

NM Marathon in Albuquerque Trip Notes September 3 - 8, 2009



You're not surprised that this trip was for a marathon? But as always, the trip was as much for the tourist sites and both goals were met with much more success than could have been expected. The marathon was well organized, full of wonderfully friendly runners, and the tourist sites far exceeded my expectations. It's hard to imagine that the Rockies extend this far south and that I was within them in June, July and August. With September also under my belt, can we find a Rockies trip for October and keep this lovely streak going?

This was my 12th marathon of the year (including 2 ultras), my 43rd in total, and my 31st state. Well, it was my 50th marathon if you count those I 'started.' It was also the site of the 50-State Marathon Club's quarterly reunion. This was the first reunion I'd attended and an eye opener. More on that later.

New Mexico flag is as unique as the state and tells the story: The simple and meaningful design features an interpretation of an ancient symbol of the sun as found on a late 19th century water jar from Zia Pueblo. This red symbol is called a "Zia" and is centered on a field of yellow. Four is the sacred number of the Zia and can be found repeated in the four points radiating from the circle. The number four is embodied in the four points of the of the compass, North, East, South and West; in the four seasons of the year Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter; in the 24 hours of each day by sunrise, noon, evening and night; by four seasons of life, childhood, youth, adulthood and old age. The Zia also believed that with life came four sacred obligations: development of a strong body, a clear mind, a pure spirit and devotion to the welfare of people/family. All of these things are bound together within the circle of life. Nice, yes?

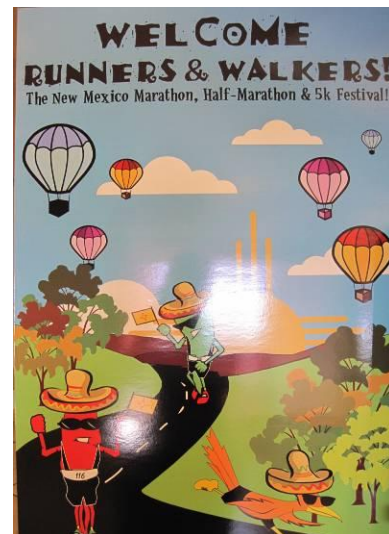


Here's Maricar in Albuquerque's Old Town surrounded by some colorful characters of the city.



Why did we like the NM Marathon? I think there are three marathons in Albuquerque to include Duke City Marathon in October and the Albuquerque Marathon in April which includes a balloon festival. This one was only 378 marathoners and 361 half marathoners plus a lot of 5K runners but they organized like a larger marathon. The size was undoubtedly assisted by the 50-State Club bringing over 100 runners.

- Nice royal blue long sleeve high-tech shirt that was even available in a woman's cut.
- Course started high and dropped considerably but don't be confused – there were rolling hills with a lot of upward climbing for the first 8 miles
- Jeff Galloway is connected and he paced the 5 hour group (and I got to run with him for almost an hour with the new 1 minute run and 1 minute walk routine that claims to be faster and injury free.)
- Local scenery and amusements were absolutely top rated and a major surprise.
- Friendly runners - especially with the 50-staters at the back of the pack with us.
- Inexpensive host hotel – though I'd look at Hotel Albuquerque next time.
- Excellent and inexpensive (\$18.25 all in) pasta dinner at the host hotel that included meat balls and chicken.
- Expo was large enough and well organized.
- Views of the Sandia Mountains at sunrise were spectacular.
- The big balloon festival is in 3 weeks. There were at least 15 balloons launched (for practice and for tourists) as we were coming down the mountain.



NM Marathon's medal utilized the pottery techniques of the local Indians, shows the roadrunner state bird, the balloon festival of which Albuquerque is famous, as well as the NM state flag. Some thought it was cheesy but I suspect they simply didn't know the significance.



