



New Mexico hike with Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Taos
April 18 – 26, 2014

Where are the boys? It was a women's only hike



No boys? It wasn't MY fault! Nice girls but whoever thought this up must not like boys. From the left: Megan, Jody, Diana, Lisa, Rebecca, Nola at the end, Sister Beverly, Cousin Cheryl, her daughter Jenny, Karen, and Sonya.

Hikes



Sonya, Sister Beverly and I spent time in Albuquerque pre-tour. Here are the two amazing and favorite leaders Megan and Nola. Yes, that's me in motion.

Hotels

Pre hike hotels are never anything to write home about, but usually pretty inexpensive. (1) La Quinta Inn is quite a bargain and amazing value for the money but I'd rather pay up for a Hyatt. Yet a Hyatt might be another digit more in price. (2) Off to Ojo Caliente which was luxurious in comparison and Parks Plus Hiking (PPH) had arranged for the best Pueblo Suites. Fireplace, wee kitchen, large room, and facing the huge soaking pool.

www.ojospa.com/accommodations.php?action=viewcontent&content_id=26

(3) Santa Fe was right downtown within a couple blocks of the square in Inn of the Governors and was plenty fine. Maybe rated like a Best Western Plus.

Report by Nola in PPH newsletter entitled - Enchanted in New Mexico

Spring has sprung up here at 7,000' and that means trees are (finally!) leafing out and this winter's snowpack is melting into rivers for summer's rafting season. The Desert Southwest's temperatures are prime for hiking. As I write this, I am in between hiking tours in New Mexico's high desert and the surreal red rocks of Arches/Canyonlands National Parks.

Northern New Mexico enchanted us during our early season "warm up" trip last week. While hiking through the pinyon/juniper dotted landscape reminiscent of a Georgia O'Keeffe painting, we enjoyed views of Cerro Pedernal (a flat-topped mountain at times painted by O'Keeffe) in the distance. We returned to our secluded refuge at the Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort & Spa for each of three nights and soaked away the day's activities in the semi-private Kiva Pool just outside our rooms. Ahhh!

After one morning's hike, we drove over to Taos for a few hours of exploring, jewelry shopping, margarita toasting, and visiting Kit Carson's home/museum. A definite trend, the neon pink of prickly pear margaritas seemed to brighten up our dinner table nearly every night!

Stepping back in time, we ventured up to the unexcavated Posi ruins near the spa as well as designated a full day at Bandelier National Monument to explore its semi-reconstructed ruins of the Ancestral Pueblo people in the soft volcanic tuff of Frijoles Canyon.

Biscochitos, the New Mexico state cookie (yes, you read that correctly--state cookie!), hot tea, and sherry awaited our arrival at the Inn of the Governors near the Santa Fe Plaza.

Not only did we climb to the top of 9,121' Atalaya Mountain with its bird's eye views of Santa Fe and the distant Jemez and Sandia Mountains the next day, but we also had time after the hike to explore several galleries and shops, the authentic native jewelry stalls at the Palace of the Governors, and the amazing Georgia O'Keeffe museum!

Our final day took us to Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument, where we explored a slot canyon, admired weird, tent-shaped rock formations, and discovered volcanic glass (obsidian) "Apache tears" in the gravelly wash below.

Thanks to all the gals who came out to New Mexico for hiking, soaking, friendship, and fun and to Megan for her reading list, leadership, and friendship. We're already looking forward to the next time we can all get together!

Notes emailed from the trip

On way to New Mexico - I came early so Tom could attend a luncheon. I actually enjoy the airport and the quiet time to read newspapers in the lounge and chow down on snacks.

Are all the airplane gates that are nearby fake? Why do I walk past all these empty and seemingly unused gates time and time again? The only reason I can think of is the airlines are trying to help us work off all those snacks.

As it turned out, Tom's lunch was a big deal lunch. He bought a car. Fortunately not for himself and not with his monies but rather for Pat he had been lunching with and who had asked his help and advice. He was the right one to ask: he knows how to spend money, he knows cars, and he can make big decisions easily. (We used to have a running joke that happened every time I hiked – he either bought a car or threatened to. Once it was an Aston Martin and when he emailed asking what color I might like I about jumped through the roof.)

