navajo, on the borders of the Cordilleras, the house being generally built of slabs of fine-grit sand-stone, a material utterly unknown in the present architecture of the North. Although some of these structures are very massive and spacious, they are generally cut up into small, irregular rooms of which yet remain entire, being still covered, with the vigas or joists remaining nearly sound under the azoteas of earth, and yet their age is such that there is no tradition that gives any account of their origin. But there have been no images or sculptured work of any kind found around them. Besides these, many other ruins [though none so perfect] are scattered over the plains and among the mountains. What is very remarkable is, that a portion of them are situated a very great distance from any water; so that the inhabitants much have depended entirely on rain, as is the case with the Pueblo of Acoma at the present day.

BILLBOARDS

"Scenery-Marring Bill-Boards"
Arizona Highways
January 1931

Outdoor advertising has its honorable place in the world of publicity. Its advertisements of photoplays, cigarettes, gasoline and what have you are only questioned when the excess of its efforts prejudices the world against it, sometimes to the point where its abolishment is demanded. If this misfortune should come to outdoor advertising, it will have no one to blame but its practitioners. In proper places in the city there is nothing objectionable in bill-boards. But when they are erected on scenic highways, marring the view of the traveler seeking rest for town-tired eyes, the boards become a liability, not an asset, to those who advertise on them. No motorist would buy a motor oil advertised on a sign board erected so as to spoil the very view he left home to enjoy.

THE

AUTHENTIC LIFE OF

BILLY, THE KID,

THE NOTED DESPERADO OF THE SOUTHWEST, WHOSE DEEDS OF DARING AND BLOOD MADE HIS NAME A TERROR IN NEW MEXICO, ARIZONA AND NORTHERN MEXICO

By PAT F. GARRETT,

SHERIFF OF LINCOLN, CO., N.M.
BY WHOM HE WAS FINALLY HUNTED DOWN AND CAPTURED BY KILLING HIM

A FAITHFUL AND INTERESTING NARRATIVE.
1882

We unsaddled here, got some coffee, and, on foot, entered an orchard which runs from this point down to a row of old buildings, some of them occupied by Mexicans, not more than sixty yards from [Pete] Maxwell's house. We approached these houses cautiously, and when within earshot, heard the sound of voices conversing in Spanish. We concealed ourselves quickly and listened. Soon a man arose from the ground, in full view; but too far away to recognize. He wore a broad-brimmed hat, a dark vest and pants, and was in his shirtsleeves. With a few words, which fell like a murmur on our ears, he went to the fence, jumped it, and walked down towards Maxwell's houses.

Little as we then suspected it, this man was The Kid. We learned, subsequently, that, when he left his companions that night, he went to the house of a Mexican friend, pulled off his hat and boots, threw himself on a bed and commenced reading a newspaper. He soon, however, hailed his friend, who was sleeping in the room, told him to get up and make some coffee, adding: "Give me a butcher knife and I will go over to Pete's and get some beef; I'm hungry." The Mexican arose, handed him the knife, and The Kid, hatless and in his stocking-feet, started to Maxwell's, which was but a few steps distant.

When the Kid, by me unrecognized, left the orchard, I motioned to my companions, and we cautiously retreated a short dis-

tance, and to avoid the persons whom we had heard at the houses, took another route, approaching Maxwell's house from the opposite direction. When we reached the porch in front of the building, I left Poe and McKinney at the end of the porch, about twenty feet from the door of Pete's room, and went in. It was near midnight and Pete was in his bed. I walked to the head of the bed and sat down on it, beside him, near the pillow. I asked him as to the whereabouts of The Kid. He said that The Kid had certainly been about, but he did not know whether he had left or not. At that moment, a man sprang quickly into the door, looking back, and called twice in Spanish, "Who comes there?" No one replied and he came on in. He was bareheaded. From his step I could perceive he was either barefooted or in his stocking-feet, and held a revolver in his right hand and a butcher knife in his left.

He came directly towards me. Before he reached the bed, I whispered: "Who is it, Pete?" but received no reply for a moment. The intruder came close to me, leaned both hands on the bed, his right hand almost touching my knee, and asked, in a low tone: "Who are they Pete?" At the same time Maxwell whispered to me, "That's him!" Simultaneously The Kid must have seen, or felt, the presence of a third person at the head of the bed. He raised quickly his pistol, a self-cocker, within a foot of my breast. Retreating rapidly across the room he cried, "Quien es? Quien es?" All this occurred in a moment. Quickly as possible I drew my revolver and fired, threw my body aside and fired again. The second shot was useless; The Kid fell dead. He never spoke. A struggle or two, a little straggling sound as he gasped for breath, and The Kid was with his many victims.

I told my companions I had got The Kid. They asked me if I had not shot the wrong man. I told them I had made no blunder; that I knew The Kid's voice too well to be mistaken. It will never be known whether The Kid recognized me or not. If he did, it was the first time, during all his life of peril, that he ever lost his presence of mind, or failed to shoot first, and hesitate afterwards. [*Excerpt, Chapter XXIII*]

A year after the shooting, widespread reports questioned Garrett's role in the event, which irked him into writing the book. "I am incited to this labor, in a measure," he wrote, "by an impulse to correct the thousand false statements which have appeared in the public newspapers and in yellow-covered, cheap novels."

VENOMOUS CREATURES OF NOTE

Name	*Description*
Bark scorpion	*Light brown in color, three inches long, potentially lethal venom induces electric-shock-like sensations*
Sidewinder	*Rattler whose sideways movement means only a few points of its body touch hot sand at any given time*
Desert tarantula	*Hairy spider can live 30 years in the wild, grow to be the size of a man's hand*
Tarantula hawk	*Vicious wasp that paralyzes and lays its eggs in tarantulas; considered to have the second most painful sting of all insects*
Western diamondback rattlesnake	*Grows 4 to 5 feet, coloration varies from gray brown to chalky white; also known as Texas rattler, coon tail or adobe snake*
Black widow	*Distinguished by the red hourglass shape on its underside, most common in the west and southwest*
Gila monster	*Black lizard with orange or yellow markings; spends up to 95 percent of its life in a burrow, storing fat in its large tail*
Giant desert centipede	*Invertebrate that grows up to eight inches long, with a reddish-brown body and yellow legs*
Sonoran desert toad	*Largest toad native to the United States; its skin and venom contain psychoactive compounds*
Wolf spider	*Solitary hunters with keen vision, acute sense of touch, known to carry egg sac and offspring*
Velvet ant	*Wingless wasps with densely hairy backs, often bright orange, female stings quite painful; commonly knows as cow killers*

ATOMIC BOMB TESTING

In 1945, New York Times *reporter William Laurence was given profound access by the U.S. War Department to cover the making of the atomic bomb. Below, Laurence describes a test blast in his book,* Dawn Over Zero.

The Atomic Age began at exactly 5:30 mountain war time on the morning of July 16, 1945, on a stretch of semidesert land about 50 airline miles from Alamagordo, N.M., just a few minutes before the dawn of a new day on this earth. At that great moment in history, ranking with the moment in the long ago when man first put fire to work for him and started on his march to civilization, the vast energy locked within the hearts of the atoms of matter was released for the first time in a burst of flame such as had never before been seen on this planet, illuminating earth and sky for a brief span that seemed eternal with the light of many supersuns. It was a full-dress rehearsal preparatory to use of the bomb over Hiroshima and Nagaski. It was a sunrise such as the world had never seen, a great green supersun climbing in a fraction of a second to a height of more than 8,000 feet, rising ever higher until it touched the clouds, lighting up earth and sky all around with a dazzling luminosity. Up it went, a great ball of fire about a mile in diameter, changing colors as it kept shooting upward, from deep purple to orange, expanding, growing bigger, rising as it was expanding, an elemental force freed from its bonds after being chained for billions of years.

SUNSET LIMITED

Below, magazine ad copy for Southern Pacific's updated western train, circa 1951.

Vacations are coming. Make your trip to California this summer aboard Southern Pacific's exciting new *Sunset Limited* streamliner. New Orleans — Los Angeles in 42 hours. In addition to the world's most beautiful, private, all-room Pullman accommodations, the Sunset Limited features economical "Sleepy Hollow" Chair Cars, magnificent dining and lounge facilities. Moderate extra fare.

GUNFIGHT AT THE O.K. CORRAL

"A Desperate Street-Fight"
The Tombstone Nugget
October 27, 1881

Marshal Virgil Earp, Morgan and Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday Meet the Cowboys—Three Men Killed and Two Wounded, One Seriously—Origin of the Trouble and its Tragical Termination

The 26th of October will always be marked as one of the crimson days in the annals of Tombstone, a day when blood flowed as water, and human life was held as a shuttlecock, a day always to be remembered as witnessing the bloodiest and deadliest street fight that has ever occurred in this place, or probably in the Territory. ... The Marshal said to the Clantons and McLowrys: "Throw up your hands, boys, I intend to disarm you." As he spoke, Frank McLowry made a motion to draw his revolver, when Wyatt Earp pulled his and shot him, the ball striking on the right side of his abdomen. About the same time Doc Holliday shot Tom McLowry in the right side, using a short shotgun, such as is carried by Wells, Fargo & Co.'s messengers. In the meantime Billy Clanton had shot at Morgan Earp, the ball passing through the point of the left shoulder blade across his back, just grazing the backbone and coming out at the shoulder, the ball remaining inside of his shirt. He fell to the ground, but in an instant gathered himself, and raising in a sitting position fired at Frank McLowry as he crossed Fremont street, and at the same instant Doc Holliday shot at him, both balls taking effect, either of which would have proved fatal, as one struck him in the right temple and the other in the left breast. As he started across the street, however, he pulled his gun down on Holliday saying, "I've got you now." "Blaze away! You're a daisy if you have," replied Doc. This shot of McLowry's passed through Holliday's pistol pocket, just grazing the skin. [Excerpt]

HOOVER DAM

"A Big Dam Out West"
The New York Times
March 14, 1931

To New Yorkers the Colorado River may seem a long way off, and the building of a dam in Boulder Canyon, or Black Canyon, even more remote from their ordinary preoccupations. Yet there is a thrill in the news from the West that even a jaded megalopolitan may feel. Billion-dollar subways are an old story to him. He has gazed up at so many skyscrapers built to be the tallest ever, only to yield the crown in a few months to another, that biggest and tallest and deepest have lost most of their meaning to him. Let him lift his eyes to Las Vegas. There he will find plenty of fresh superlatives. The biggest contract of the kind the Government ever let before was for a $6,000,000 dam in Idaho. The contract Secretary Wilbur signed the other day for starting work on the Hoover Dam on the Colorado called for the expenditure of nearly $50,000,000. The Government will supply the cement — 20,000 freight car loads or thereabout, a train 165 miles long! What stirs the imagination is not so much the size as the nature of the undertaking. A lone "hard-rock engineer," walking to the rim of the canyon and saying to that flash and treacherous stream, "Old man, my friends and I are going to tame you!" The fellow who stole fire from heaven was hardly more presumptuous.

SACRED MOUNTAINS

The Navajo view 6 mountains as sacred: the first four represent traditional territory borders, the last 2 make up the heart of their country.

COMMON NAME	NAVAJO	TRANSLATION
Mount Taylor, NM	Tsoodzi	Turquoise Mtn.
Blanca Peak, CO	Sisnaajini	White Shell Mtn.
Hesperus Mountain, CO	Doko'oosliid	Abalone Shell Mtn.
San Francisco Peaks, AZ	Dibé Nitsaa	Obsidian Mtn.
Gobernador Knob, NM	Ch'óol'ʔí	Fir Mtn.
Huerfano Mesa, NM	Dzil Na'oodilii	Holy People Encircling Mtn.

MINING TERMS

Avery's Hand-Book and Traveler's Guide of New Mexico, 1881

CLAIM	*A piece of land twenty-five to three hundred feet wide and fifteen hundred feet long, which the government sells to the man who finds mineral within its limits*
CHUTE	*An incline channel through which ore slides*
FISSURE VEIN	*A fissure or crack in the earth's crust filled with mineral matter; the two walls are always of the same geological formation*
LITTLE GIANT	*A movable nozzle attached to hydraulic pipes*
PILGRIM	*Fresh arrival from the East or the "States"*
PANNING	*Usually to wash the dirt from the free gold with a pan; the pan resembles an ordinary milk-pan*
POCKET	*A rich spot in a vein or deposit; sometimes an entire claim contains but one or two pockets, which makes it less desirable*
STRIKE	*A find; a valuable mineral development made in an unexpected manner*

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS OF NOTE

DETAIL	DESCRIPTION
Kiva	*Rounded adobe fireplace built into the corner of a room*
Nicho	*Small niche carved out of a wall to display objects of religious significance [or other decoration]*
Viga	*Exposed, typically unfinished structural beam in a ceiling*
Latillas	*Literally "sticks," thin pine or spruce lengths laid in rows across vigas to form a ceiling*
Portal	*Wooden, flat-roofed porch with a floor that is paved or tile*
Saltillo Tiles	*Large, unglazed floor tiles that are reddish-brown in hue*
Ramada	*Four-posted wooden structure roofed with latillas, used to provide shade outside*
Coyote Fencing	*Unstripped latillas lashed vertically to form unclimbable walls*
Horno	*Freestanding dome-shaped adobe oven traditionally used by Pueblo Indians*
Banco	*Built-in bench, generally plastered to blend into the surrounding walls*
Canales	*Wooden drain pipes, often ornamental, that jut from the side of a roof*
Placita	*Enclosed central courtyard found in Spanish Colonial houses*
Zaguan	*passageway leading from large wooden door to placita*

SOUTHWEST COLOR

There is never a season, in the cañon of the Rio Grande, without its appropriate, its inevitable color scheme. In the snowy months there will be cumulus clouds topping the cañon walls, white as cotton bolls, burnt-orange tips of the willows repeating the note of the cliffs, and bright flecks of bluebirds' wings, interlacing earth and sky. When the snowdrifts in the shadows begin to take lilac tones, the drift of wild plums is feather white, the rabbit-brush white fluff over green, and the water shadows as green as the junipers. In September the wild plums are vermilion, with a bloom like the purple haze of the mountains, and after the plums the Virginia creeper tones with the frost-bitten red of the cliffs. Then the squashes piled in the fields, and the bright gold of the rabbit-brush bring out the yellow of the clays, and the adobe huts which otherwise tend to disappear into the earth from which they have been drawn, are blots of flaming scarlet and vermilion.

Mary Austin wrote extensively about Native American rights and environmental issues. Above, an excerpt from her book, The Land of Journeys' Ending.

UFO SIGHTINGS

LIFE Magazine reported on 10 incidents of UFO sighting in a 1952 article, "Have We Visitors from Space?" One is excerpted below.

In the summer of 1948 Clyde W. Tombaugh, the discoverer of the planet Pluto, was sitting in the back yard of his home at Las Cruces, N. Mex. With him were his wife and his mother-in-law. It was about 11 p.m. and they were all sitting quietly, admiring the clarity of the southwestern sky, like any proper astronomical family. All at once they saw something rush silently overhead, south to north, too fast for a plane, too slow for a meteor. All three of the witnesses agreed that the object was definitely a solid "ship" of a kind they had never seen before. It was of an oval shape and "seemed to trail off at the rear into a shapeless luminescence." There was a blue-green glow. About half a dozen "windows" were clearly visible at the front of the ship and along the side.

The writers concluded that the questions were certainly perplexing. "Answers may come in a generation—or tomorrow," they wrote.

ZANE GREY

We rode all day, for the most part closed in by ridges and bluffs, so that no extended view was possible. It was hot, too, and the sand blew and the dust rose. Travel in northern Arizona is never easy, and this grew harder and steeper. There was one long slope of heavy sand that I made sure would prove too much for Wetherill's pack mules. But they surmounted it apparently less breathless than I was. Toward sunset a storm gathered ahead of us to the north with a promise of cooling and sultry air.

At length we turned into a long canyon with straight rugged red walls, and a sandy floor with quite a perceptible ascent. It appeared endless. Far ahead I could see the black storm-clouds; and by and bye began to hear the rumble of thunder. Darkness had overtaken us by the time we had reached the head of this canyon; and my first sight of Monument Valley came with a dazzling flash of lightning. It revealed a vast valley, a strange world of colossal shafts and buttes of rock, magnificently sculptured, standing isolated and aloof, dark, weird, lonely. When the sheet of lightning flared across the sky showing the monuments silhouetted black against that strange horizon the effect was marvelously beautiful. I watched until the storm died away.

Dawn, with the desert sunrise, changed Monument Valley, bereft it of its night gloom and weird shadow, and showed it in another aspect of beauty. It was hard for me to realize that those monuments were not the works of man. The great valley must once have been a plateau of red rock from which the softer strata eroded, leaving the gentle league-long slopes marked here and there by upstanding pillars and columns of singular shape and beauty. I rode down the sweet-scented sage-slopes under the shadow of the lofty Mittens, and around and across the valley, and back again to the height of land. And when I had completed the ride a story had woven itself into my mind; and the spot where I stood was to be the place where Lin Stone taught Lucy Bostil to ride the great stallion Wildfire.