How did we do? The Liberty Ladies have been neglecting their running legs and paid the price. When it was clear that we'd not finish before 5:30 hours, we got into visiting and touring mode and finished in 5:51 hours. Even at that we were both sore the next day but realized it served us right. We made stops, walked when we had good company even if running were an option, went down to the dirt river path, stopped for food, plus a few potty stops. The altitude of well over 5,000 feet didn't help, nor did the heat that came around mile 18. The early morning showers felt good. The downhill from mile 8 was wonderful to say nothing of the views too, but the first 8 miles were a surprisingly bit of rolling hills and all upwards.

Color of the region – a folk dancing festival on Albuquerque’s Town Square; sculpture in Santa Fe’s Canyon Valley art section; bottle fences and bottle trees throughout a village on the way to Santa Fe on the Turquoise Trail.



Crafts of the area – colorful blankets in Santa Fe’s 400-year anniversary festival; Peggy shopping for pottery at Acoma’s Sky High City; Maricar in “Wild Hog” city with a bird sculptured bar stool; a crafty chair in Old Town Albuquerque.



Mountains of the area - If my priority was touring, Albuquerque gave me a varied terrain and scenery and all quite different than other places I’ve been. Here are some unique or surprising mountains. One of the Sky City of Acoma; in the Sandia Mountains and I can’t imagine what they call this one; in the valley of Acoma and those are many stories high; and the original Sky High City that’s 40 stories high.



Acoma Pueblo 1000 year old Sky City – This is about 60 miles from Albuquerque and our tour guide had told us about it and that it was one of his favorite places ever. I now understand why. From www.acomaskycity.org: Discover the centuries-old history of New Mexico’s southwest Indians. Acoma Pueblo offers a window in time where Native people carry on the customary traditions of their ancestors through Native American pottery making and tribal celebrations. Acoma Pueblo is built atop a sheer-walled, 367-foot sandstone bluff in a valley studded with sacred, towering monoliths. Since 1150 AD, Acoma Pueblo has earned the reputation as the oldest continuously inhabited community in North America. The mesa-top settlement is known worldwide for its unique art and rich culture. A federally

recognized Indian Tribe, Acoma Pueblo has a land base covering 431,664 acres and is home to 4,800 tribal members with more than 250 dwellings, none of which have electricity, sewer, or water. In 1629, construction began on the massive San Esteban del Rey Mission, a Catholic mission. Both the Mission and the Pueblo are Registered National Historical Landmarks. Acoma Pueblo was named the 28th National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) site in 2007 and is the only Native American site in the nation.

Here are pictures from my visit to the 74 acre mountain top that's 40 stories high, their church and sacred graveyard where tribal members have been buried in layers, and a home on the mountain top face with views to die for. You'll find a lot of fascinating pictures at the above link. I bought an entire book of history and pictures.



At the conclusion of the tour, I don't know whose devil prompted us to do it (this was the day before the marathon), but Peggy and I decided to hike down the ancient and narrow stone route (maybe because we were with this Australian hunk who we wanted to follow?) This route was their safety net to the impenetrable sky high city: A pile of stones would be above and if an evil party tried to ascend, the rocks would be pushed over the side. It was very steep and caused us to go down backwards at times and on your butt at other times. No wonder they were considered safe and have survived 1000 years.



Churches of Santa Fe – On Friday, Maricar and I took a day tour to Santa Fe. Here we have pictures from the Loretto Chapel (see below for more info), the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi with lots of trompe d'oeil inside, and San Miguel Chapel, thought to be the oldest standing church structure in the U.S. having been constructed of adobe around 1610 AD. Santa Fe is famous for its perfect look of all adobe (whether with a stucco façade or not) and the town is picturesque like something out of Disney. They were just setting up for the celebration of their 400th anniversary and the plaza was full.