While they were shopping I was comfortably and ensconced on the airplane, minding my own business. Meanwhile in the back of the plane a whole family must have been having their own internal war. We landed and were told to sit still and remain seated. Pretty soon five policemen in full dress uniform and I think guns entered the airplane and shortly thereafter the whole family was escorted off. I watched a moment as the family was being interviewed in the gate area. It didn't make sense. There were two really old people but they didn't seem to be in poor health. There was a little one of 10-12 years old and there were a couple of thirty-something's. When I went into the airline lounge, they didn't know either but they were most willing to call to the gate to ask, as they were curious too. Presumably it was just a family brawl. One really needs to behave on an airplane. Even more so now that airplanes are booked solid and this one was.

From Albuquerque pre tour - I haven't been to Albuquerque for maybe four years. I liked it then and I like it now. I rented a car which allowed Beverly, Sonya and I to do a little bit of tourist. My ideas were to go to the hilltop sky village of Acoma or up to the top of Sandia Peak. I figured we would end in old town for dinner and a bit of shopping. I'm not sure how it happened but it was just fine that we ended up in the botanical garden. Their Japanese gardens, lake and waterfall were just fine though not all that Japanese looking. It didn't get an AAA GEM but our next stop did - Old town. I drove around some looking for the restaurant I had so enjoyed, and thought I knew where it was but it didn't jump out at me. So we parked and walked a little bit and at the first art gallery I went in and asked the business owner "Where would you eat?" I had to just trust her when she said Church Street Café. It didn't sound so authentic. So imagine my surprise when I found that it was THE restaurant I was looking for. We ate and we drank and we talked and had a lovely time before finishing the town with a tour of their old church and lots of little bits of shopping. Their day ended with a long drive toward the Sandia Mountains on the famous highway called Route 66. My day ended with a circuitous route to the rental car return where I found no gas station for fill up and had to return to the hotel area. Oddly the airport was very near the hotel but the rental car area was quite a ways out.



The Botanical Garden included a respectable Japanese garden. They'd had Chihuly glass show here when I visited in 2009



Sculpture from the entrance to the Zoo and Botanical Garden; then we visited Old Town and one of the oldest churches in the country and its courtyard.



Some characters from Old Town including the Museum's Outdoor Sculpture Garden.

Those of us who had consumed the huge combination Mexican dinner and ate every bit of it doubted that we were going to be hungry for dinner. But we managed and went to Fuddrucker's where I was amused at finding slow fast food. The Mexican meal was hugely better and decorated with a sangria margarita.

But darn if 7am and the start of our hike wasn't going to come awfully early. Weather was fitful with at times our declaring it was perfect and at other times our looking up and inquiring "where did those rain showers come from?"

In Ojo Calientes - Starting Sunday we had a hike plus a delicious lunch at a new restaurant chain in Santa Fe called Flying Star before arriving at our historical and luxurious resort hotel where we would stay for the next three nights.



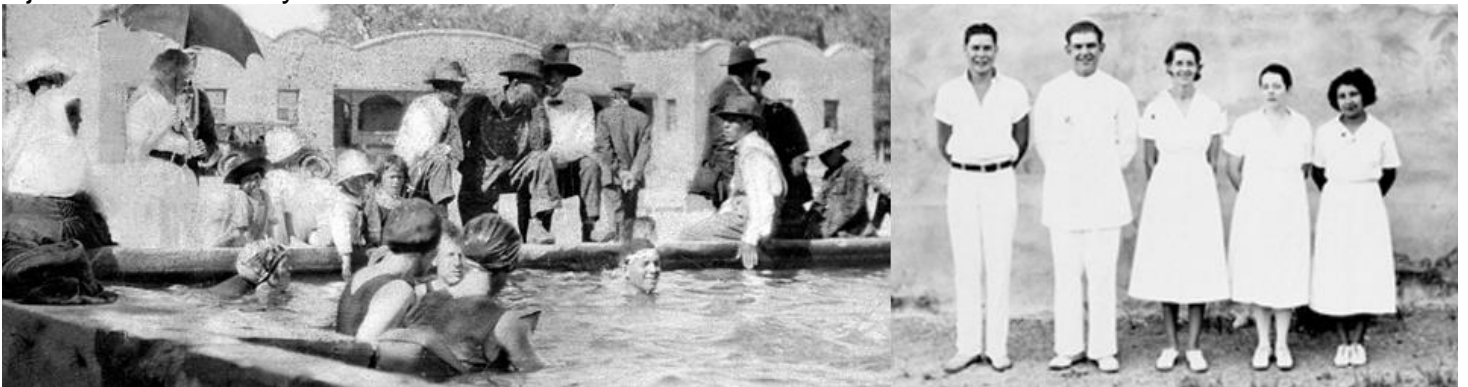
Nowadays we have water babies like my sister Beverly who absolutely love the mineral spas. Anyone who knows me would guess correctly that I don't even put my toe in the water. Do I believe it has healing qualities? Yes absolutely so if one believes it. I also believe that I could drown in it and it makes my skin dry. Smile.