— Excerpt from *Tales of Lonely Tales*

FILMS IN MONUMENT VALLEY

The five square miles of Monument Valley, a collection of enormous sandstone buttes on the border between Arizona and Utah, have become a visual stand-in for the entire Southwest, thanks to the many movies that have used it as a backdrop. An incomplete list:

- *Stagecoach* [1939]
- *The Searchers* [1956]
- *How the West Was Won* [1962]
- *Once Upon A Time In the West* [1968]
- *2001: A Space Odyssey* [1968]
- *Easy Rider* [1969]
- *Electra Glide in Blue* [1973]
- *The Eiger Sanction* [1975]
- *National Lampoon's Vacation* [1983]
- *Back To The Future Part III* [1990]
- *Thelma and Louise* [1991]
- *Forrest Gump* [1994]
- *Mission: Impossible II,* [2000]
- *Transformers: Age of Extinction* [2014]

ROAD TRIPS

A 14-day Great Southwest trip, a 7-day itinerary for the Canyonlands of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, plus three seasonal weekends in Coachella Valley, Telluride High Country and Santa Fe & Taos.

THE GREAT SOUTHWEST

14-DAY

Traversing Texas ranch towns and the high deserts of New Mexico, the sacred monuments and miracle miles in Arizona, Utah's slot canyons, arroyos and open range, ending up on California's desolate edge, the vast western area that explorers and frontiersmen once called "Indian Country" feels, in a word, infinite—*same as God*. It stretches a traveler's definition of space and time like no other place in America. Two weeks, 2,500 miles, boundless adventure.

1.BIG BEND 2.WHITE SANDS 3.ALBUQUERQUE 4.SANTA FE 5.DURANGO 6.CANYONLANDS 7.AMANGIRI 8.LAS VEGAS 9.-10.GRAND CANYON 11.PHOENIX 12.SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK 13.SLAB CITY 14.JOSHUA TREE

DAY 1

BIG BEND, TX

A trio of towns on US Route 90 show off the enduring mystique and charm of Far West Texas.

MARATHON

Grab venison sliders at the White Buffalo Bar in the Gage Hotel, a mission-style beauty, and, after sunset, let the starry skies entertain. As a class-1 dark site, light pollution in Marathon [pop. 430] is nonexistent.

ALPINE

Stop by Big Bend Saddlery, where workers craft saddles, roping reins and other horse tack prized by the areas working ranchers and rodeo cowboys. Ask co-founder Bret Collier for an impromptu tour.

MARFA

Though Donald Judd's creative impact is bedrock, this town's esprit artistique comes to life in spaces like Ballroom Marfa, where you might catch an avant-garde installation or a Bonnie "Prince" Billy concert.

DAY 2

WHITE SANDS, NM

The wide-open dune field is sparkling, strange and worth a photography session.

White Sands' mere existence is anomaly: gypsum, the soft mineral cast across this desert expanse, is water-soluble, normally washing out to the sea with centuries of rain. But in this desolate corner of New Mexico—the Tularosa Basin—no water escapes. And its 40-foot dunes have remained undisturbed for eons. In practical terms, this means travelers to the 245-square mile White Sands National Monument encounter an otherworldly landscape. Mountains rising up behind ripples of blindingly colorless sand. Stark, inspiring, marooned and magnificent, the area has attracted commercial filming, from movies like *The Man Who Fell To Earth* and *Transformers*, to advertisements for cars of nearly every make and model. That said, the glistening dunes do present photographic challenges. "If you let the camera handle it," warns New Mexico-based photographer Ryan Heffernan, "everything will come out gray. Overexpose—you want everything damn close to blown out when it's all white like that."

DAY 3

ALBUQUERQUE, NM

The home of the worlds largest celebration of hot air ballooning is best experienced from above.

"I would guess that Albuquerque, as a city, has more balloonists than any other place. The weather is very good for ballooning here. And we have the Fiesta every October. You'll have 600 balloons flying all around you, and when you're flying, you're not exactly controlling where you're going. You're at the whims of the direction of the wind. So if you say you want to fly over here, it's probably not going to happen. I'm 79, so it's kind of my goal to get to 80 and still fly. As I'm getting older, the softer the winds, the better I like it."

—Elaine Thatcher, *balloonist*

RAINBOW RYDERS *rainbowryders.com*

DAY 4

SANTA FE, NM

Vintage veteran Scott Corey's top spots for camp blankets, biker jackets, turquoise and more.

SANTA FE VINTAGE

My showroom, 2,200 square feet of vintage, has different concepts—western, military, biker, rock and roll—plus Navajo and camp blankets. At my smaller outpost downtown, local jeweler Julienne Barth and I focus on Southwest vintage.

SHIPROCK GALLERY

They have Navajo rugs, as well as jewelry and contemporary Native artists. If they say a piece of turquoise is late-1800s from the Royston mine, then you can pretty much guarantee what they're telling you is true.

DOUBLE TAKE

They have everything: contemporary styles, vintage, and of course a very extensive collection of western items. They even carry costume and old pawn jewelry and furniture.

DAY 5

DURANGO, CO

John Shocklee, a guide with Mountain Waters Rafting, on three standout rapids.

SMELTER, LOWER ANIMAS RIVER

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, they smelted silver and gold here, and later mined uranium for the first atomic bomb. It's awesome to have whitewater like that in Durango, right in town.

EYE OF THE NEEDLE, PIEDRA RIVER

It's a notorious rapid. Just a big boulder blocking the river, and your boat pushes up against it. Try to go right, without getting flipped, because right below it is another rapid called Meatgrinder.

NO NAME, UPPER ANIMAS

This Class V rapid has always been the big crux for any boatman in the area. Boulders everywhere. Running right through the San Juans. Once you're through No Name, it's awesome, euphoric.

MOUNTAIN WATERS RAFTING *durangorafting.com*

DAY 6

CANYONLANDS, UT

The west's most spectacular specimen of rock art pictographs, plus dirt-roading and canyon trekking.

Around 7000 B.C., before the Fremont and Ancestral Puebloans, a tribe of Archaic peoples inhabited the area known today as Canyonlands. More fertile then, with lower temperatures and megafauna, the region entered a decline that lasted several millennia. During this waning period the Archaic developed a unique style of rock art. The finest examples are preserved in Horseshoe Canyon on a 200-foot long wall called the Great Gallery. More than thirty rust-red figures live on this canvas of sandstone, including the Holy Ghost panel, now reproduced in the MoMA in New York. To witness these relics, visitors must first drive two and a half hours and 30 miles on a graded dirt road, then complete a 7-mile, down-up trek into the canyon—a severe challenge no doubt, but your best path to understanding the ancestral artists as they were. For road conditions and other information, call park rangers at 435-719-2313.

MILT'S STOP & EAT in Moab opened in 1954, and thankfully very little has changed since. Chili cheeseburgers, hand-cut fries, homemade shakes—after hours of Utah canyoneering, a greasy chow down is well-deserved. *miltsstopandeat.com*

DAY 7

AMANGIRI

Save up for a night in this stunning desert hideaway.

A luxurious outpost, the Amangiri is rugged desert meets modern refinery. Set on 600 acres of dunes and plateaus, the resort's 34 suites, spa and great room echo the nearby slot canyons. Polished concrete walls match the entrada sandstone, cutting clean lines and narrow passages, and fireplaces illuminate the restaurant and lounge, which open onto a huge pool that bends around a soaring mesa rock. Amangiri is a one-of-a-kind desert hermitage, and once-in-a-lifetime for most travelers, with four-digit prices. But beyond the lavish digs, the resort has carved out expertise on adventures, from fixed-cable via ferratas to Navajo-led tours of Antelope Canyon. This base camp is unforgettable. *aman.com*

DAY 8

LAS VEGAS, NV

Maggie Zakri of the Neon Museum shares her favorite signage from throwback Las Vegas.

THE STARDUST

The tallest sign in the world when it went up in 1968, it was a big cloud of stars, and it says Stardust in an 'atomic' font—the country was just enthralled with everything futuristic and spacey.

MOULIN ROUGE

In 1955, the Moulin Rouge was the first integrated casino in town. When performers were done on the strip, they all hung out here—together. Betty Willis also did the 'Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas' sign.

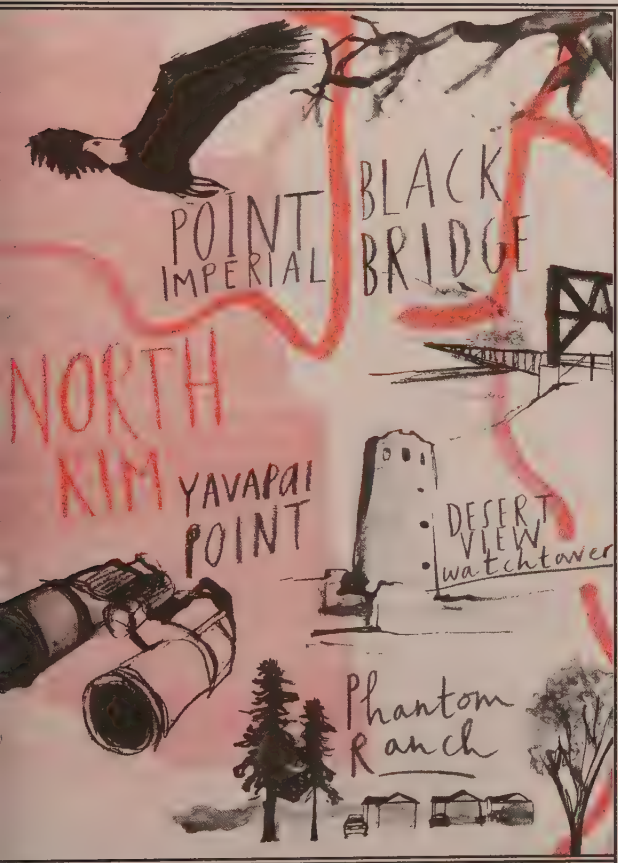
YUCCA MOTEL

All these motels were competing with each other, so they had to draw people in with their amazing signs. This one is a gigantic arrow with a huge three-dimensional yucca plant sitting on top. It's fabulous.

THE NEON MUSEUM offers guided tours of its 200-sign "boneyard" for $25, seven nights a week. *neonmuseum.org*

DAYS
9-10

THE GRAND CANYON No sight in America is more astounding than the Grand Canyon, its 277 miles laying bare two billion years of history while offering unrivaled views. See the sunset from Yavapai Point, trek 10 miles for the turquoise



Havasupai Falls, cross the Colorado on Black Bridge, gaze out from Toroweap Overlook, stay the night at Phantom Ranch, catch sunrise on Point Imperial, channel the Pueblo atop Desert View Watchtower and brave Lava Falls' Class 10 rapid.

DAY 11

PHOENIX, AZ

A tasty dish found only in the region, Navajo fry bread is a humble delicacy with deep roots.

Most Southwestern food has been exported: fresh Hatch chiles now FedEx to Brooklyn in the fall, and you can get a smothered breakfast burrito just about anywhere in the world. The one exception: fry bread. A flat disk of dough leavened without yeast and deep fried, its cultural importance isn't just culinary—according to legend, fry bread was first made by the Navajo people during the "long walk," their forced migration from their ancestral homelands in the Four Corners area to Bosque Redondo in 1864. The best-known place for it is Phoenix's Fry Bread House, awarded a James Beard "American Classics" Award in 2011. Get the namesake dish smothered in red chile stew or chorizo and cheese for dinner, and follow up with honey and powdered sugar bread for dessert.

Since 1929, **THE HEARD MUSEUM** has committed itself to showcasing a wide-ranging body of work from American Indian artists. Trace the evolution of Native culture in the museum's permanent collection, which gives as equal a spotlight to 19th century pottery and Barry Goldwater's collection of 1,200 katsina dolls as it does an intricately beaded pair of sneakers. *heard.org*

DAY 12

SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK, AZ

Arizona's most iconic plants tower across the Sonoran Desert near Tucson.

The branched cacti that are emblematic of the Southwest don't stand tall just anywhere—you'll only find the spiny sentinels in Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico. The best place of all to encounter them is Saguaro National Park, which encircles Tucson. In particular, you want the western district, where the massive cacti grow so densely that the Park Service calls it a cactus forest, without a trace of irony. Some grow into 200-year-old specimens with up to 25 arms, while others remain a single enormous spire—no one knows exactly why. For an iconic Southwest shot, look for a saguaro with three or four prongs, preferably an hour before sundown for a silhouette.

DAY 13

SLAB CITY, CA

Nomads, RV snowbirds and outsider artists commune and create in America's "last free place."

"Slab City—even if I try to explain, it's hard to understand. I ended up here on my way to Central America. I was camped out in Arizona, and a local Slabber and I started talking. He told me about Slab City and said, 'It's on your way. When you see it, you might like it.' That was six years ago. Out here, every day is a day off. We play in the river. We help pick up trash, build things, art projects, ride motorcycles in the mountains, go fishing, go watch the wildlife out in the Chocolate Mountains, drag cars around with chains, ride around on big giant tractor tires behind trucks. If you come out, you'll drive right by an amazing monument called Salvation Mountain. An old boy who just died a couple years ago, Leonard Knight, built it. He spent 28 years out here building this amazing mountain out of adobe and paint. The people out here, the excitement always going on, the weather—you can't beat it."

—Balu, *owner of the Slab City Hostel*

SLAB CITY AND SALVATION MOUNTAIN are located 4 miles outside of the town of Niland. For specific directions, visit *salvationmountain.us*.

DAY 14

JOSHUA TREE, CA

A night under the stars in pristine high desert wilderness.

Three hours from the Pacific, Joshua Tree is the western edge of the Southwest, a land of jumbo rock expanses, Seussian plantlife and American lore. Below, a story for when you're sitting around the campfire.

In 1973, country great Gram Parsons visited Joshua Tree National Park after completing his last recording sessions, later released on the album *Grievous Angel*. While near the park, he died of a morphine overdose. At the funeral of Byrds guitarist Clarence White several months earlier, Parsons had asked his manager, Phil Kaufman, to cremate his body and scatter the ashes at Joshua Tree. After Parsons's death, his assistant Michael Martin and Kaufman received word that the body was at Los Angeles International Airport awaiting a flight to his family in Louisiana. Impersonating funeral home workers in a borrowed 1953 Cadillac hearse, the pair talked their way into taking possession of the body and drove it to the desert, where they attempted to burn the coffin and body with gasoline. The unburned remains of the body were discovered the next morning. There was no law against stealing a body in the jurisdiction at the time, so the two were convicted of stealing the coffin, fined and ordered to pay for the Parsons family's funeral costs. Today, admirers pay tribute at an impromptu memorial within Joshua Tree National Park, but Parsons's remains lie in the Garden of Memories, outside New Orleans.

RETRO INNS

If camping's not in the cards, rest up at one of these roadside throwbacks.

29 PALMS INN

73950 Inn Ave, Twentynine Palms, *29palmsinn.com*

PIONEERTOWN MOTEL

5240 Curtis Rd, Pioneertown, *pioneertown-motel.com*

MOJAVE SANDS MOTEL

61121 Twentynine Palms Hwy, Joshua Tree, *mojavesands.com*

CLASSIC CANYONLANDS

7-DAY

In the Southwest, awe is as abundant as the land is severe, simultaneously unsurprising and breathtaking. For centuries, travelers have explored the wilds of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah with humility, even fear, experiencing its grandeur—from badlands and box canyons, to hidden pools and native ruins—with a bright-eyed sense of wonder. Follow the path of ancients on this epic loop into divine territory.

1. PETRIFIED FOREST NATIONAL PARK
2. CANYON DE CHELLY 3. JEMEZ MOUNTAINS
4. TAOS 5. SAN JUAN RIVER 6. LAKE POWELL
7. ZION NATIONAL PARK

DAY 1

PETRIFIED FOREST NATIONAL PARK, AZ

Full of geological marvels, this landscape might be the region's most underrated national park.

Named by conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado during a 16th-century expedition for the Seven Cities of Gold, the "Painted Desert" near Holbrook, Arizona, earns its stripes with boldly banded formations in a rainbow of colors. Rock jocks will tell you that bluish colors mean the soils formed under ancient oceans, while reds and pinks mean they were exposed to air. Most importantly, photographers capture the most saturated hues an hour after sunrise or an hour before sunset.

CONSCIENCE PILE According to local lore, the park's 200-million-year-old namesake fossilized wood is cursed. And the bad juju gets results. The park receives so many returns from spooked thieves that they've created a "conscience pile" where rangers stack pieces as a warning.

DAY 2

CANYON DE CHELLY, AZ

Modern luxury etched into mesa rock and quick to let desert panoramas work the magic.