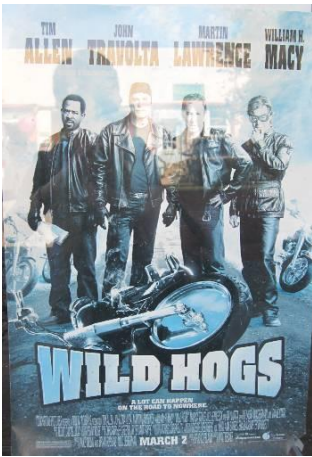
Loretto Chapel dates from 1882 contains the 'the miraculous staircase'. Here's the fascinating story from www.visitsantafe.com: When the building was almost finished someone noticed that while the chapel was beautiful, as was the choir loft, there was no way to get from one to the other. The sisters summoned carpenter after carpenter who told them that a 21 foot staircase in such a small space could simply not be built. The sisters began to pray to Saint Joseph. In answer a grey haired man with a donkey and tool chest came to the convent and asked if he might have a try at building what would be known as the Miraculous Staircase. When the work was complete the man simply disappeared as suddenly as he appeared and couldn't be found to accept any pay for the job. Nor were there any charges for lumber at the local lumber yard. The Miraculous Staircase has 33 steps and makes two complete turns of 360°. The staircase, unlike every other spiral staircase in the world, has no center support and no one can really explain how the thing stands up and bears weight. Wooden pegs, rather than nails, were used. The sisters remember the old carpenter using only hammer, saw and T square. They also remember pieces of wood soaking in tubs of water. Nobody has actually pinned down exactly where the wood in the structure came from. The wood is not native to New Mexico. Who actually built the Miraculous Staircase? Some people think it was St. Joseph himself. (Note that the banisters were built as an add-on for safety much later.)

Santa Fe -- the capital is well-known as a center for arts that reflect the multicultural character of the city; and has been designated as a UNESCO site. It not attracts the rich and famous but many movies have been filmed in this 4th largest town in NM. From www.wikipedia.org: The town and the surrounding areas have a high concentration of artists. They have come over the decades to capture on canvas and in other media the natural beauty of the landscape, the flora and the fauna. One of the most well-known New Mexico-based artists was Georgia O'Keeffe. The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe is devoted to exhibitions of her work and associated artists or related themes. Canyon Road, east of the Plaza, has the highest concentration of art galleries in the city, and is a major destination for international collectors, tourists and locals. Santa Fe's art market is the second largest in the U.S. See www.santafe.org for more info on Santa Fe.

Turquoise Trail - From www.turquoisetrail.org: Back roads lead to great discoveries. Venture off the freeway and onto the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway, and you'll see what we mean. The Scenic and Historic Area encompasses 15,000 square miles in the heart of central New Mexico, linking Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Enjoy a breathtaking view from atop Sandia Crest, and then drive back into history through the mining towns of Golden, Madrid, and Cerrillos.

We found Cerillos to be ghostly but the other towns to be full of hippies and a lot of "Wild Hogs" memorabilia to include the original "Maggie's Diner" built by Disney to be intact. Here is a picture of Maggie's as well as next door's shop owned by the same person.

We also found the Turquoise Trail and the back side of Sandia Mountains was totally different than what we saw from the Albuquerque side.



Sandia Mountains and the aerial tramway – Peggy, Maricar and I went on this tour after the marathon. From www.sandiapeak.com: A trip on the world’s longest aerial tramway transports you above deep canyons and breathtaking terrain a distance of 2.7 miles. See some of nature’s more dramatic beauty unfold before you. At sunset the desert skies produce a spectacular array of color, and your vantage point from the observation deck atop 10,378 foot Sandia Peak in the Cibola National Forest affords an 11,000 square-mile panoramic view of the Rio Grande Valley and the Land of Enchantment.

That is me crawling out on a rock to look over the edge. We’d gone to the tram on our second day but heavy rain and lightning closed it down. Weather was fortunately excellent on Sunday afternoon when Maricar, Peggy and I ventured to the top. The weather was in the high 50s then instead of 42 degrees with 20-25mph winds on our first attempt.