We were told that it was luxurious but we didn't exactly sign up for a luxurious hiking trip, nor is the price denoting luxurious, so it was a big surprise to all of us to have a lovely Pueblo Suite that was very roomy with a front porch and a fireplace and a little kitchen plus most modern amenities (but no telephone). Wood beams, old wooden porch chairs and all the instant makings for a fire - in the fireplace of course. Down comforters and leather lounge chairs in front of the fireplace.



Our rooms surrounded a huge soaking tub the size of a swimming pool and the pathways led up to the old historical hotel and large area filled full of multiple pools and their spa. There are different types of water in different pools and each magically has a different health reason. Mud baths sound to be the piece d' resistance. The place is crawling with little old tubby ladies in their bath robes (provided.) Some younger ones too but those appear to be in the minority.

Ojo Calientes history from their website:



Steeped in myth and legend, these ancient springs have been a gathering place and source of healing for thousands of years. The use of the waters can be traced back to the earliest human migrations in the region. Ancient peoples, the ancestors of today's Native American Tewa tribes, built large pueblos and terraced gardens overlooking the springs. Surrounding the springs are the ruins of the cities populated before the birth of history. Posi or Poseouinge, "village at the place of the green bubbling hot springs" was the largest of 4 Pueblos surrounding the springs and home to thousands of people. Because of the work of archaeologists Adolph Bandelier and Edgar Hewitt, we know that Posi was a vibrant center of activity until the 15th century. The unusually diverse and abundant styles of pottery shards and other artifacts remain as a testament to Posi and the spring's long-standing iconic significance within the larger region. Tradition tells us that often-warring tribesman would set their weapons and differences aside to gather in peace at the springs to enjoy the benefits of the waters, and to trade and heal their wounds and ailments without conflict.

In the 1500's the Spaniards, in their quest for gold and the Fountain of Youth, also discovered the springs. The first explorer's record cites, "The greatest treasure that I found these strange people to possess, are hot springs which burst out at the foot of a mountain... so powerful are the chemicals contained in this water that the inhabitants have a belief that they were given to them by their gods. These springs I have named Ojo Caliente" (literally translated means "warm eye",

but more commonly known as “hot spring”). After discovering Ojo Caliente’s springs and the lush and fertile surrounding river valley, the Spanish were challenged in their attempts to colonize the area and cultivate the land throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Those attempts repeatedly resulted in the settlers retreating back to the more established and safer settlement of Santa Fe, as result of routine raids conducted by the Comanche and other hostilities. One can still see the old “gun portholes” in the walls of Ojo Caliente’s original Santa Cruz church (constructed in the late 1700’s) that the Spanish settlers used to defend themselves.

It was not until the 19th century that westward expansion caused Ojo Caliente to emerge from its prehistoric origins. In 1868, Antonio Joseph, New Mexico’s 1st Territorial Representative to Congress, built the first bathhouse and Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs became one of the first natural health resorts in the country. Ojo quickly became a hub of activity providing the mineral waters, overnight lodging, a Post Office, and a general store where historical ledgers show Kit Carson frequently purchased supplies. As a “sanitarium”, Ojo was known throughout the country as a place where thousands of people were cured each year through the healing effects of the waters and the earth. Three original buildings have been lovingly restored and maintained and today are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, including the Historic Bathhouse built in 1868; the Historic Hotel, built in 1916; and the Adobe Round Barn built in 1924.