In the winter of 1863-1964., under the command of then-Colonel Kit Carson, the United States Army stormed through the labyrinthine 35-mile Canyon de Chelly [pronounced *Shay*] as part of a broader offensive against the Navajo, who had retreated to the sacred canyon as a final stronghold. Though many Navajo survived by hiding in the cliffs, the army burned their settlements and destroyed their peach orchards, leaving no choice but surrender. Thousands of Navajo were forced to endure the "Long Walk" to resettlement 300 miles away at Bosque Redondo, where they faced starvation and brutality from their captors. The land proved unable to support the 10,000 men, women and children who were held there, so they were permitted to return to their homeland in 1868. Today, around 75 Navajo families live in Canyon de Chelly. Visitors are only permitted to enter under the supervision of a park service or Navajo guide, who will take you by horseback. *canyondechellytours.com*

DAY 3

JEMEZ MOUNTAINS, NM

Spend 24 hours exploring steep canyons, upland meadows and a picture-perfect adobe inn.

TIME	ACTIVITY
9 AM	Hike and climb ladders at BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT on a 1.2-mile loop trail that covers multi-story cliff dwellings, the foundation of an enormous pueblo and a ceremonial kiva in a cave hundreds of feet off the valley floor.
11 AM	More than a million years ago, a volcanic explosion created the VALLES CALDERA, a 13-mile-wide depression in the heart of the Jemez Mountains. Today, herds of elk graze the caldera, now a vast meadow.
1 PM	The same geological activity that formed the caldera heats the SAN ANTONIO HOT SPRINGS to around 105 degrees. Find them five miles up Forest Road 376, a rough dirt road that's open summer and early fall. If the road is closed to cars, the tiered pools and forest scenery are worth the hike.
4 PM	In summer months when the road is clear, take Forest Road 376 the other way, 17 miles into a dramatic BOX CANYON. On one side, the Rio Guadalupe dumps over a series of waterfalls; on the other, the road winds through narrow rock arches cut in the 1920s.
7 PM	End the day at RANCHO DE CHIMAYÓ, a 7-room hacienda-style inn [go for room "Siete," which has a kiva fireplace] and 50-year-old restaurant, winner of a prestigious James Beard "American Classic" Award in 2016. And be sure not to miss anything covered in stewed green chiles.

DAY 4

TAOS, NM

Get hands-on experience during a daily class taught by ceramics artisans.

Taos takes hold of the senses in a profound way, and the landscape's allure has inspired artists and thinkers for as long as man has know the powerful reaches of northern New Mexico. From Pop Chalee and Joseph Henry Sharp, to Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams, the great ones have tapped into this realm — but amateurs [and even the unskilled] follow the artist's way here as well. Travelers channel that spirit with a pottery class at the Taos Clay Studio. Founded in 2002, the studio offers daily two-hour workshops that offer opportunities to glaze and fire previously-shaped works before jumping on the potter's wheel to throw clay. An unforgettable experience in an extraordinary landscape. *Classes from* $125, *taosclay.com*

For a deeper artistic dive into the region, enroll in a week-long Plein Air Painting at **TAOS ART SCHOOL** class. *taosartschool.org*

DAY 5

SAN JUAN RIVER, CO

Spend a half-day trout fishing on one of the finest tailwater runs in North America.

"The San Juan has a reputation as one of the best trout streams in the world, and it deserves it," says High Desert Angler's Norman Maktima, a Santa Fe-based fishing guide of Pueblo descent who has been fishing these waters since he was seven. "You're looking at 15,000 fish per river mile—that's off the charts for any stream, not just in the Southwest." The river is what fishermen call a tailwater, immediately downstream from a dam, which moderates the temperature and makes for good fishing year-round. But what really draws anglers are trophy-sized brown and rainbow trout. Neither are native to New Mexico—browns were imported from Germany and rainbows first observed in Siberia's Kamchatka peninsula. But some of the best specimen anywhere live in the San Juan, regularly growing to rod-bending, line-snapping proportions.

HIGH DESERT ANGLER *highdesertangler.com*

In San Juan County, New Mexico, about 40 miles from Farmington, SHIPROCK, the colossal Four Corners monadnock, rises nearly 1,600 feet out of the desert. As the legend goes, in the earliest of times, the ancestral tribe of the Navajo were in deep, deep distress. One night, their elders prayed to the gods for help against warring tribes, and, that evening, the earth beneath them rose up, flying their people to safety. The Tse Bi dahi, or "rock with wings," crashed into the desert. These transported Navajos, as the story goes, then lived on the top of the Shiprock peak, climbing down only to sow their fields and retrieve water. Until one day, a storm split the rock, leaving women and children stranded on the peak to die. Forever after, the isolated structure has held sacred meaning in Navajo tradition. It's also become a somewhat daredevil ascent prize in mountaineering circles, though all climbing here was made illegal in 1970.

DAY 6

LAKE POWELL, AZ

Rent a houseboat to properly explore the canyon-laden reservoir.

Antelope Point Marina rests on the southwest shores of Lake Powell, offering an ideal starting point for an aquatic adventure. Study up to get the most out of a quick trip.

SELECTION	Smaller groups are easily accommodated by the 50-foot Forever model [2 bed/2 bath], while the 75-foot XTreme can sleep up to 15 people.
AMENITIES	Water slides, grills, full kitchens and private bed/bathrooms come standard issue on all houseboats. Larger models include hot tubs, too.
BOOKING	Reserve at least a month in advance, particularly for a summer trip.
ESSENTIALS	Bring sunscreen, water and a sweatshirt.
MAPS	Each boat comes equipped with a GPS. Be mindful of buoy markers and bring a back-up print map, available for purchase at any of Lake Powell's five marinas.
SIGHTS	Padre Bay offers room to spread out without sacrificing views of either Cookie Jar Butte or Boundary Butte, which denotes the Utah-Arizona state line. For a day trip to Rainbow Bridge, head toward Forbidding Canyon and moor the boat. From the dock, it's a short hike to see the stunning arch up close. Wherever you go, take note of one seriously important rule: absolutely no cliff jumping.
911	Tune your radio to channel 16 [the emergency hailing and distress frequency] and relay coordinates for assistance.
FOOD AND DRINK	Stock up on sandwiches and snacks at Antelope Point's Market Place Store. For drinks, look for the sunny yellow awning of Fred's Liquor Store.

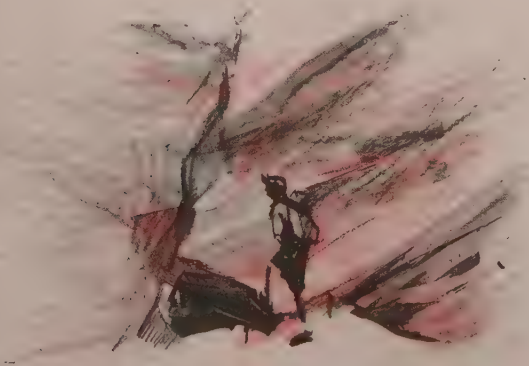
DAY 7

ZION NATIONAL PARK, UT

Some places rebel against tourism with an unceasing awe. Zion is that kind of place.

An overnight hike in Zion National Park—that's how you cap off a Southwest road trip. Cut by the North Fork of the Virgin River, Zion is Red Rock Country at max volume. Craggy buttes and terra-cotta slot canyons. Cottonwood groves and emerald pools. Hanging gardens pouring from watery cracks in the sandstone. Zion is paradise, or pretty damn close. And though it's a known discovery, the 16-mile hike along the Zion Narrows is the way to take in the divine beauty of this national treasure. Half of the trek means wading the Virgin River, sometimes requiring gear to be hoisted overhead. With each slippery step into the canyon, the stone walls soar as high as 2,500 feet and taper to as tight as 20 feet across. At this moment, miles into the ruddy wilderness, folded into the rock, tired in the best way—one feels small and free. Once camp's set up at one of 12 sandy outposts, the Narrows day trippers disappear, replaced by silence and a few billion stars and the thought that for thousands of years, people have walked this riverbed, admired this canyon, stared at this sky.

ZION ADVENTURE COMPANY *zionadventures.com*



SPRING ITINERARY

COACHELLA VALLEY, CA

Find physical and spiritual enlightenment in the low and high deserts.

AVG TEMP
35 LOW, 68 HIGH

SUNRISE
7:10 AM

SUNSET
6:28 PM

RAINY DAYS PER MONTH
5

TRIP COST
$800 FOR 2

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES
EXPLORING, MEDITATING, RELAXING

Situated between the snow-capped San Jacinto Mountain range and Joshua Tree National Park, the Coachella Valley has been viewed as sacred ever since the native Cahuilla people found hot springs and realized the healing power of its underground waters. Everyone from Slim Aarons to Steve McQueen has sought the restorative benefits of the region. For those looking for more alt-meditative experiences, the high desert's trippy sound baths and spa ghost towns, is worth the hour drive north.

DAY 1

PALM SPRINGS The heart of the region—and its version of Malibu—is Palm Springs. Driving through the barren windmill plains, it's hard to imagine you're about to enter a manicured landscape of midcentury homes, lavish pool scenes, and girls channeling their best Stevie Nicks. Start the morning with a hike through TAHQUITZ CANYON, a two-mile loop through the land of the Cahuilla Indians that ends at a waterfall oasis. Pay a visit to MOORTEN BOTANICAL GARDEN, an old and iconic private family estate with a bountiful cactarium. Grab breakfast at CHEEKY'S, balancing your plate of salted-butter waffles with a tall glass of minty green juice. Ride the Palm Springs aerial tram, and take in the pine-forested view from 8,500 feet. Back down in the desert, stay at KORAKIA PENSIONE, a tranquil bougainvillea-covered Moroccan-style riad.

DAY 2

DESERT HOT SPRINGS Wake up and drive 13 miles to Desert Hot Springs, which is just as strange and magical as it seems in Robert Altman's 1977 film *3 Women*. Check in to check out at TWO BUNCH PALMS, a desert retreat since the 1940s. Start with a mineral soak in the grotto, which is heated by geothermal activity and naturally occurring lithium [said to boost moods within 30 minutes]. After your dip, dine at the organic restaurant, book a gazebo massage or join in one of the many wellness classes available—from restorative yoga to a guided journey with a shaman.

DAY 3

MOJAVE DESERT Send off the long weekend with a trip to the INTEGRATRON. Built to promote time travel and communication with extraterrestrials, this far-out property is now used to give your brain a massage in ceremonies involving the meditation-inducing sounds of giant crystal bowls. Continue the headtrip with a visit to ZZYZX, the beautiful abandoned ruins of a health spa and mineral springs, reachable off I-15 past the salt-flats of Soda Lake. Or, just keep driving. Both I-40 and I-15 crisscross some seriously inspired stretches of desert wilderness.

Tahquitz Canyon
500 W Mesquite Ave
tahquitzcanyon.com

Moorten Botanical Garden
1701 S Palm Canyon Dr
moortenbotanicalgarden.com

Cheeky's
622 N Palm Canyon Dr
cheekysps.com

Korakia Pensione
257 S Patencio Rd
korakia.com

Two Bunch Palms
67425 Two Bunch Palms Trail
twobunchpalms.com

Integratron
2477 Belfield Blvd
integratron.com

SUMMER ITINERARY

TELLURIDE, CO

Blue skies, sunny weather and summer festivals abound in this Rocky Mountain mecca.

AVG TEMP
76 HIGH, 51 LOW

SUNRISE
6:01 AM

SUNSET
7:59 PM

RAINY DAYS PER MONTH
2

TRIP COST
$1750 FOR 2

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES
FESTIVALS, GONDOLA RIDES, MOUNTAIN BIKING

San Juan folklore says the name originated from 'To Hell You Ride!,' a warning to early miners drawn to the gold hub. History attributes it to the mineral Tellarium, and a postal service mixup that warranted a spelling change. Regardless, when you make it to the Telluride valley in the summer months, you'll find a sweep of lush Uncompahgre wilderness—a place out of some kind of Wild West fairytale, and an idyllic getaway for those who brave the trek.

DAY 1

TELLURIDE PROPER Colorado Avenue is Telluride's heartbeat, a wide strip lined with the trading places and playgrounds of yesteryear's fortune-seekers. Start the morning with coffee and breakfast at local favorite THE BUTCHER AND THE BAKER, then pay homage to the candy-colored Queen Anne Victorians. Soak in the fresh snow melt of the San Miguel River, or head to the THE LAST DOLLAR SALOON—"The Buck," to its regulars—the perfect cool-down dive. Stay at old-school charmer THE NEW SHERIDAN or opt for the luxe LUMIERE TELLURIDE, accessible via jaw-dropping gondola ride. Don't miss a show at the SHERIDAN OPERA HOUSE, the pint-sized town jewel. The best part? You can pretty much do it all in the quintessential wardrobe of mountain summer: fleece and flip-flops.

DAY 2

BRIDAL VEIL FALLS Adventurers come to ramble the pristine 365-foot falls—the tallest in Colorado—or to take a look at the curious house perched up top. Pack a lunch from BROWN BAG and get last minute tips from JAGGED EDGE MOUNTAIN GEAR. The hike to the falls is a four-mile round-trip; from town, go east along Colorado Avenue toward the east side of the box canyon and past the Pandora Mill. Follow the County Road, park at the Valley View parking area and head up the road to the Bridal Veil Basin trailhead. If you're wanting to get deeper into the San Juans, book a backcountry hut through the pros at SAN JUAN HUTS.

DAY 3

FESTIVAL SEASON From the first alpine blooms to the turn of Aspen leaves, Telluride has a festival nearly every weekend: May's MOUNTAINFILM, a mingling of year-round residents and seasoned film buffs; June's BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL, a pilgrimage for traditional bluegrass junkies; August's MUSHROOM FESTIVAL, a meeting of fungi followers—even the NOTHING FESTIVAL, a celebration for non-festivarians, in July. If you're in town over the summer, there's something on the docket; check out the lineup in advance and take advantage with a single day pass.

The Butcher and the Baker
201 E Colorado Ave
butcherandbakercafe.com

Last Dollar Saloon
100 E Colorado Ave
lastdollarsaloon.com

The New Sheridan
231 W Colorado Ave
newsheridan.com

Lumiere Telluride
118 Lost Creek Ln
lumieretelluride.com

Sheridan Opera House
110 N Oak St
sheridanoperahouse.com

Brown Bag
126 W Colorado Ave

Jagged Edge Mountain Gear
223 E Colorado Ave
jagged-edge-telluride.com

San Juan Huts
770 N Cora St
sanjuanhuts.com

FALL ITINERARY

SANTA FE & TAOS, NM

For art, food and foliage to rival New England, head to New Mexico's heartland.

AVG TEMP
66 HIGH, 35 LOW

SUNRISE
7:10 AM

SUNSET
6:28 PM

RAINY DAYS PER MONTH
5

TRIP COST
$1,350 FOR 4

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES
GALLERY HOPPING, HIKING, HATCH CHILE EATING

Santa Fe is a bucket-list destination any time of the year, but fall is pure magic. In late September, the aspen trees begin their annual transformation, leaves hypercoloring into a vibrant, arresting yellow. Around the same time, the New Mexico chiles are at their peak, available in abundance and at maximum flavor. Add in some next-level hubs for ancient art and culture, mountain vistas, endless miles of hiking trails and a High Road pilgrimage to sacred Taos, and you have a trip for all the senses.

DAY 1

CLASSIC SANTA FE Pull up in the late afternoon to EL FAROLITO, a cozy B&B just a few streets from downtown. Stretch your legs with a half-mile walk to the central plaza to take in the exhibits at the NEW MEXICO MUSEUM OF ART [free on Friday evenings]. Afterward, duck into the nearby HOTEL ST. FRANCIS for a drink at the SECRETO LOUNGE. [If you're feeling flush, book a room here instead—rates hover around $600 a night, but it's worth it.] The hotel is the oldest in town, with austere architecture that somehow feels at once monastic and inviting. Order the Spicy Secreto, a sublime cachaça-elderflower concoction. Then, go in for the green chile cheeseburger topped with roasted Hatch chiles and melty cheese at SANTA FE BITE.

DAY 2

SANGRE DE CRISTOS Start at the farmer's market in the Santa Fe Railyard for a Ziploc bag of dried heritage chiles from Matt Romero Farms. Then, visit nearby SANTA FE CLAY, a 10,000-square-foot warehouse home to multiple artists' studios. Hop in the car for a hike at the Dale Ball trails, 22 miles of red rock routes in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Of the three main paths, the southern is the most rugged, but offers the best rewards. Refuel with a transportive IZAKAYA meal at Izanami inside the Japanese spa TEN THOUSAND WAVES.

DAY 3

HISTORIC TAOS Pilgrimage to Taos via the High Road, a breathtaking two-hour trip through river valleys, aspen-forested mountain passes, and indigenous Pueblo and Spanish villages. Start at EL SANTUARIO DE CHIMAYÓ, one of the most-visited Catholic centers in the country. A pair of shovels next to the site encourages guests to take home a scoop of the sacred grounds. In Taos, steal away from the touristy main drag to pop into the galleries along Kit Carson Road, Bent Street and Paseo del Pueblo Norte. Fall afternoons often bring epic thunderstorms, so duck into the ADOBE BAR for a spicy margarita—a fortifying toast to the weekend.