Albuquerque Museum on the edge of Old Town –



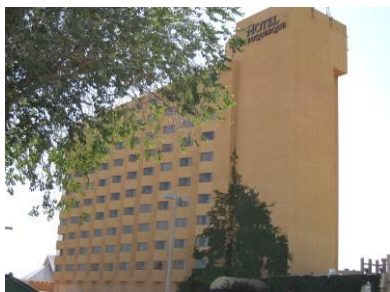
Albuquerque Old Town – between a trolley tour of the Albuquerque area, a ghost tour and then a history tour, the town is feeling fairly familiar now. It’s amazingly clean and comfortable and they might have Mayor Marty to thank for that as he’s made graffiti a felony and has a clean-up crew of jailbirds. While Albuquerque has been known for gangs and high crime rate, it appears that Mayor Marty’s extreme efforts to clean up the area has paid off. Like Philadelphia, they have mural contests and graffiti artists are now employed to paint sides of buildings and then they take care of their own area. People were polite and looked prosperous. Though it’s a town of many languages, English certainly prevails among the natives, despite it being said to have two official languages. The Indian reservations appear to be giving the natives a good life and only in one case did we hear of drinking and gambling in their own casinos. The cost of housing is low and education is totally free to any student who maintains a decent grade point. It all bodes well.

Here we have some business dwellings in town, a plaza, the back gate to one of the plazas, and the oldest church and monastery in the area complete with old graveyard and makings of a winery in the back courtyard where I feasted on grapes long neglected.



Did you know that Historic Route 66 runs through the area? It's one of the few sections of Route 66 that remain preserved. On the way to Acoma Sky City we saw the first and once longest bridge, but it is now bypassed and much of their road comes and goes with dead ends.

Hotel Albuquerque – the expo location is where I'd stay if I went again. It wasn't much more money and it's hugely nicer than the Best Western. Since its lovely, very representative of the area, and close to Old Town, here are some pictures.



Back to marathoning and the quest for 50-states – I've thought of this often and mentioned it before but an entire meeting room full of runners gave me pause again. While I love mavericks, people with quests, those with goals, accomplished folks, etc.; I want to try for a balance in my life. The majority wore marathon shirts and talked of nothing else but marathons. I want more and I can hope they do too. I want to work on balancing my life and not get so worked up on a 50-states quest that it's done to the detriment of learning about the places I visit or from visiting a super city just because I'd been to that state. I want to visit a place with more than just a 'wave as you go by.' I want to enjoy more aspects of life. I want to look like I'm going to dinner, not going to a run. I want all my serious runner friends to enjoy running but not at the cost of missing other joys. This was a wake-up call and thought provoking.

Next up? I'm home two days and off to the Northern Italian Lake Region with Tom for two weeks, then to Omaha Marathon the end of the month. I'm even more serious about taking more hiking trips thereafter. Wanna come?

Itinerary

Thu Sep 3 – Maricar

7:30am Depart Newark via AA thru Dallas
1:35pm Arrive Albuquerque

Thu Sep 3 - Diana

9:15am Depart Newark thru Houston
2:00pm Arrive Albuquerque (ABQ)

Shuttle complimentary provided by hotel from 7am to 10pm.

Hotel: **Best Western Rio Grande Inn**
1015 Rio Grande Blvd, Albuquerque, NM 87104
Tel: 505-843-9500 | Fax: 505-843-9238, Toll Free: 800-959-4726
E-mail: reservations@riograndeinn.com www.riograndeinn.com

Notes: Coffee maker, refrigerator and WiFi. A full service hotel located on the edge of Historic Old Town with over 150 unique shops, restaurants and art galleries nestled around the Albuquerque Plaza. Within walking distance of Old Town, five museums, and dozens of restaurants, shops and galleries.

Fri Sep 4 – Diana and Maricar

Tours Follow the Sun, Inc. www.ftstours.com at 505 897 2886 – see listing below

Fri Sep 4 – Peggy

8:41pm Peggy arrives

Sat Sep 5

9:00am Expo until 3pm (Maricar working) at Hotel Albuquerque but packet pick up until 6pm
800 Rio Grande Boulevard, NW.

10, 12 and 2pm Jeff Galloway speaking then again at reunion

4:00pm 50-states reunion get together until 5:30pm

Pasta dinner arranged by the hotel at \$18.25 including tip and taxes. Included meat balls and chicken.

Sat Sep 5 - Parker

1:21pm Parker arrives

Sun Sep 6

4:15am Buses will depart The Rio Grande Inn Best Western (South side of hotel off of Aspen Street & Rio Grande Blvd.) race morning at 4:05am for Marathon, 5:15am for Half-Marathon and 6:15am for 5K.