El Farolito
514 Galisteo St
elfarolito.com

New Mexico Museum of Art
107 Palace Ave
nmartmuseum.org

Hotel St. Francis
210 Don Gaspar Ave
hotelstfrancis.com

Santa Fe Bite
311 Old Santa Fe Trail
santafebite.com

Santa Fe Clay
545 Camino de la Familia
santafeclay.com

Izanami
21 Ten Thousand Waves Way
izanamisantafe.com

El Santuario de Chimayó
15B Sanctuario Dr

Adobe Bar
125 Paseo Del Pueblo Norte
taosinn.com

INTERVIEWS

Fourteen conversations with locals of note about mezcal, the duties of a small town mayor, Grand Canyon river guiding, shamanism, wildlife biology, ultramarathons and more.

DR. DEIDRE HUNTER

ASTRONOMER

THE SUMMER before seventh grade, I decided I was going to be the first woman astronaut.

BUT IF you wear glasses, you can't be an astronaut.

DWARF IRREGULAR galaxies shouldn't be able to form stars, but they have young stars. How do they do that?

OUR TELESCOPE can collect about 230,000 times more light than your eyeball.

WHEN A STAR comes to the end of its life, it becomes unstable and explodes, and the outer part of the star is cast out into space.

THOSE ARE the atoms that became part of us and the Earth.

I'M NOT REALLY "from" anywhere. My father was in the military, so we moved all over the place.

I GOT A JOB at Lowell Observatory in 1986.

AS A SCIENTIST I have to say we don't know if there are human beings in other galaxies. But it would seem incredible if there weren't.

FOR THE NAVAJO, constellations are used to tell you how to live your life.

WHEN Percival Lowell was observing at the telescope, he would sit and sketch what he saw.

ONE OF MY mentors is Dr. Vera Rubin, who's in her eighties. When she was coming up, they wouldn't let women observe at telescopes.

ASTRONOMY speaks to the soul. It helps us see our place in the universe.

YOU'VE got to keep the soul alive.

WHEN I THINK about the Big Bang and all that has happened that has brought us to where we are today, and brought me to being me, it's just so beautiful.

MICHAEL GHIGLIERI

RIVER GUIDE

MY FIRST Grand Canyon trip was in 1976.

MANY SUPERLATIVES can be used, and none of them are actually superlatives when they're applied to the Grand Canyon.

NO TWO TRIPS are identical.

IF SOMEONE'S being swept away into oblivion, you use a throw rope. You throw an underhand Hail Mary.

IF YOU'RE A GOOD SHOT, it'll plop right in front of their nose and you can haul them back.

IT'S PHYSICAL, like playing professional football. It's easier when you're 25; it's harder when you're 55—impossible, basically.

FIFTY POUNDS is the minimum amount of junk you have to bring as a guide.

SHOWMANSHIP is necessary.

WE DON'T MAKE CAMP FOOD. We make better food than you'll find in most restaurants.

EVERYONE LOVES my lasagna. It's baked in a Dutch oven and it takes about two and a half hours.

WHEN IT'S BLAZING HOT and somebody pops up an umbrella on their boat, everybody says to their guide, "Those guys are in the shade." You can say, "Well umbrellas are for wimps," but there goes your tip.

YOU DON'T WANT WET FEET. Eventually, bad things will happen down there.

WHEN MY LAST TRIP happens, it will probably be because I'm injured, not because I'm planning it to be my last trip.

OUT HERE, people get a sense of how insignificant we are and how fast our own lives go by. We're like the life of a gnat.

I GET paid to be in the most beautiful place on the planet. I feel pretty lucky.

BRYAN EICHHORST

MIXOLOGIST

THERE'S NOT A LOT of mezcal in Tucson.

WHEN I HELPED open Penca—an agave spirits, Mexico City cuisine, kind of place—I had to go down to Oaxaca and get my hands dirty.

IN SANTA MARÍA ZOQUITLÁN, I met this mezcalero, Ignacio Parada.

DON IGNACIO is an insanely intense dude who looks like the last person you'd ever want to run into in a dark alley.

HIS WHOLE HOUSE is decked out in heavy religious iconography.

THE WALLS in his palenque [garage distillery] are covered with ads for beer or car batteries featuring scantily clad women.

HE SAYS they're there for spiritual reasons, to help stimulate the mezcal production.

YOU DON'T COOK MEZCAL in a clean, above-ground oven like you do with tequila. It's made in a pit with wood, to get that intense smoke flavor.

TEQUILA COMES FROM blue agave. Mezcal comes from any number of agave, the most popular being Espadin.

MEZCAL isn't for shots.

YOU DRINK it the same way it was made: slow and intense and with meaning.

BACANORA is another agave distillate, from the Sonoran desert. We call it agave pacifica here.

UNTIL 2003 it was illegal. Kind of a charming Southwestern moonshine.

GROWING UP, everyone had an uncle who'd show up to the party with an emptied out 2-liter bottle of Coke filled with Bacanora.

ALL OF these spirits have been around forever; they just never had any real marketing appeal. Until now.

JESÚS "CHUY" CALDERÓN

MAYOR

I WAS BORN here in Valentine, Texas, and I've been mayor for 42 years.

DURING the Mexican Revolution, my grandparents came across the river into Texas.

VALENTINE is very small, about 150 people.

I REMEMBER being a little kid, and Rock Hudson and James Dean and Elizabeth Taylor were running around town. Back then, we didn't even know who they were.

IF SOMEBODY NEEDS something, they know exactly where I live and my phone number.

EVERYBODY knows me by Chuy.

I DO A LOT. My wife and I clean the cemetery. I work for FedEx. I record the weather for the National Weather Service.

EVERY TIME the weeds start growing on the sides of the road, I go out and mow everything, just to make it look pretty.

WE HAVE a new water system, two tanks that are always full. We have fire hydrants on both sides of town. We have a new sewer system, state of the art.

THREE YEARS AGO, we paved all our streets, because every time it rained, we would have to drive our vehicles in the mud.

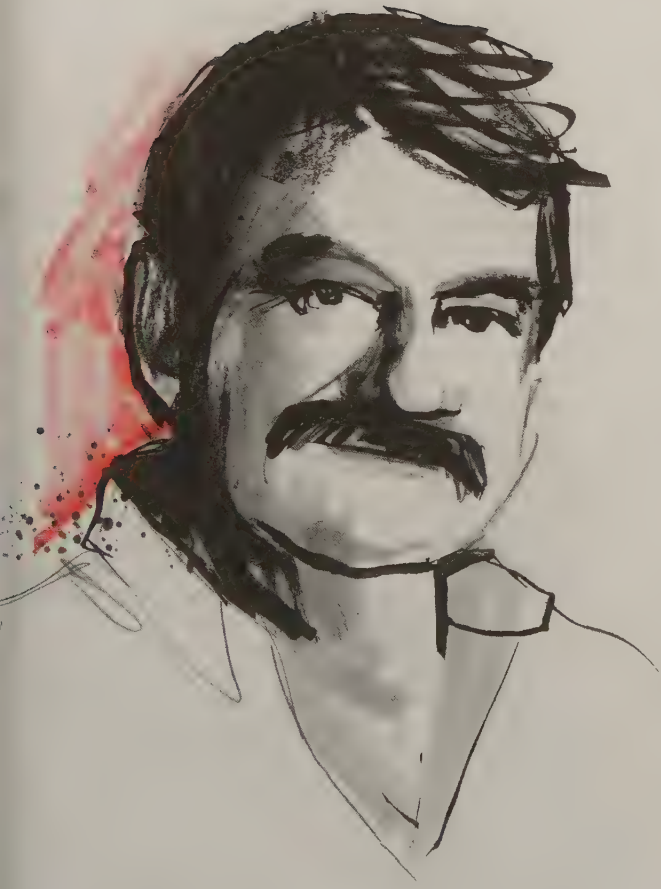
NO DEBT to the city. I've done all that with grants.

THE BORDER is maybe 25, 30 miles away, and we get a lot of illegal aliens that come to the town.

THEY ACTUALLY walk to town. Sometimes the border patrol catches them, and sometimes they don't.

CRIME or breaking into houses or stealing cars, we haven't had any of that.

THEY'RE COMING OVER here to try to find a better life, you know?



PATRICIA BROWN

TURQUOISE SELLER

FORTY YEARS ago, my husband and I were exploring throughout the hills during a snowstorm. He came across this little green vein in the rock.

THE SNOW made it wet and brilliant, so he chipped some out with a chisel, brought it home and worked it.

QUITE A FEW YEARS later, we went to the Bureau of Land Management office and claimed the spot.

WE DEVELOPED it into a working mine and got out 600 pounds of turquoise.

WE'VE GONE DOWN 30 feet so far.

I CALL IT working in my own backyard.

THE ANASAZI were mining turquoise here in 900 A.D.

I CAME TO the Southwest in 1971 to see what was out West and I fell in love.

OUR TURQUOISE is green because it has more iron content. Blue turquoises are strong in copper.

INDIAN LORE says that blue turquoise is for Father Sky and green is for Mother Earth.

I LIKE IT in the rough, the very natural pieces that come from the ground. Then what happens when you cut and grind it.

NORTH of town is the Cerrillos Hills mining district. There are more than 100 turquoise mines but most have been played out. Only seven are under claim today.

WE'RE self-taught.

WE HAVE DIAMOND wheels, which do the cutting. Stones go through six wheels to get down to the very finish.

WE'VE BEEN open for 37 years.

IN A SMALL TOWN of just over 200 people, you have to wear many hats.

ROB KRAR

ULTRARUNNER

THERE IS A REASON the greatest runners on earth flock to Flagstaff—Olympic and world champions, world record holders, some of the quickest ultra and trail runners in the world.

IN THE SUMMERS you'll find me running along an amazing single-track out my back door. Winters find me ski mountaineering well before sunrise.

ALTITUDE and attitude go a long way.

I'M PARTICULAR about my shoes for sure. Lightweight, low profile and highly cushioned.

AS THE MILES of a 100-mile race whittle away, the intensity of the suffering lessons.

THE PAIN shifts more toward a comfortable numbness.

IT ALLOWS ME to explore my furthest depths and to learn and redefine what suffering means to me.

IT'S A PLACE that I fear and yearn for at the same time.

I SPENT a decade working the graveyard shift as a pharmacist. I left it a year ago, and my only regret is not leaving it sooner.

MY NEW JOB is to chase my dreams on the trails.

FINISHING FIRST at the Western States Endurance Run, a 100-mile race in California, was the culmination of a year-long journey in 2014.

THE MOST POWERFUL experience of my running career was setting the record for the 42-mile crossing of the Grand Canyon.

BELOW THE RIM during my FKTs [Fastest Known Time] I was laser focused. A single misplaced foot could have instantly ended the run.

THE LONG VIEWS and towering rock faces could easily have fed into the fear and doubt I felt deep in the Canyon.

ARNOLD CLIFFORD

BOTANIST

I DO FLORISTICS, which is the study of shrubs, grasses, trees and flowering plants.

THE HIGH COUNTRY, the mountains, the deserts and canyons—I go out to the boonies and collect every plant that's growing there.

I'M TRYING to get a whole collection from throughout the southwest.

ALTOGETHER, I have around 24,000. I store them in alphabetical order in these old metal cabinets that came from Harvard.

I GREW UP around the Four Corners area about 18 miles west of Shiprock, in a small community called Beclahbito. I still live there.

MY GRANDMOTHER started teaching me about the Navajo side of plants when I was 9 or 10.

FIRST, it was the deities that are involved—the god of Native plants, how Rain Boy and Big Thunder brought about the knowledge of human anatomy, which included the medicinal plants that we called the lifeway medication—and later on, the classification system and how to collect.

IT WASN'T about learning in the traditional western way; it was about life, and what you can eat if you're out herding sheep and you get hungry—and also knowing what the sheep eat.

WILD PEARS, celery, and onions: If I wanted to eat, she said I had to learn those first.

MY FAVORITE cactus fruits are probably the hedgehogs.

MARIPOSA lilies are good, too. Dig down four inches, five inches, and you'll find a little white bulb that tastes like a peanut.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW about plants and where they live, you miss out on all of the natural treats out there.

JADE WAH'OO GRIGORI

SHAMAN

I'M VERY NOMADIC, but Sedona has been home base. I moved here in 1987.

MY MATERNAL grandparents were Mongolian.

I UNDERWENT my first initiation into shamanism when I was five. My spirit was split into two. My human spirit was returned to me and my shaman spirit was taken away and "trained," I guess you'd say.

WHEN I WAS seven, my shaman spirit returned and it was like I woke up.

ALL THE KIDS around me were talking about Mickey Mantle and I was wondering why they didn't know what I knew. But I wasn't going to say anything. I became very introverted as a tactic of survival.

I SPENT my time as a child of nature, in the woods and the creeks and on the farm.

I WAS run out of my hometown by the Ku Klux Klan when I was 17 because I was dating a black girl.

I HIT the highways and ended up in New York City. From there I headed to California for a while, and in early 1971 I moved to northern New Mexico.

I SET OUT with an intention of getting horses and moving into the mountains.

I STAYED in the mountains for seven years.

AMONGST INDIGENOUS peoples, spiritual adoption is more significant than blood relatives because it's intentional.

THE DAY I met Juan Peña I was out hunting. When I got to the top of a ridge I saw a cabin down below, with the smoke of a newly laid fire. I went down and knocked on the door.

SEEING that he was an old man, I asked him if I could help him out—could I bring him some water from the river or chop

some firewood? He got this little smirk of a smile and this bluish-white silvery light beamed from his eyes.

HE WOULD tell me wonderful stories, and I'd go into a drifty daydreaming state.

IT WAS LIKE I was actually there. One day I was sitting there and he was talking and I was in that state and all of a sudden I heard what he was saying—and it scared me.

HE LOOKED at me and said, "You remember that day you came to my door? The eagle told me the night before that there was going to be an Indian who's not an Indian to come to my door and ask to help me out. He told me I was to pass my ways onto that one."

HE DIED in 1982 at 104 years of age. And with that he passed onto me the caretakership of his shaman ways.

AFTER I CAME to Sedona, I fell in love and had babies.

THE ELDERS counsel against it. But I was headstrong and believed that if a path has heart in it, then it includes children.

AS GRANDPA PEÑA SAID, we shamans belong to all people.

WE ARE ALL children of this earth, and so all that's truly required is that we surrender into the embrace of the earth our mother, and the sky our father, and become earth peoples.

WHEN WE DO that, there is a natural expression of spirit through our lives, woven of the tapestry of the land.

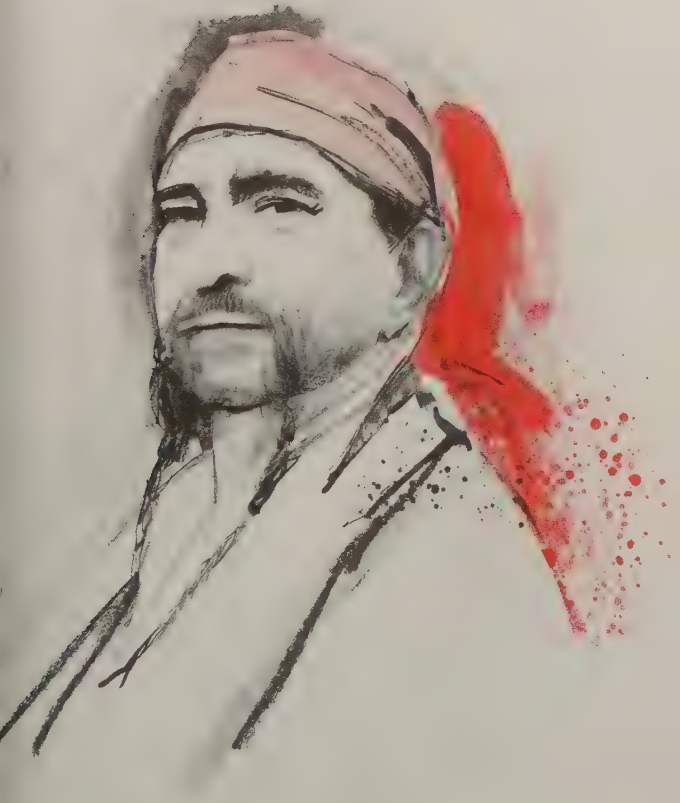
THEY'RE the same and unchanging, yet they're continually in a state of fluctuation—with the different angles of the sun depending on the time of day, or the different seasons, the rains staining the rocks or the play of shadows with the glimmer of the moon.

I DON'T promote myself as a healer.

I HAVEN'T been lily-white and pristine in my life.

AN INTEGRAL part of shamanism is the ability to dream while awake.

WE MUST relinquish the mind, and it is that relinquishment of the mind that allows for awareness of the heart.



KEN LAYNE

EDITOR

I'M FROM New Orleans originally. My dad's family has been in the desert for generations.

WHEN WE RELOCATED out West, as soon as I got my drivers license, I started going out into the desert. I was drawn to the landscape. My dad despised it.

HE GREW UP in pre-air-conditioning Arizona.

DESERT CAMPING is an acquired taste.

THE MAIN THINGS to know have stayed pretty consistent: wear a hat, bring plenty of water and tell somebody where you went.

ZIP UP your tent so there's not a tarantula or rattlesnake or something in there. It's fun.

MOST OF THE STUFF in *Desert Oracle* is kind of oddball stories and folklore. I like to dredge up the mythology of places, especially the lost mythology.

YUCCAMAN is desert Sasquatch.

"THE STORY" was passed around by Marines stationed out here at Twentynine Palms.

I SPENT THREE WEEKS hunting down various stories related to hairy demon monsters out wandering the desert, from gold miners, from cattle crossing people, from Native American myths.

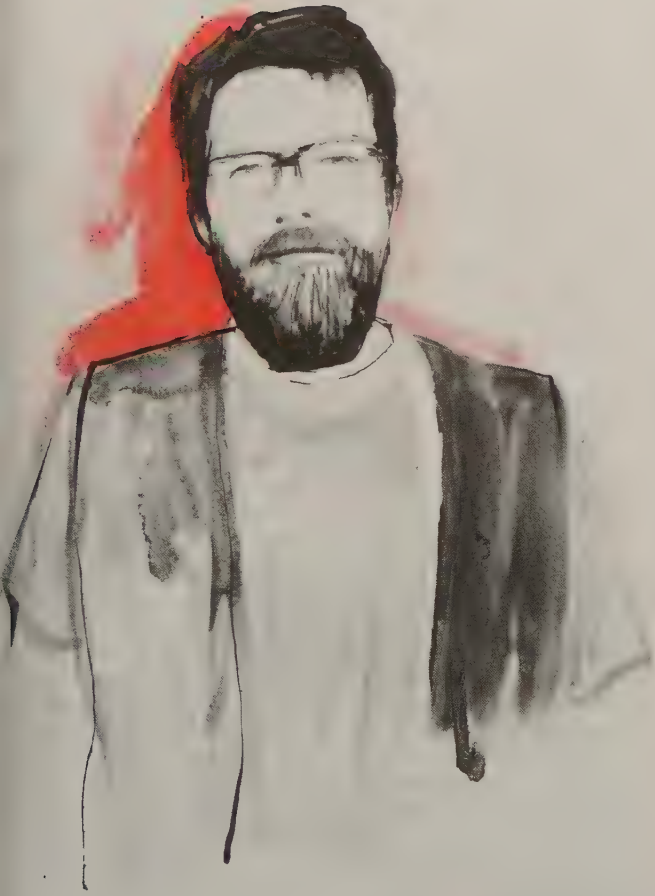
THERE WAS nothing on the Internet about them.

THE MOJAVE National Preserve is immense. It's 800 miles of straight wilderness.

YOU DRIVE for days back there, old dirt roads, ranch homesteads, beautiful mountains. The Marines call it the back way to Vegas.

THERE'S SOME pine forests up at the top. Islands in the desert.

YOU'RE GOING TO START seeing it all in the travel section soon. I've got a travel writer here about every two days.



JERI YOUNG

GEOLOGIST

I LIKE ROCKS, yes, but I've always been more into landscapes.

ON A SUMMER TRIP with a friend during college, I made it to the Grand Canyon.

I THOUGHT, "What's the closest PhD program to the Grand Canyon?" That would be Arizona State University, so I ended up there.

WHEN YOU GO to the Grand Canyon, it's kind of like church. Just this awesome record of part of Earth's history that we can actually see and stand there and enjoy.

MY SUBFIELD is geomorphology, related to tectonics.

I'M IN CHARGE of the Arizona Broadband Seismic Network, eight specially sensitive instruments that record earthquakes.

OUR MISSION is to study environment-related hazards—landslides, flooding, earthquakes—make that information public and provide studies to protect the citizens of Arizona.

THESE SEISMOMETERS—the ones that I'm babysitting now—provide this sort of information for critical infrastructure.

IF YOU HAVE a nuclear power plant, you would want to know how it behaves with seismic shaking.

SEISMICALLY, we've underestimated the activity of Arizona.

A COUPLE of summers ago, we had a magnitude 5.3 near Safford.

MY JOB is very physical. On any given day, I have to be able to solder and rewire a bilge pump. I have to move large instruments. Each battery weighs 70 to 100 pounds, and they all have at least two.

I ACTUALLY started lifting weights because of it.

THAT'S WHY I GOT into geology, though. It's hands-on. You're outside. Your brain, your body, everything is all-systems-go.

CASSIE WATERS

WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

EVERY OWL has a distinctive hoot.

MEXICAN spotted owls use Zion's canyons for breeding habitats. To survey, we produce a mimic call, so we hoot to try to get a response.

IF YOU DON'T have the training provided by the Fish and Wildlife Service, you're actually in violation of the Endangered Species Act if you're out there hooting.

I GREW UP in southeastern Kentucky. I ended up in a wildlife management program as an undergrad, and then I joined the army to help pay off my student loans.

I WAS IN the army for four years. They don't have a lot of environmental-related positions—I repaired air-defense radar systems.

I'VE BEEN at Zion National Park since 2007—I started out seasonal. I felt like it was a good idea to start at the bottom.

WE GET THREE and a half million visitors a year, but most people don't get into some of the really isolated places.

PRETTY MUCH anytime, even in the peak season, I can get completely away from people. I need the solitude.

ON THE EAST SIDE, you can walk up the canyons and find yourself a place.

VISITORS are surprised to start a hike in a sagebrush desert habitat where it's 110 degrees and then work their way up the canyon where it's cooler and there's more vegetation. Douglas fir, big tooth maple, it can be pretty lush.

WE'RE REALLY concerned with how unprepared people are when they come here. Everyone hears about the Narrows and the Landing and they want to do these epic hikes, but they have no idea what they're getting into.

ROSE B. SIMPSON

ARTIST

NEW MEXICO is the most beautiful place on the planet.

I'M FROM Santa Clara Pueblo and live on the plot that was my great-great-grandfather's.

ON THE RESERVATION you don't get a lot of privacy, but there's never a lack of support.

NO ONE EVER TOLD ME, "You can't be an artist. Go be a doctor."

I GREW UP with a mother who was a successful artist. She supported our entire family.

I'M a multidisciplinary artist, but I mainly do sculpture.

CLAY HAS an innate relationship to nurturing. I grew up in a mud house, so it was my protection. On the daily, we use clay to feed ourselves in vessels. We grow our food in the earth.

I DON'T waste any clay.

MY STUDIO is full of different stuff. I use them like Legos.

I WAS INFLUENCED as a kid by custom cars. Española is the lowrider capitol of the world.

I BOUGHT my first car when I was 12.

I ASK my clay to perform feats for me.

I USE HIGH-FIRE commercial clay with high grout content so it can be as strong as I need it to be.

I WORK WITH the human figure, because I feel like I'm making slightly abstracted versions of myself.

IT'S A DELICATE balance between knowing what is enough and what is too much.

SOMETIMES going overboard is the point.

I TRY TO DECONSTRUCT some of my cultural identities to find out what makes us all indigenous to this planet.

MIRABAI STARR

WRITER AND COUNSELOR

PEOPLE HAVE been drawn to Taos for thousands of years. It has always been a crossroads.

DURING THE 1960S, my parents got interested in alternative living and took us on a road trip, not knowing where we'd end up.

WE MOVED to Taos in 1972.

TAOS was a vortex for social experimentation and counterculture.

THE WHOLE concept of the nuclear family was out the window.

AT 15, I dropped out of school and left home to begin following the spiritual teacher Ram Dass.

NO RUNNING WATER or electricity. We grew our food. We got our clothes at the free box. People shared. There was a radical simplicity to the lifestyle.

WHEN WE LIVED in New York, my brother died. I was seven and a half.

TO ME, IT WAS as a mystery, this ultimate reality, and I looked directly into the void. I remember it feeling both terrifying and beautiful.

MY PARENTS came to rely on me a lot.

THERE WAS definitely an underbelly and a shadow to the free-spirited life.

MY MEMOIR is called *Caravan of No Despair.*

FROM AN EARLY AGE, I have had a sense of the sacred. But the real epiphanies in my life have come from death.

FIRST, MY BROTHER Matty. And then, when I was 14, my first love Phillip was killed in a gun accident.

THAT EXPERIENCE catapulted me onto my spiritual path.

I MEDITATED all hours of the day. I fasted, read all the great spiritual texts.

TAOS runs through my bloodstream.

THERE'S NO PLACE that looks and sounds and smells and feels like Taos. Even Santa Fe.

SHORTLY AFTER Matty's death, I started writing poems.

BOTH of my parents encouraged me. They told me that I had a way of saying so much with so few words.

MY GRANDMOTHER would type out my short stories and make copies for all the family members.

WRITING THROUGH grief is like alchemy.

WHEN WE TALK, we're rambling around it. When we write, we're excavating.

THERE'S NO more potent catalyst for transformation than profound loss,.

MOST OF US are conditioned to turn away from that experience. To get over it quickly.

A LOT OF US even use spiritual practices to bypass the pain.

THE POWER of loss lies in the courage to be present. Even when it's your own child.

IT'S TERRIBLE. It's not supposed to be that way. It's all out of order. It is completely fucked up that my 14-year-old daughter was killed in a car accident. She was a young woman with a beautiful life ahead of her.

BUT WHEN Jenny died, I chose to be with what happened.

THE MYSTICS connect brokenheartedness with a longing for God.

I WILL NEVER be the same.

THE PEOPLE of Taos Pueblo have a strong connection to the ancestor. When my daughter died, she became my ancestor.

JOHN O'DONOHUE described grief as a raging fire that you cannot draw near that eventually becomes a warm hearth that you take comfort by.

EVERY DAY, I walk in the Talpa Foothills. I grab a little piece of sagebrush and press it between my fingers and inhale it.

EVERY SINGLE TIME it takes me back to my childhood.

ESSAYS

Stories about setting a new pace in Santa Fe, severe desert landscapes and the life of a wilderness fire watcher.

ON ANCIENT GROUND

Written by **HAMPTON SIDES**

THE BIG MAN, the one they call Zozobra, was pleading for his life, his arms bound in ropes. Tens of thousands of people were crowded around him, yelling, *Burn him! Torch his sorry self!*

As Zozobra groaned incoherently, robed druids pranced at his feet, wielding torches. The head priest consulted the crowds for their verdict, but by now they were worked up into a frenzy. *Fry him—up in smoke!*

Zozobra begged for mercy. He groaned in despair. Then the druids put him to the torch. The big man flailed as his body was consumed in billowing flames. In his agony, I was perhaps a little embarrassed by my own bloodlust. Maybe I even felt sorry for him. But it was only a fleeting empathy. The giant finally collapsed in a heap of sparks and cinders and smoke, and the sated throngs bayed in ecstasy.

When I moved to Santa Fe, back in 1994, and had my initial encounter with poor condemned Zozobra, I was told that the annual immolation of this comically ugly, forty-foot marionette effigy was a cathartic ritual, a symbolic banishing of all workaday concerns. Prior to the burning, officials keep something called the "gloom box." It's literally a box which the citizens of Santa Fe are invited to fill with worrisome artifacts from the previous year—divorce papers, photographs of loved ones, tax returns, locks of hair—any sort of fretful talismanic object people might want to go up in flames. ["Zozobra" means "anxiety" in Spanish.] The contents of the gloom box are placed inside the mannequin each year—and are duly incinerated with Old Man Gloom himself.

The burning of Zozobra dates back to 1924, many decades before the first torching of the more famous Burning Man of Nevada. The ceremony happens during Fiesta Week, the grand party that New Mexico's capital has been throwing for itself every September since 1712, when the Spanish reclaimed New Mexico after the Pueblo Revolt.

For a short spell, during Fiestas, Santa Fe becomes a place again and not a Style. We lay aside our howling coyote animalitos and close up our high colonics spas. And with that first cool-weather tingle in the air, we stand before the doomed giant and greet the coming of fall.

Something about the crazy-weird ritual of Zozobra—this thoroughly homegrown pagan spectacle concocted by local artists—reminds me that I live in the right place. A place with a weird and whimsical sense of humor, but also with a deep sense of history. A place that rekindles itself each year—and consigns worldly worries to the stake. Santa Fe: The Royal City of the Holy Faith of Saint Francis of Assisi. Santa Fe: The City Different. This town of squat beige buildings, surrounded by mountains of every description and geological origin. The Sandias. The Ortiz. The Jemez. Atalaya. The Sangre de Cristos. Mountains that seem so close you could pluck them like pendulous fruit, and mountains that are more than a hundred miles off, phantoms rising from the Navajo country to the hazy west.

Sure, Santa Fe's a tourist trap, a sometimes annoying New Age mecca, and a retirement haven for the filthy rich. Sure, the very words "Santa Fe" have become international shorthand for a whole horsey, bolo-tied, hot-peppered, woo-woo way of life. Fanta Se. Pseudo Fe. Santa Fake. Having been declared one of the world's "spiritual meridians" [by whom I'm not too sure], this town has long been a magnet for an astonishing cross-section of questing individuals—Hollywood wellness junkies, eccentric art dealers with a taste for the occult, hackeysack-playing trustafarians, Texas billionaire widows willing to give anything a try.

Still and all, Santa Fe remains an extraordinary outpost of North American civilization. Beneath the stucco of tourism lies a fascinating, tolerant, laid-back Western town with a creative wattage all its own. Historically, it's always been an end-of-the-line kind of place: the end of the Camino Real, the end of the Santa Fe Tail, the northern end of the desert, the western end of the prairie, the southern end of the Rockies. People who gravitate to Santa Fe—artists, complexity scientists, photographers, physicists, chefs—often tend to be the sort of people who could live most anywhere but choose to live here because they've found inspiration, or solace, or a certain frisson of amusement in looking at the United States of America from what seems like a long way away. For living here does at times feel like living on an island surrounded

by oceans of land. We're in America, but somehow separate from it. A lot of people move to Santa Fe from somewhere else—they come, in effect, to burn their worries and their cares, to dispatch their old lives and invent themselves anew. In a sense, Santa Fe is its own little cyst, a dusty enclave of semi-expats who thrive on pursuing a new kind of life at the end of the line.

Each time I fly back to New Mexico after a trip to pretty much anywhere else in America, I'm reminded of why I live in this state. I gaze out the window as the plane begins its long descent, and I contemplate the endless space, the wrinkled mountains, and the merciful dearth of human scars on the land. After Dallas, after Phoenix, after any of those Mattress-Firmed, PetsMarted, Office-Maxed rat warrens of modern America, I often find myself literally breathing a sigh of relief: Home! I remember all over again why I came here, and why I stay.

The contradictions of New Mexico never cease to astound me—and they lie at the root of why I love this place so much. Dry but high, vast in size but puny in population, financially poor but culturally rich, we're a state with an enormous inferiority complex, dwelling as we do down in the cellar of far too many national social rankings. Yet people the world over fantasize about coming and living here—somehow, some day, some way. We're an oasis of high culture [Santa Fe Opera] but also high kitsch [Roswell's UFO Festival—"a great place to crash!"]. We're a place with deep strains of humility [penitents on the road to Chimayo] and also of cosmic arrogance [nuclear interlopers at Los Alamos]. We're a state so hickishly backward that cockfighting was declared illegal only a few years ago. And yet we're also poised on the furthest frontiers of futurism and technology, home of the Virgin Galactic Spaceport, Intel, and the Very Large Array.

In truth, I had no intention of becoming a New Mexican—not permanently, at least. I floated out here twenty-one years ago for what I thought was a temporary sojourn, a loose experiment in desert living. I thought I would chase a few adventures in the Southwest and then move on, in the way that modern Americans, restless and deracinated, always move on—in search of something "better."

But something about the place grabbed me from the start. The first few months, I went around with a stupefied expression on my face. I couldn't believe I lived out here, amongst all this surreal and spectral

beauty—a landscape so different from the South where I was raised, or from the East where I'd lived most of my young adulthood. There was something about it, some delicate combination of the latitude, the altitude, and the bone-dryness of the air, that was ineffably powerful. I really felt I'd landed in a part of heaven.

Oh yes, and there's "The Light." People talk incessantly about it. Painters and photographers move here to capture it. New Agers form communes to be closer to it. At first, I was skeptical of its specialness. But then one morning in late-September, after the monsoons had died off and the skies had sharpened, I was driving along the low road to Taos. Chile vendors were roasting peppers in those enormous tumbling contraptions, issuing a carbon haze over the land. I looked up through the smoke and saw a fuzz along the upper reaches of the Truchas Peaks—the first snow dustings of the season. And below that, threading like a yellow necklace through the ponderosa forests, were stands of aspen bathed in a roseate glow.

New Mexico is one of our youngest states and yet one of our oldest-seeming places, a well-trodden crossroads of myriad cultures, a crazy-quilt of warring and overlapping civilizations. Consequently, the desert Southwest is a wonderland of North American archaeology, having long attracted the lions of the field—people like Earl Morris and A.V. Kidder. Taos Pueblo is widely considered the oldest continuously inhabited spot in North America, and New Mexico's Spanish culture predates Jamestown or Plymouth Rock. Make no mistake, the Desert Southwest, sometimes touted by boosters and boomers as the sparkling "New Sunbelt," is *old, old old*—and thoroughly suffused with the ghosts of antiquity.