5:30am 11th Annual - marathon start. www.nmmarathon.com

Finish near the hotel. Note high altitude of 5,000 plus feet

Course description: The course begins in the shadows of our beautiful Sandia Mountains at 5,800 ft. Runners and walkers wind their way down to the Bosque trail in Albuquerque's North Valley, as the hot air balloons ascend into the beautiful blue skies and the sun rises over the majestic mountains. The course concludes along a tranquil stretch through our scenic North Valley to finish at 4,800 ft. near historic Old Town Plaza.

Mon Sep 7 Maricar and Parker

7:25am Maricar departs

8:15am Parker departs
8:20am Peggy departs

Tue Sep 8 – Diana

2:35pm Depart Albuquerque through Houston
11:47pm Arrive Newark (EWR)

Diana and Tom depart to Milan and Italian Lake Region on Friday

Participants:

732 804 8514 Diana Burton cell; 732 671 7045 Diana home (cell does not work at home)
908 907 5054 Maricar Korff cell
561 721 5093 David “Parker” cell
908 433 4278 Peggy McKean cell – with Diane
Steve Faigen and Dr. Dave
Beth and friends?

There are at least 3 marathons in N.M. This is said to be the largest.

1. April 22 - Albuquerque Marathon out of old town, with a balloon festival but I sort of think it's not THE big famous Albuquerque balloon festival.
2. Sep 3 -- N.M. Marathon that we're looking at. Did you see it goes through trails and bike routes?
3. Oct 22 -- Duke City Marathon with start and finish at same location. Lots of sponsors and looks like a big deal. Too bad it overlaps with everybody else's date. Start and ends at 5,000 feet and brags that there's only 123 feet difference. Didn't realize Albuquerque was so high up. Odd. Isn't that Denver's level / altitude?

Albuquerque tourist ideas: Albuquerque was founded in 1706 by Don Francisco Cuervo Y Valdez, who was governor of the Spanish province of New Mexico. The area was founded originally as a villa, then later became the seat of regional government. Rich with history and tradition, Albuquerque is a unique, exciting place to visit.

Often overlooked in favor of Santa Fe, Albuquerque, New Mexico, offers tourists a wide range of things to see and do. Even better, because it is slightly less well-known as a tourist destination, Albuquerque is more reasonably priced than its sister-city.

When visiting Albuquerque, be sure to bring a big appetite. This place offers some of the most delicious cuisine in the Southwest. From the restaurants in Old Town to eateries in the Sandia Mountains, Albuquerque offers tantalizing edibles for everyone.

Old Town Albuquerque offers both great food and shopping. Visit the Church Street Cafe for their delicious chiles rellenos or patronize Seasons Rotisserie & Grille for their American fare, then walk it off while you browse through the local shops and art galleries or stroll around the central plaza.

Albuquerque's historic Nob Hill-Highland district, near the University of New Mexico, also offers art, antiques, delicious food and sightseeing. Visit the Zinc Wine Bar & Bistro for a taste of nightlife, French and American food and fine wine, then take in a show at the Ana Chavira theater. Or stroll through the galleries and antique shops.

When you've gotten your fill of shopping and fabulous food, visit Albuquerque's excellent museums. With much of the place devoted to describing various eras in the Earth's history, the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science offers outstanding exhibits on dinosaurs, the Ice Age, and local changes in culture and geography. You'll also find some fascinating exhibits on microcomputers.

Another must-see is the Albuquerque Biological Park. Encompassing the Albuquerque Aquarium, Rio Grande Botanic Garden, Rio Grande Zoo and Tingley Beach Aquatic Park, the Biological Park offers a view of numerous ecosystems and a surprisingly complete, enjoyable aquarium, something you wouldn't expect from a city located almost in the center of the state.