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF NEW MEXICO NEVER CEASE TO ASTOUND ME—AND THEY LIE AT THE ROOT OF WHY I LOVE THIS PLACE.

It's ironic that the very qualities that make New Mexico so beautiful and unique—lean country, bold climate, sharp clashings of well-entrenched peoples—were the very qualities that so many bewhiskered politicians back in Washington found so unattractive when they were considering candidates for statehood in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

People then didn't regard this country as beautiful or uplifting. Most visitors from back East regarded the place as ugly, scary and vaguely threatening: an alien slagheap. Early expeditions of the U.S. topographical corps found little to recommend, declaring it a "cursed land" and a "broken country." It was a world set in the kiln heat of the desert, confusingly burdened by so many languages, so many religions and so many ethnicities that stubbornly held onto the past.

Some senators in Washington thought New Mexico should stay a territory forever. Others seriously proposed giving it all back to Mexico. What was the point of it? You couldn't farm it, you couldn't settle it, and the land looked just plain weird. It was, they said, a *dead place*—geology without biology. They were used to finding beauty in deep greens and blues, in plunging waterfalls, in florid meadows full of fat, happy cows. Easterners could not understand the land's logic, let alone declare it lovely.

And what they did understand, they found unsettling. For it is a terrain stamped with terrific violence. Its scale dwarfs human beings, not only spatially but chronologically, suggesting chasms of time that mock our relevance in the story of creation. It would take several generations before artists, poets, painters, photographers and scientists [people like Edward Curtis, John Wesley Powell, Aldo Leopold, Ansel Adams, and Georgia O'Keeffe] began to put this strange country in proper perspective—and, finally, to call it *beautiful*.

More and more often, I've found myself leaving Santa Fe, heading out in all directions, and losing myself in the terrain. Here is real estate without peer, a land of sky islands, cinder cones and mesas the size of battleships, a queer world of upheaval and stark finality cooked in an unforgiving forge. It's a country that has moved modern geologists, ordinarily a dry and understated lot, to employ a vocabulary of doom: On the maps, you'll find terms like Paradox Basin, Defiance Uplift, the Great Unconformity. Walking over it, rafting through it, camping amongst it, we feel squishably insignificant—a feeling that I find paradoxically uplifting. To me, it's a source of comfort to know that we're nothing, that nature always wins, and that, in the end, we *homo not so sapiens* are mere spore-specks in the record of time.

I can think of no region of the United States where one can see the raw processes of nature so brutally exposed—erosion, sedimentation, vulcanism. Here you sense the hand of time and the patient but

relentless creativity of nature: Bold edifices of rock, conjured by God, masoned by the epochs, and kissed by clear desert light.

What really held me here, though, was not beautiful light or beautiful scenery; rather, it was the unexpected pull of history. In the spring of 1998, I went down to the White Sands Missile Range to write an article for *Sports Illustrated* about an event called the Bataan Memorial Death March. Part endurance race, part military exercise, and part retrospective on the horrors of war, it is a kind of athletic passion play held each year on the anniversary of the surrender of Bataan. The World War II battle of Bataan in the Philippines resulted in the largest surrender in American history. More soldiers from New Mexico than from any other state were killed in the brutal trek to Japanese-run concentration camps that came to be called the Bataan Death March. Because of this, Bataan is memorialized throughout our state; it's a Filipino place-name curiously found on our museums, government buildings, highways, libraries, and yes, military marathons.

In 1998, a Bataan veteran named Winston Shillito, seventy-eight years old and in terrific shape, decided to honor his fallen comrades. A few thousand seriously-ripped athletes, including elite soldiers from several NATO countries as well as New Mexico's fitness-junkie governor, Gary Johnson, would be running in the desert marathon. But Winston would be *walking* it.

I decided to walk it with him. Starting at dawn's first light, we trudged all day long over great dunes, up rocky buttes, across shimmering salt flats, with the beautiful-weird Organ Mountains hanging in the distance. As we walked, Winston told me his war stories: How he had endured starvation and tropical diseases and horrible mistreatment, how he was finally liberated from a slave labor camp in Japan by a bomb that had been designed in New Mexico and tested at the Trinity site, on this very missile range.

I found something tremendously powerful and deeply purifying about walking the bleached desert with this tough, wise man who harbored no bitterness in his heart. Thousands of his comrades had perished in the Philippines. His way of paying them respect, his way of working through his own complicated feelings, was to put one foot in front of the other and lose himself in landscape. Here was Winston's version of consigning his cares to the "gloom box." It was the time-

honored healing ritual known to all mystics: If you have a problem, immerse yourself in the desert and take a long walk.

Twenty-six-point-two miles long, in this case. By the time I crossed the finish line with Winston late that afternoon, I was blistered and deliriously happy. I had made a decision that changed my life and insured that I would make this state my home forever. On that day, I decided to become a historian.

The book I wrote about Bataan, *Ghost Soldiers*, grew directly from that bittersweet march with Winston, and since then I've made a permanent home here in New Mexico. I've come to see my day in the desert with Winston as a metaphor for New Mexico itself—for the magical way this place burrows into the imagination, for the curing effect of long vistas, for the clarifying of mind and soul that comes with hard hikes over spare country. Revelation through landscape. Renewal on ancient ground. A sense of space and possibility stretching to the horizons.

Perhaps what most enriches Santa Fe is its proximity—its contiguity, really—with Native American cultures that are still very much alive. In every direction, like clicks on a dial, one finds ancient peoples. The Pueblos, of course, but also the Mescalero Apache, Jicarilla Apache, Kiowa, Comanche, Ute, Arapaho, Cheyenne. Santa Fe is an ideal jumping off place for anyone who wants to explore this wealth of cultures

All in all, I prefer the Navajo country, the country of the Diné. I've been out there I don't know how many times, and I never grow tired of it. It's a world as big as New England, with its own snowy mountain ranges and great drainages, its own quirks of geology. I love the broiled mazes, the gulchy badlands, the intervening alkali flats studded with monoliths of rock. I love the malpais, the sky islands, the dormant volcanoes lofted over the plains. Even on decent roads, it still takes most of a day to drive across the Nation. Out in the middle of Navajo Nowhere, the influences of Anglo-American life are feeble and skewed, as though refracted through a thick lens.

The Navajos are, depending on how one measures bloodlines, the largest Native American tribe, living on the largest reservation in the United States. They've always been great improvisationists, mobile and restless, eager to absorb the ideas and implements of others, to inhale the essence of other cultures. Unlike the Pueblo peoples, the

Navajos have always preferred to spread out as far as possible from one another over large swatches of country. Yet no society has ever felt a keener sense of place. The traditional boundaries of the Diné country are defined by four stand-alone mountains, one for each cardinal direction, and each one inhabited by different gods. In the old days, Navajos were not supposed to stray from the borders formed by these great mountains or else face sickness and death. From nearly any place in Navajo country, a person can glimpse at least one of the four sacred peaks. From my house in Santa Fe, I can look to the west on any clear day and see one of them, Blue Bead Mountain [also known as Mount Taylor], hanging there a hundred miles away like a wispy blue mirage.

Like the Holy Land, the Dinétah is an intensely mythic landscape. Nearly every rock and butte has a name—and a rich legend behind it. Here is where First Man found the infant Changing Woman on a stormy slope. There the Hero Twins slew the Monster Who Kills With His Eyes. Upon that rock, Spider Woman, the lovable old crone-goddess, weaved some version of her mischief. The petrified forests of northeastern Arizona are, according to Dinée legend, the bones of *yeitso*, a grotesque monster who was slain by the Sun and left to rot upon the plains, the creature's blood congealing into lava.

The U.S. Army, based out of Santa Fe, claimed victory over the Navajos during the Civil War years. But, in truth, the United States never really conquered the Diné, and certainly never conquered their land. The Dinétah remains a kingdom within the country, too vast and defiant to be subdued.

My favorite place within Navajo country is Canyon de Chelly. The literal and metaphorical heartland of the Navajo Nation, it's a rock world with a human pulse, with peach orchards and corn fields planted along a sinuous sandy floor that's framed by massive luminous sandstone walls. The great mythologist and writer Joseph Campbell called Canyon de Chelly, with good reason, "the most sacred place on earth."

I've spent days hiking and climbing down in the canyon, hooked by its intrigues, exploring its endless notches and alcoves. The Canyon de Chelly complex is seventy serpentine miles of rock art and ancient artifacts interspersed with contemporary Navajo civilization: People still *live* there. Carl Jung said Canyon de Chelly was "the essence of antiquity." By that, he meant not just the presence of the old, but

the seamless cohabitation of the old with the modern. In Canyon de Chelly, it's all mixed up together, giving the visitor a sense of chronological vertigo that's strangely pleasing.

Societies come and go, they rise and fall, they die in the flames and are then reborn. All those petroglyphs and pictographs on the walls remind us that humans have been at this game a long, long time, scrawling our Kilroys, constructing our towns. We American moderns are just a passing thing, destined to be supplanted by other folks who're different, but not so different, from ourselves.

Those figures up on the wall are *us*.

HAMPTON SIDES is an American historian, writer and journalist. He is the author of *Americana, Hellhound on His Trail, Ghost Soldiers, Blood and Thunder* and In the *Kingdom of Ice*. He is an editor-at-large for *Outside* magazine.

FEAR AND WONDER

Written by **KATE SIBER**

ROPE STREAMED THROUGH MY GLOVED HANDS as I rappelled down a 170-foot cliff, curving from convex to concave. Spider-like, I dangled in mid-air before hitting the gravel floor of the canyon bottom. There, between two sandstone walls barely ten feet across, I waited nervously as the last person in our group of two guides and six canyoneers landed. We pulled the rope, and I felt a deep seed of unease. Now, there was no way out of the canyon, an obscure incision on the edge of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, except through.

I had known Rick Green, the lead guide and founder of the outfit Excursions of Escalante, for years. I took a canyoneering course from him and called him up when I wanted to run canyons I didn't have the skill or nerve to do on my own. He'd spent more than two decades exploring Glen Canyon and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, getting himself into slots so tight he had to exhale to squeeze through. Mostly, he took tourists on day hikes into chasms with beginner rappels and easy exits. But one fall, he decided to gather a team of more experienced clients, camp out in the desert for a few days, and lead us on routes that had never been guided. He invited me on the condition that I wouldn't tell anyone where we went.

On the canyon floor that October morning, the eight of us slipped on wetsuits, buckled our harnesses, and donned helmets and packs. We set off down the drainage, stomping through knee-deep puddles, sliding down rocky chutes carved by water over millennia, and sloshing into murky pools feet-first. The canyon became a dim tunnel, snaking back and forth in tight curls. It widened into cornerless chambers and narrowed into hallways slimmer than my shoulders.

This is not a place made for human travel, and obstacles arose that made us stop and furrow our brows: a series of refrigerator-sized boulders wedged in the canyon, a huge nest of woody debris, a round stone room smooth as a teacup and filled with water. We shimmied

over logs and occasionally floated under them, fumbling around in the dark. We slid down chimneys of rock, then fell ten feet through the air into shadowy water.

"I could not do this day in day out, I would have a heart attack," said Rick about his liability, as he watched me drop off a series of boulders. "It's like flying on the wing of 747, it's like waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah." He mimicked the drone of a plane. Rick, goateed with a shock of peppery hair, is slight of stature and incredibly strong. Like a lizard, he moves quickly and effortlessly across steeply angled rock. He roars around the desert four-wheel-drive roads in a bright yellow SUV, occasionally bursts into 80s ballads, and liberally doles out high fives. But he also has a solemn respect for the Southwest's capillaries—and the dangers of travelling them.

This canyon is known as one of the most challenging canyoneering routes in the region, not only because it requires strength, endurance, and acrobatic moves but because of the icy water that regularly barrels through, changing the nature of the route. At times, I saw tangles of sticks and logs jammed more than 30 feet above my head, a reminder of the sudden violence of flash floods.

At the time, Rick estimated that fewer than 100 people had ever been down here, and some had died. A few years prior, two young men perished either by hypothermia or drowning when they got stuck behind a logjam too difficult to climb over.

Later that day, I swam alone through a long chain of oxbows. Part of the group was ahead and part behind. I inched sideways through a narrow section, my back pressed against one wall, my hands mashed against another, water up to my neck. I pushed my pack, floating in a dry bag, ahead of me. In a bend cut off from the reverberating sounds of splashing and human voices, I felt a small panic arise. A feeling of entrapment. I was profoundly uncomfortable—cold, wet, hands raw from pawing the sandstone. How did I find myself here?

I stopped for a moment and breathed and stared at the rock a few inches from my face. Rick once told me that long swims are the hardest because they can ignite a primal anxiety. The key is to loosen into calm before it proliferates, to bring yourself back to the inherent okayness of that moment, discomfort included. I looked around at the slender landscape with all of its soft shapes, shifting hues of vermilion and flesh, and muted light. Wonder has an expansive quality, and in

time, my fear dissolved within it.

I moved from the Northeast to Santa Fe for a job, but it was the landscape that convinced me to stay. The abundant sunshine wooed me instantly. Driving through, I admired the tableaus of red earth, green sage, and blue sky for their minimalism. The floodlit space felt safe, as if there was nowhere for anything too big and sinister to hide. The uncluttered openness seemed to invite my mind to calm and still.

So many others have felt the same sanctuary here. With the promise of sunshine, the Southwest's deserts attract jocks and retirees, artists and spiritualists, dropouts and misfits. Like me, they come seeking fresh starts, beauty or meaning. As the months and years went by, and I moved from Santa Fe to Durango, Colorado, I learned more about the history of the landscape, and I realized that it was not always held as sacred.

Since the Spanish arrived in the region in the 1500s, Western explorers loathed and feared this land. They cursed its scarce water and infertile soil, its extreme weather and difficult terrain. John Wesley Powell, the one-armed Civil War veteran best known for exploring the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, declared large swaths of the desert uninhabitable. Settlers continually connived ways to tame, control and exploit it.

I am not particularly strong or brave, but I got curious. When I first moved here, I experienced the desert superficially, as if it existed in two dimensions. But I began to wonder about its dark moods and inhospitable corners. I wanted to understand this place beyond O'Keeffe paintings and greeting card photographs. So I learned to travel it in new ways. I coaxed myself to run at 7,000 feet on dirt paths threading juniper-and-piñon foothills. Out in the canyons, I learned to rock climb, inching up vertical faces for views over arid wastelands. In winter, I ventured out in the backcountry on skis, gliding through some of the lightest, driest, most unstable snow on the continent.

My naiveté got me into trouble. Running the sagebrush expanses one day, a thunderstorm gathered in what seemed like minutes. Bolts stabbed out of the sky and thunder clanged over my head as I sprinted through the rain in a panic. I exhausted myself in heat, unaccustomed to how quickly the air saps moisture from the skin. I got lost in a sea of white sand dunes and hiked steep trails slippery with talus.

On the edge of the Grand Canyon one night, I cowered as windstorms flattened my tent and flung sand into my face beneath the fly.

I am cautious by nature, and I cursed myself in these moments. I hated the fear and resolved at times to lead a boring life padded with safety. But my efforts also opened a world of more nuanced beauty. The electrified stillness that arises before a monsoon. The footprints of night-dwelling creatures that appear on the earth in the mornings. The sound of air moving over stone or sand.

I AM NOT PARTICULARLY STRONG OR BRAVE, BUT I GOT CURIOUS.

Sage travelers know that the most compelling places snare our interest with what they promise to teach us about ourselves. My curiosity to know these deserts, to be immersed in their difficult wildernesses, pulled at me like some migratory instinct. And I realized that to get to know this place, I had to be willing to look beyond the pleasant. I had to be willing to be uncomfortable.

After I moved to Durango, Colorado, I met the man who would become my husband. A kayaker, he invited me on an 18-day 220-mile private raft trip down the Grand Canyon with friends. Sixteen of us set off down the Colorado River in four rafts, three kayaks, and a wooden dory in mid-March. I didn't even know enough to be wary.

Rain washed the beaches clean of footprints and for days we saw no humans or signs of civilization. As the miles ticked by, the canyon walls rose. Great caverns and cliffs and amphitheaters paraded by, decked with spring wildflowers growing in improbable nooks. Herons fished in the shallows and hawks looped overhead. We hiked to mossy waterfalls, up a river tinted turquoise by natural minerals, and to ancestral Puebloan granaries overlooking sweeping bends in the river.

There were also rapids, dozens of them with great house-sized boulders and boat-tossing waves. Long before they appeared, sound heralded their proximity. An almost imperceptible rumble like a distant train grew louder and louder into a deafening roar banging against the canyon walls. Standing at the top of a rapid, scouting a line through the rocks and waves, feeling overcome with terror, I bargained: Is there really no way out of this? Each safe passage felt

like grace.

One day, just as I was getting accustomed to riding in the dory, a swift and bucking craft, we hit a hole sideways and a wall of water enveloped us. Tumbling through waves and rocks, I smashed my head and knees, somersaulted through darker depths, and gasped for air. Eventually the river rolled into calm. I caught up to the overturned boat and climbed on top of it. It took a mile for the next raft in our group to catch up and push us to shore. The river had monstrously disfigured the bow, knocked off the gunnel, and swallowed an oar.

IN RAIN, THE CANYONS TAKE DIFFERENT FORM. THE CLIFFS' COLORS SHINE, AND NATURAL STRIPES OF BLACK EMERGE.

I was frigid yet unharmed. But the delusion of safety had burst. Sleeping out on the sand that night, I replayed the incident in my mind and grew more afraid thinking about it. The fear was also a heady tonic, making all of the experiences that followed more real and immediate. The terrible, wondrous indifference of big water. My fragility. The beauty, the stillness, the quiet.

The biggest rapid was still to come—an enormous waterfall followed by a series of raft-swallowing waves and a rock dubbed Cheese Grater. I lived in fear of it for days. I didn't swim again, but being at the mercy of the water made me experience the canyon in a different way. The glimpse of my own vulnerability, ever-present but easy to ignore in a modern life so insulated from danger, made me feel both small and deeply connected. I returned home, and I mourned the river and its way of life. I had felt human in a way I never had before.

Something started to change after that. I certainly didn't seek out dangerous experiences, but I also didn't avoid the unpleasant. And on occasion, I even began to crave contact with the landscape's raw edges as if they were medicine.

One spring weekend not long ago, the forecast called for nothing but rain—a rarity in these parts. I decided to go backpacking in southeastern Utah anyway. I wanted to look for ruins, and it had been enough time that I had become consumed again by daily trivia. My thoughts had turned to mosquitos, so petty and loud.

In a truck, four friends and I hurtled through the black one Thursday night, set up tents in a canyon, and awoke to clouds hung low like thick curtains. A sense of expectancy hung in the air. Every so often, the sun leaked through, illuminating a patch of desert in slanting beams like a soft lamp.

We set off from the trailhead in a steady drizzle. Over the years, I have discovered that the desert has many different rains. It spits down angrily. It streams down in great sheets. It sprinkles intermittently, as if in hesitation. We were at its mercy. We walked down enormous gulches, the cliffs rising around us in sweeping theaters. Multi-story stone-and-mud houses with spooky rectangular windows peered down from impossibly high alcoves. On rocky shelves, we stopped to inspect ruins, still sporting centuries-old beams blackened by fire. Potsherds and desiccated corncobs littered the sand.

Much is known about these people from the homes and artifacts they left behind and from their descendants, the modern-day Puebloan people. But much is also not known, and I like to contemplate these mysteries as I walk. What was it like to wear hides and shoes made of mountain lion feet? What did their stews taste like? Did they love this land or curse it or both?

Sometimes these people feel distant, and I catch myself conceiving of them as mythical. But that day, in the steady rain, they felt closer. My feet soaked and my body penetrated by a persistent chill, I wondered how they fared exposed to these conditions. I wondered if their ghosts walked among us.

In rain, the canyons take different form. The cliffs' colors shine, and natural stripes of black emerge. Green grasses and leaves come alive, as if everything is opening, surrendering to moisture. Rockfall resounds through the valley, and water collects in cascades like delicate silver chains. Sage scents the air.

On a treeless ridge, I paused and looked behind me. My friend Eileen stopped to gaze out from beneath her dripping hood, taking in an amphitheater decked with waterfalls and ringing with the sounds of water. She caught my eye and smiled.

"What a treat," she said.

On some level, I know that water is both the desert's creator and ghost, forming it in abundance and absence. But it seems that there

are only certain moments when I can actually feel the nature of this landscape. It is not a fixed monument as it appears. It is a tangle of processes too slow and too fast to normally perceive. Water flows and disappears. Greens glow and dull. Rocks erode and shift. Beings like me arrive and depart. Every now and then, I remember.

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BURN SCARS

Written by **PHILIP CONNORS**

I WOKE TO THE SOUND of my name shouted from below, a spatially disorienting wake-up call. Dozing in the sunrise glow pouring through the windows of the fire tower, I needed a moment to locate myself and holler back.

It was Teresa, fiancée of my friend and fellow lookout John, whom we'd both been mourning for three weeks. She'd been on the trail to the mountain before daybreak. Sleep was elusive for her past about four in the morning, so she found ways to make use of the dawn hours, fueled by plenty of coffee. For me the trouble was the night, but I hobbled through with the time-tested crutch of whiskey, neat.

I invited her up the stairs, feeling strange at having to proffer the invitation. She'd spent far more time in that particular tower than I had, hanging out with John; I was just an emergency fill-in, on loan from a different mountain twenty miles east since his death. A fire there the previous summer had left my home tower surrounded by a 214-square-mile burn scar: a bird's nest marooned in a charscape. There wasn't a whole lot left to catch fire in that country, so my boss figured he could spare me for a few weeks while I covered John's shifts, and my relief lookout covered mine.

Although retired, Teresa still had me by almost two decades in the lookout's game, having worked thirty seasons in total, most of them on a couple of different mountains in our shared home forest, the Gila of southern New Mexico. Given her intimate knowledge of the profession, she refused to climb an occupied tower before receiving an invitation from its resident caretaker, an eminently sensible rule among the tribe of lookouts, about whom you can never be certain whether our pants are on.

Not all visitors honored this rule, despite a sign at the base of the tower informing the curious that the structure was both a home

and an office, and that permission was required to climb it during its annual season of occupancy. Humans being human, many ignored the official verbiage and began their thoughtless trudge up the stairs without so much as a shouted warning. When John had ruled the roost he would tweak such trespassers by meeting them partway in their ascent and telling them he was in the middle of some very important paperwork, and that if they would wait at the base of the tower for, say, ten or fifteen minutes—twenty tops—he would have the Is dotted and the Ts crossed and be glad to show them the view. Then he would return to his glass-walled perch on stilts and laugh to himself. The fact that there was no paperwork was part of what he loved about the job.

I joined Teresa on the catwalk. We stood against the railing looking north toward the Gila Wilderness, the original American experiment in protecting wild country from incursion by industrial machines. In 1924, as an idealistic young forester, Aldo Leopold had convinced his superiors in the Forest Service to draw a line around the only mountains left in the American Southwest not carved up by roads and keep them that way. His plan made the Gila the world's first wilderness with a capital W, meaning no automobiles allowed, no tourist developments of any kind, all travel demanding the exertions of animate flesh, either one's own or that of a horse: the model for what would become, forty years later, the Wilderness Act. True to Leopold's vision, this exercise in willed restraint had preserved, for ninety years and running, a big enough stretch of country to allow for packing with mules on a trip lasting two weeks during which the pack string never once crossed its own tracks. Even if he weren't venerated as the high priest of American ecology, a man who forever changed the way we think about the natural world thanks to his visionary land ethic, Leopold would be remembered for changing our relationship with some pretty big chunks of it—none more resonant with symbolism than the Gila. For some of us it remained not only the first Wilderness but the best.

It felt like the right sort of day for spreading some of John's ashes. The breeze was barely a whisper in the tops of the pines just below us; their needle clusters glinted like pom poms in the slanted sunlight. With the tinsel tufts of ground fog beginning to lift and dissolve, we could see mountains way beyond the forest boundary, over

in Arizona and down on the Mexican border. We both understood the gravity of what we were about to do and so we held off a little while longer, not wanting to rush toward a reckoning. Instead we stood on the catwalk and watched the forest come to life, sometimes speaking quietly, sometimes pointing to something on the landscape, sometimes silently attentive as the hummingbirds buzzed around the feeder.

After I called in my morning weather, Teresa suggested a stroll. We descended the tower and walked down the trail a little ways, until we came to an opening in the trees, on a ridge overlooking the rounded peaks of the Twin Sisters to the south. John had come there often with his wife, back when they first staffed the tower, back when Miquette was still alive. In 1999 she had been hired as the primary lookout, he as her relief, and they both liked the view from a natural stone bench just below the top of the ridge: thick ponderosa pine rolling down the slopes of the Pinos Altos Range, giving way eventually to piñon-juniper country, and beyond it the cougar-colored grasslands. John spread some of Miquette's ashes in the clearing after her death from cancer, more than a decade earlier.

Now it was his turn to join her.

I sometimes thought of him as the blue-eyed gringo incarnation of a Mudhead Kachina, the drumming, dancing clown in Hopi ceremonies: partial to mischief and merriment, and the most gregarious lover of solitude I had ever known. His laughter, his most winning characteristic, tumbled forth in staccato waves, his belly shaking, his torso rocking back and forth from the hinge of his waist like a see-saw. He had a kind of bebop laugh that reminded me of a Dizzy Gillespie solo, supple and exuberant, the individual notes crowding each other as if in a hurry to be free. When children visited his lookout tower, he delighted in showing them how he could make a flower of his lips by painting them with lipstick, drawing in hummingbirds for a drink of sugar water straight out of his mouth if he remained still as a statue on the catwalk. I found the tube of cherry-colored Wet n Wild in the drawer where he kept his weather instruments; its gauche branding first made me laugh and then ruined me for half an hour with all it evoked of the kind of man he had been.

The sight of that lipstick was nothing compared with my initial

glimpse of his handwriting in the log book, which detailed the major events of his last hours alive:

Noonish — Past lookout Bart Mortenson family arrives. Bart was a *lookout here in the 70s. He honeymooned here*

12:32 — *Smoke report: Azimuth 247° 30', Township 16S, Range 14W, Section 32 — small white column — BART FIRE*

12:39 — *Smoke more dense, still white color*

12:57 — *Engine 672 on scene*

13:00 — *Mortenson family spreads Bart's ashes north of tower. Nice singing of hymns drifting inside*

13:05 — *BART FIRE getting a broader base. Lat/Long 33° 55' 32.1" x 108° 12' 46.8"*

19:00 — *Out of service*

Shortly after writing the words "out of service," on the evening of June 7, 2014, he saddled his horse Sundance and set off on a ride along the Continental Divide Trail, passing by the spot where he'd spread Miquette's ashes eleven years earlier. When he didn't call in service the next morning, two of his good friends—his relief lookout, Mark Johnson, and his supervisor, Keith Mathes—set out ahead of a search and rescue team in a hunt for him. The hunt did not last long. Both John and the horse were found in the position they fell; Sundance and his massive bulk had crushed the torso of his rider. Neither betrayed signs of having struggled. Those of us who loved John kept telling ourselves that whatever the reason for the fall—a horse heart attack, the evidence suggested—he had gone quickly, doing something he enjoyed, in a place he loved, having lived life to the fullest until the age of 62, as if these facts would cushion the blow. And maybe they did, a little.

Still, it unnerved me the first time I studied John's handwriting in the log book and discovered he had saddled his horse and ridden off to his death within hours of witnessing, out his tower window, those rituals honoring the memory of Bart Mortenson. The resonance of all the little details made for a paradoxical feeling, a retroactive sense of foreboding: the loved ones of a fellow lookout bearing the man's ashes to the mountain; John's honoring the memory of the man by bestowing his name on a fire, a mere seven hours before the fire in his own eyes went out.

Those of us with long experience sitting watch over the Gila sometimes joked that we weren't so much fire lookouts as we were morbid priests or pyromaniacal monks. All of us had come there seeking solitude, adventure, the romance of wild mountains and a taste of the sublime; we got everything we had hoped for and more, including pyrotechnics on a landscape scale. The job never lasted long enough—six months maximum, more like four or five in a typical season—but it beat hustling for a living year-round, down in the neon plastic valleys.

From ten different functioning lookouts over the Gila we had the good fortune to watch over the forest more aggressive than any other in the Lower 48 at letting wildfires burn, for the sake of the health of the land. We had witnessed the triumphs of progressive fire management, even played a small role in them, participants in a new pyromancy that no longer saw wildfire as a despised disruption of the natural order, a menace, a scourge. After most of a century of total suppression, the fire managers of the Gila National Forest had sculpted that new attitude into a strategy—let a few smokes burn, when and where conditions were favorable, generally in the middle elevations of the wilderness areas, away from the settled edges of the forest—that helped preserve one of the healthiest ponderosa pine stands in the Southwest.

At McKenna Park, the place in the state of New Mexico farthest from pavement, you'd have to be lobotomized or a filthy aesthete not to sense something magical about the country: the scent of wild earth unbroken by human tools, a pine-oak savannah that called up a primeval feeling in the blood. The whole interwoven pattern of life there flourished amid the frequent recurrence of low-intensity burns; it had been and remained a fire-adapted ecosystem.

The ponderosas dropped their lowest limbs to prevent fire climbing into their crowns, giving the forest a distinctive, open look. Nearly every living tree was blackened at its base—evidence of wildfire as handmaiden to evolution.

In the two fire seasons preceding the summer of John's death, the forest saw the two biggest burns in its known history. First came the Whitewater—Baldy Fire, in May of 2012, which set a state record when two fires merged and burned five-hundred square miles of the Mogollon Range. It was followed eleven months later by the Silver Fire, which chased me from my peak in a helicopter as half of the Black Range succumbed to flames. Together the two fires roamed across almost half a million acres. There wasn't much to do about them but marvel at the heat and smoke and what they wrought, which included, at their hottest, the incineration of the normally moist, dense woods of the high country: Douglas and corkbark fir, blue and Engelmann spruce.

It struck me as appropriate that the earth in the place where John fell to his death had burned a little more than a month earlier, his last big wildfire as a lookout. The smoke started on Mother's Day afternoon when target shooters threw their spent shells in a hollow stump just off the road to the mountain. The heat from the cluster of shells set the stump to smoldering, and it smoldered long enough to ignite the grass and pine needles surrounding it. [The shooters slipped away and were never identified.] Aided by winds steady at thirty miles per hour and up, the fire in the grass quickly swept into the timber; once in the treetops it became a running crown fire, with flame lengths of fifty feet and more.

The fire ran up the flank of the mountain in a hurry, wind-driven all the way. Only the arrival of a back-door cold front that first night stopped it from growing ten times larger than its final tally of 5,484 acres. Overnight the humidity rose and temperatures dropped into the 20s; more crucially, the prevailing west wind changed to a light east one, turning the fire back upon itself—but not before John and Teresa were forced to flee for their own safety down the back side of the mountain on foot. After they left, the fire crested the ridge at the base of the tower, and the heat half-melted the flamingos John had arranged as a wry gesture of suburban lawn ornamentation. The fire essentially died there, leaving one side of the mountain green,

the other black, with malformed pink plastic birds marking the boundary.

From the mountain one could see almost the entire burn from above, the pattern it had chewed across the land quite obvious: almost straight west to east, with an uphill push to the top of the divide along the southern perimeter. It was far from the most spectacular fire I had ever witnessed, but it had more personal resonance than most. It was to be the last smoke on which I collaborated with John: I gave him an azimuth on it from my lookout, so he could pinpoint precisely how far north of his tower it was before he bailed off the peak. Now, staring at the burn scar day after day up close, I felt as if I would be shirking a duty if I didn't venture into it. I needed a hitch and a half as John's stand-in to work up the nerve, but one evening, after signing off the radio, I decided it was time for a walk through ash.

It didn't take long to discover the scene of John's death; the smell tipped me off from fifty yards away. The body of Sundance still lay where it fell, and his bay-colored hide stood out in a landscape that was now otherwise monochrome, the bare earth and fire-scarred trees streaked and daubed with white vulture droppings. John's body had been retrieved by Forest Service friends and colleagues, but rules and regs did not call for the removal of a half ton of horse flesh from national forest land, and the birds had made a feast of it. In the afternoons I sometimes watched them circling the ridge southeast of the tower, as many as two dozen at a time riding thermals over the crest of the divide, spinning in languid gyres, dark against the light blue sky—lazy-looking but never not vigilant. Sort of like lookouts.

THE FIRE RAN UP THE FLANK OF THE MOUNTAIN IN A HURRY, WIND-DRIVEN ALL THE WAY.

The trail contoured along a steep slope on the southern edge of the burn. Sundance had fallen hard to the downhill side, his neck bent around a charred tree trunk. In the two weeks since his fall, his carcass had shrunk until the hide draped over the bones like a tattered blanket. Beneath that blanket, inside the rib cage, something scratched and scrabbled—something alive. I stood and listened

for awhile, eavesdropping on the process of flesh reentering the food chain by the traditional method. The sound, a dry scraping, said all you needed to know about the pickins being slim. I tossed a small rock at it, then another. A vulture poked its head from inside the horse's body cavity. It crawled out into the light, glanced over its shoulder at me and took flight through the bare branches of the ghost forest: meal, interrupted.

The turkey vulture, a study in paradox: from a distance so graceful, gliding on invisible currents, air riffling its fingerlike wing tips; at close range so hideous, with its raw red head, greasy brown feathers and contemptuous yellow eyes. Misfortune its sustenance, death what's for dinner. "Your ass is somebody's else's meal," Gary Snyder had written, in his essay "The Etiquette of Freedom," and more than once, while idly musing on the interdependent nature of all forms of life, I had imagined my corpse—having accidentally fallen from my fire tower—picked clean by Cathartes aura, ensuring my remnants would soar one last time over mountains, before floating back to earth in the form of scavenger's excrement. What can I say? The days are long in a lookout tower. But not until that moment, standing over the bag of bones once called Sundance, had I known the given name of a creature repurposed by a journey through a vulture's digestive system.