If you're in the mood for a hike, Albuquerque offers several day-long adventures that you'll love. For history and pre-history buffs, Petroglyph National Monument offers both a mild workout and a mystery. The monument features petroglyphs, or pictures that have been tapped into the rock several thousands of years ago. Although scientists have several theories, no one has yet determined why these petroglyphs were carved here or what they mean. The park offers almost 25,000 different carvings and stretches for 17 miles along Albuquerque's West Mesa.

If you want a true rush of adrenaline, though, Sandia Peak is the place for you. Albuquerque is located

near the Sandia Mountains, which means “watermelon” in Spanish. Named for their deep red color at sunset, which is punctuated by the shadows of local fauna, these mountains offer the longest aerial tramway in the world, plus downhill skiing in the winter and mountain biking in the summer. You can also hike from the bottom of Sandia Peak to the top. And if you get hungry from your efforts, there are restaurants at the foot and on top of the mountain. Choose the more casual Sandiago's Grill at the bottom or the more formal High Finance Restaurant & Tavern. But if you choose the latter, you'll probably want to take the tram or at least a change of clothes – it's a tough hike up the side of the mountain.

Albuquerque also offers several day and overnight trips. In easy driving distance of Bandelier National Park, the location of Anasazi cliff dwellings, and Taos, a renowned ski resort, Albuquerque offers culture, history and tradition, plus great shopping and dining.

Albuquerque ideas from AAA: Convention and Visitors Bureau on 20 First Plaza N.W. Suite 601, Tele 800 284 2282

Self guided driving tours available.

Aquarium and Rio Grande Botanic Garden

Museum of Art & History

American Intl Rattlesnake Museum

Anderson-Abruzzo Intl Balloon Museum at 9201 Balloon Museum Drive, N.E. (Gem)

Explora! (Gem)

Indian Pueblo Cultural Center

Natl Museum of Nuclear Science and History

Natl Hispanic Cultural Center

NM Holocaust & Tolerance Museum and Study Center

NM Museum of Natural History & Science (Gem)

Old Town (Gem)

Petroglyph National Monument

Rio Grande Nature Center State Park

Rio Grande Zoo (Gem)

Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway (Gem)

Turquoise Museum

U. of NM (with their own long list of attractions)

Unser Racing Museum

Course Summary by Section

- Mile 1 to 8 – Rolling hills North on Tramway Blvd.
- Mile 9 to 15 – Downhill West on Tramway Blvd./Roy Rd. to 4th Street
- Mile 16 to 17 – Flat to slightly downhill on 4th Street to Alameda Blvd.
- Mile 18 to 22 – Flat and fast, along the Bosque bike path and East on Montano Rd. to Rio Grande Blvd.
- Mile 23 to Finish – Flat and fast, South on Rio Grande Blvd. to side streets taking you to finish line

Follow the Sun Tours at www.ftstours.com or 505 897 2886

Several fabulous Day tours out of Albuquerque. All tours include pickup at your hotel or residence in the greater Albuquerque area.

The Albuquerque City Tour, cost \$25 per person.

This driving tour hits all the highlights of this expansive city. Old Town, Country Club, Downtown, Botanic Gardens, Rio Grande River, Hispanic Cultural Center, University of NM, Rio Grande Boulevard, Local Winery, Balloon Park. Tour length 2.5 hours.

The Tram Tour, cost \$35 per person, plus Tram Ticket

This tour will provide transportation to and from the Sandia Peak Tram. Tour length 3 hours.

The Santa Fe Tour, cost \$60 per person.

Getaway to the city different. A city that embraces its natural environment unlike any other in the United States. A city whose beautiful brown adobe architecture blends with high desert landscape. A city that is, at the same time, one of America's great art and culinary capitols. Tour length 7 hours.

The Acoma Tour, cost \$45 per person, plus admission

Fifty miles west of Albuquerque, Acoma Pueblo is impressively situated atop a 365-foot sandstone mesa. Although most present-day Acomas have residences in nearby villages, "Sky City" has several families still occupying the old homes on the mesa. The delicately decorated pottery of Acoma is among the most prized of Indian crafts. Many fine pieces are for sale in the Visitors Center at the base of the mesa, which also houses a museum, a restaurant and the information center where tours of the pueblo are available. Tour length 5 hours.