The old boy had rejoined the chain of life at a new link.

That's what we had in mind for John too: his ashes joining with the life of the mountain. Teresa opened the plastic bag, and we dipped our hands in his cremains, grabbed a pinch between our fingertips and let it float off below us, toward a cluster of surviving century plants. His ashes mingled there with the ashes of the Signal Fire; within weeks, perhaps even days, a good rain would flush them down drainage, a nutrient recharge for the banks of the creek bottoms below and, for his remnants, one last ride through a piece of country he knew better than nearly anyone alive.

We each licked our fingers, wanting to take a bit of him into ourselves. I suppose some might view this as macabre, but to us it felt entirely natural. We had both inhaled the smoke of huge burns—as had John during his fifteen summers on the mountain—and the taste of ash on the tongue was far from unfamiliar. The forest, of course, would evolve over time, as it always had—spruce and fir suc-

ceeded by aspen, pine replaced by locust and oak. But, like John, what it had been was now a memento etched in flame.

As the day's heat increased, a few proto-cumulus began to form. Teresa and I each tossed another pinch of John into the air, watched the motes twist and float on the breeze. After awhile she gave me a hug and set off down the trail, leaving me alone to the spectacle in the sky.

And what a spectacle: the ancient drama of moisture streaming north off the Gulf of Mexico and colliding with the furnace of the desert, the resulting cumulus clouds expanding and building, their bottoms darkening, the first bright flash of a ground strike in the middle distance, then another. By midafternoon dry lightning was jabbing the mesas to the north every few seconds, and new smokes were popping up, demanding my attention. Still unfamiliar with the terrain from John's vantage point, I misplaced the location of one of the fires by three miles. The crew sent to suppress it found it anyway, in plenty of time to put it out.

That evening, off the clock and out of service, I took a couple of pulls off the tequila bottle John had left behind. I uncapped his tube of lipstick and made myself up in the reflection of his hand-held signal mirror. As I stood on the catwalk, lips puckered, a sad clown waiting for a hummingbird's kiss, I couldn't help thinking that the man I would have liked to ask about the contours of the country, the man who could have alleviated my ignorance, was forever unavailable. No longer up above the country keeping watch, he was now a part of it—and a part of me.

PHILIP CONNORS is the author of two books, *Fire Season: Field Notes From a Wilderness Lookout* and *All the Wrong Places: A Life Lost and Found*. He lives in the Mexican-American borderlands.

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A state-by-state catalog of contact information for recommended restaurants and bars, hotels and inns, shops, outfitters, museums, service providers and more.

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622 N Palm Canyon Dr
cheekysps.com

17 Mr Lyons
233 E Palm Canyon Drive
Palm Springs
mrlyonsps.com

27 Pappy & Harriet's, Pioneertown
53688 Pioneertown Rd
pappyandharriets.com

27 Frontier Café, Yucca Valley
57844 Twentynine Palms Hwy
760-303-1984

27 La Copine, Yucca Valley
848 Old Woman Springs Rd
lacopinekitchen.com

ACTIVITY

17, 27 BKB Ceramics, Joshua Tree
61075 CA-62
bkbceramics.com

70 Integratron, Landers
2477 Belfield Blvd
integratron.com

70 Moorten Botanical Garden, Palm Springs
1701 S Canyon Dr
moortenbotanicalgarden.com

COLORADO

LODGING

12 Dunton Hot Springs, Dolores
52068 Rd 38
duntonhotsprings.com

12 Siesta Motel, Durango
3475 Main Ave
durangosiestamotel.com

25 Strater Hotel, Durango
699 Main Ave
strater.com

73 San Juan Huts, Ridgway
770 N Cora St
sanjuanhuts.com

72 Lumiere Telluride, Telluride
118 Lost Creek Ln
lumieretelluride.com

72 The New Sheridan, Telluride
231 W Colorado Ave
newsheridan.com

FOOD & DRINK

25 81301 Coffee, Durango
3101 Main Ave
81301coffee.com

25 Diamond Belle Saloon, Durango
699 Main Ave
diamondbelle.com

25 Durango Coffee Co., Durango
730 Main Ave
cooksandcoffee.com

25 Ska Brewing Co., Durango
225 Girard St
skabrewing.com

73 Brown Bag, Telluride
126 W Colorado Ave
970-728-5556

72 The Butcher & The Baker, Telluride
201 E Colorado Ave
butcherandbakercafe.com

17 La Marmotte, Telluride
150 San Juan Ave
lamarmotte.com

72 The Last Dollar Saloon, Telluride
100 E Colorado Ave
lastdollarsaloon.com

ACTIVITY

25 Animas Herbal, Durango
1111 Camino Del Rio #5
animasherbal.com

55 Mountain Waters Rafting, Durango
303 W College Dr
durangorafting.com

25 Narrow Gauge Railroad, Durango
479 Main Ave
durangotrain.com

17 Traders Rendezvous, Gunnison
516 W Tomichi Ave
coloradoantlers.com

73 Jagged Edge Mountain Gear, Telluride
223 E Colorado Ave
jagged-edge-telluride.com

72 Sheridan Opera House, Telluride
110 N Oak St
sheridanoperahouse.com

NEVADA

LODGING

26 12 Oasis at Gold Spike, Las Vegas
217 N Las Vegas Blvd
oasisatgoldspike.com

26 The Palazzo, Las Vegas
3325 S Las Vegas Blvd
palazzo.com

26 The Venetian, Las Vegas
3355 S Las Vegas Blvd
venetian.com

26 Wynn, Las Vegas
3131 S Las Vegas Blvd
wynnlasvegas.com

FOOD & DRINK

17 Bob Taylor's Ranch House, Las Vegas
6250 Rio Vista St
bobtaylorsranchhouse.com

26 Bacchanal, Las Vegas
3570 S Las Vegas Blvd
caesars.com

26 Joël Robuchon, Las Vegas
3799 S Las Vegas Blvd
joel-robuchon.com

26 Makers and Finders, Las Vegas
1120 S Main St #110
makersfv.com

26 Sunrise Coffee, Las Vegas

3130 E Sunset Rd, Ste A
sunrisecoffeelv.com

ACTIVITY

26 Akhob at Louis Vuitton, Las Vegas
3720 Las Vegas Suite 103 [The Shops at Crystals]
us.louisvuitton.com

26 The D Casino, Las Vegas
301 Fremont St
thed.com

26 Dream Racing, Las Vegas
7000 N Las Vegas Blvd
dreamracing.com

17 The Flamingo, Las Vegas
3555 S Las Vegas Blvd
caesars.com/flamingo-las-vegas

26 Golden Nugget, Las Vegas
129 Fremont St
goldennugget.com

57 Neon Museum, Las Vegas
770 Las Vegas Blvd N
neonmuseum.org

NEW MEXICO

LODGING

12 Ojo Caliente, Ojo Caliente
50 Los Banos Dr, Hwy 414
ojospa.com

12, 22 Los Poblanos, Los Ranchos de Albuquerque
4803 Rio Grande Blvd NW
lospoblanos.com

65 Rancho de Chimayó, Chimayó
300 Juan Medina Rd
ranchodechimayo.com

74 El Farolito, Santa Fe
514 Galisteo St
farolito.com

74 Hotel St Francis, Santa Fe
210 Don Gaspar Ave
hotelstfrancis.com

12 The Inn of the Five Graces, Santa Fe
150 E De Vargas St
fivegraces.com

21 Mabel Dodge Luhan House, Taos
240 Morada Ln
mabeldodgeluhan.com

FOOD & DRINK

22 Dirty Bourbon Dance Hall & Saloon, Albuquerque
9800 Montgomery Blvd NE
thedirtybourbon.com

22 El Paisa, Albuquerque
820 Bridge Blvd SW
505-452-8997

22 Prismatic, Albuquerque
1761 Bellamah Ave NW
prismatic.coffee

22 Sidetrack Brewing Co., Albuquerque
413 2nd St SW
sidetrackbrewing.net

9 Tesuque Village Market, Albuquerque
138 Tesuque Village Rd
tesuquevillagemarket.com

15 Silva's Saloon, Bernalillo
955 S Camino Del Pueblo
505-867-9976

74 Izanami, Santa Fe
211 Ten Thousand Waves Way
izanamisantafe.com

9 The Pink Adobe, Santa Fe
406 Old Santa Fe Trail
thepinkadobe.com

74 Santa Fe Bite, Santa Fe
311 Old Santa Fe Trail
santafebite.com

74 Secreto Lounge, Santa Fe
210 Don Gaspar Ave
secretolounge.com

15 The Shed, Santa Fe
113 1/2 East Palace Avenue
sfshed.com

75 Adobe Bar, Taos
125 Paseo Del Pueblo Norte
taosinn.com/adobe-bar

15 Love Apple, Taos
803 Paseo Del Pueblo Norte
theloveapple.net

21 World Cup Café, Taos
102 Paseo Del Pueblo Norte
575-737-5299

ACTIVITY

22 National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque
1701 4th St SW
nhccnm.org

8, 54 Rainbow Ryders, Albuquerque
5601 Eagle Rock Ave NE
rainbowryders.com

22 Sandia Peak Tramway, Albuquerque
30 Tramway Rd NE
sandiapeak.com

75 El Santuario de Chimayó, Chimayó
15 B Santuario Dr
elsantuariodechimayo.com

66 Ortega's Weaving Shop, Chimayo
53 Plaza Del Cerro
ortegasweaving.com

84 Casa Grande Trading Post, Cerrillos
17 Waldo St
cerrillosturquoise.com

15 Taos Clay Studio, El Prado
1208 Paseo Del Pueblo Norte
taosclay.com

21 Kokopelli Rafting Adventures, Pilar
Rio Grande Gorge Visitor

Center
kokopelliraft.com

15 Very Large Array, Socorro
vla.nrao.edu

66 Taos Art School, Taos
432 Este Es Rd
taosartschool.org

21 Wild Earth Llama Adventures, Taos
llamaadventures.com

15 Tinkertown Museum, Sandia Park
121 Sandia Crest Rd
tinkertown.com

55 Double Take, Santa Fe
320 Aztec St
santafedoubletake.com

67 High Desert Angler, Santa Fe
460 Cerrillos Rd
highdesertangler.com

74 New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe
107 W Palace Ave
nmartmuseum.org

75 Santa Fe Clay, Santa Fe
545 Camino de la Familia
santafeclay.com

75 Santa Fe Farmer's Market, Santa Fe
1607 Paseo De Peralta
santafefarmersmarket.com

55 Santa Fe Vintage, Santa Fe
7501 Avenger Way
santafevintage.com

55 Shiprock Santa Fe, Santa Fe
53 Old Santa Fe Trail
shiprocksantafe.com

75 El Santuario de Chimayó, Taos
15B Sanctuario Dr
elsantuariodechimayo.us

21 Kit Carson House, Taos
113 Kit Carson Rd
kitcarsonmuseum.org

TEXAS

LODGING

12, 53 Gage Hotel, Marathon
102 NW 1st St, Hwy 90 W
gagehotel.com

12, 20 El Cosmico, Marfa
802 S Highland Ave
elcosmico.com

20 Hotel Paisano, Marfa
207 Highland St
hotelpaisano.com

FOOD & DRINK

15 L & J Café, El Paso
3622 E Missouri Ave
landjcafe.com

9 Bienvenidos Restaurant, Fort Stockton
405 W Dickinson Blvd
bienvenidosrestaurant.com

20 Jett's Grill, Marathon
207 Highland St
hotelpaisano.com

53 White Buffalo Bar, Marathon
102 NW 1st St, Hwy 90
gagehotel.com

20 Marfa Burrito, Marfa
104 E Waco St

15 La Kiva, Terlingua
23220 FM 170
la-kiva.com

ACTIVITY

53 Big Bend Saddlery, Alpine
2701 US-90
bigbendsaddlery.com

15 James Evans Gallery, Marathon
21 S 1st St
jamesbevans.com

20 Cobra Rock Boot Co., Marfa
107 S Dean St
cobrarock.com

20 The Wrong Store
110 W Dallas St
wrongmarfa.com

15 McDonald Observatory, Fort Davis
3640 Dark Sky Dr
mcdonaldobservatory.org

53 Ballroom Marfa, Marfa
108 E San Antonio St
ballroommarfa.org

20 Chinati Foundation, Marfa, 1 Cavalry Rd
chinati.org

20 Garza Marfa, Marfa
103 N Nevill St
garzamarfa.com

UTAH

LODGING

12, 56 Amangiri, Canyon Point
1 Kayenta Rd
aman.com

FOOD & DRINK

16, 56 Milt's Stop and Eat, Moab
356 E Mill Creek Dr
miltsstopandeat.com

16 Zion Canyon Brew Pub, Springdale
2400 Zion Park Blvd
zionbrewery.com

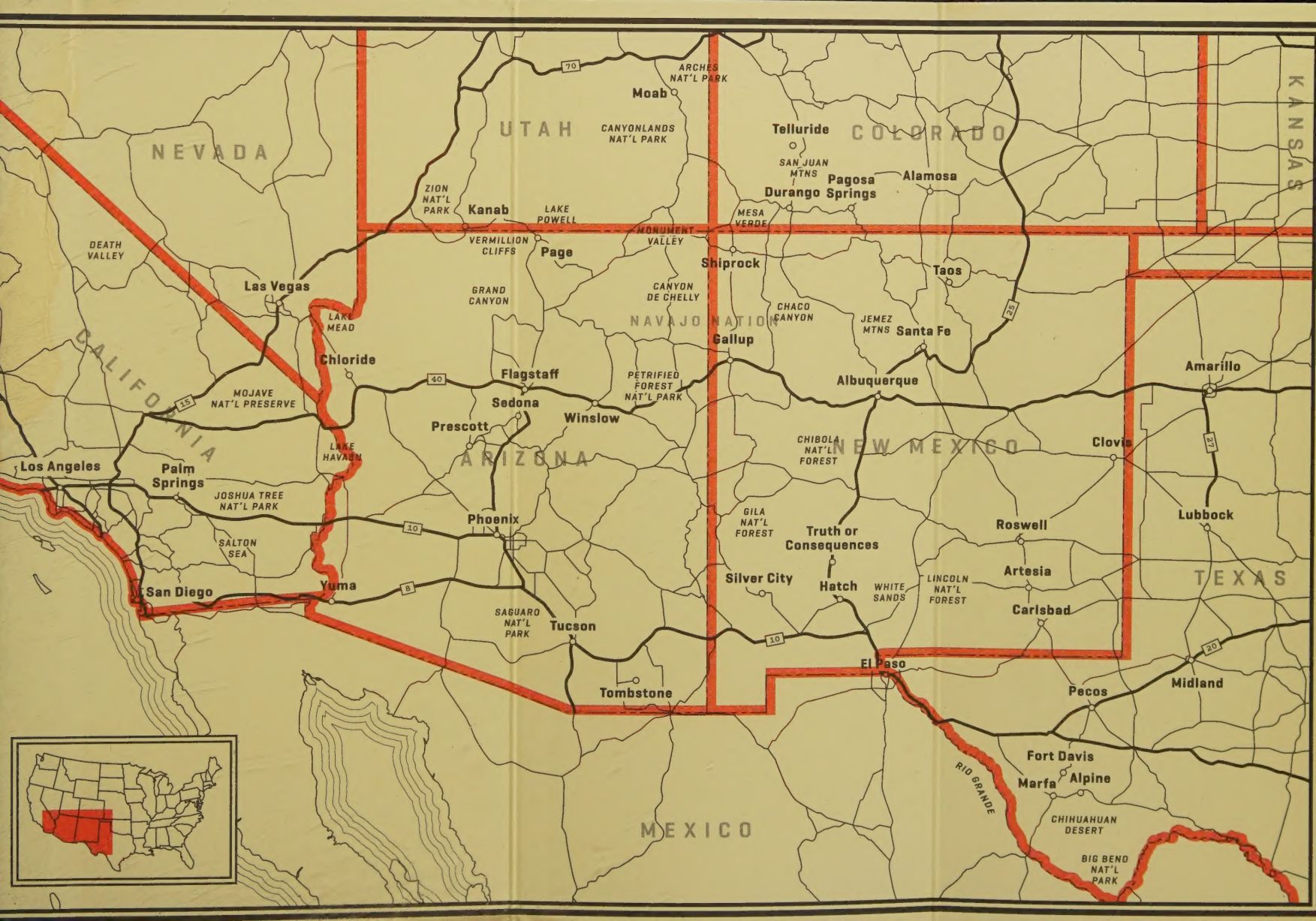
ACTIVITY

16 Twin Rocks Trading Post, Bluff
913 Navajo Twins Dr
twinrocks.com

16 Mars Desert Research Station, Hanksville
2200 Cow Dung Rd
mdrs.marssociety.org

16 Grand Circle Trail Fest, Kanab
thetrailfest.com

69 Zion Adventure Co, Springdale
36 Lion Blvd
zionadventures.com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BIG BEND NAT'L PARK
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