The famous and the infamous have enjoyed these legendary waters and volumes of testimonials filled with declarations of miracle cures abound. Generations continue to make the pilgrimage to Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs to enjoy the unique combination of four different sulfur-free mineral waters: Lithia, Iron, Soda and Arsenic, with more than 100,000 gallons a day steaming to the surface revitalizing those who soak in them. Ojo Caliente is a legendary oasis healing body, mind, and spirit naturally for countless centuries. It is a unique legacy that lives on today and we are pleased to share it with you.

Hiking. Our first hike on Sunday was in a very populated area with well-marked trails. For us the incentive was the overview of the towns and view of the mountain ranges and also to warm up our legs. So we got to drive through Santa Fe as well as seeing it from the mountain top.

Monday meant getting up earlier for a longer hike. It was in a more remote area but as Megan said, if there had been any problem she could have evacuated us out within an hour. We had a new hiker who was concerned about the remoteness of the hiking; many of us find remoteness to be the reason we come hiking. She turned back to wait a couple hours in the van but had company with my sister.

We took about 3 miles to get to the top but that must’ve been a couple hours of hiking with about 1500 feet of elevation and lots of rocks. Some of us felt the rocks with more than our feet and are half hoping for no bruises. (I view bruises as honor badges.) It was worth it at the top to see what inspired Georgia O’Keeffe. There was no doubt it was what inspired much of her artwork.



The hikers who decided to turn around found it was very convenient to do since this was an out and back hike. It was hot and it was a little bit steep and it was in fact a bit remote. Plus I think they were looking forward to a bit more soaking in the various pools at the resort and we had time for that before our wine and cheese party.

Dinners are amazingly special because there is a glorious menu. Me, I get sort of done with eating and I don't have any interest in desert so I leave the dinner table early and wander the grounds, look at the fire pit, or answer emails. I've even been known to shop.



Almond encrusted trout; stuffed romaine lettuce; pork belly BBQ wraps; always a Mexican combination plate.

Tuesday is the open day when it was suggested if anyone wanted spa services that that would be a good day. Some people are taking advantage and some of us are hiking. In the afternoon we are going to go be tourists in Taos.

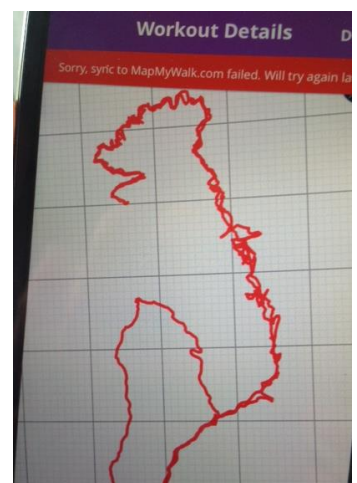


The Ladder Hike in Bandelier National Monument

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJslmtACOWI>

What a hiking route map from an iPhone looks like – squiggly.

Leaving Albuquerque – There is never enough time. I could happily spend some more days in Albuquerque itself and certainly more days sightseeing in the area. I was in Albuquerque as recently as 2009 for the marathon and thought I did quite a bit of touring then, the more you see the more sites and possibilities open up. Fortunately my last trip I saw some of the balloon festival, took a day trip to the famous hilltop village called Acoma, and went into some of the museums. I had a trip up to the Sandia Mountains on the longest cable car in America. I would have gladly visited these sites again.



It's hard to decide what is the highlight of the trip whether it was Albuquerque's Old Town and a special meal with friends and sister, whether it was Ojo Caliente's famous and ancient mineral spa, whether it was the multiple panoramas and seeing the sights as Georgia O'Keeffe saw them, rambling and climbing through the hoo doos that looked like giant tents, being with a couple of my favorite hiking leaders, or just the fact that I am absolutely thrilled to still be able to still do this kind of hiking.

One afternoon was spent in Taos. I think the majority of the hikers went shopping and some very successfully. (Beverly got some lovely items of jewelry and a gift for most family members.). I went to the Kit Carson Museum to supplement the historical book I was reading and I also followed a walking map of the historical sites of downtown including the burial grounds of Kit Carson and his family members. I had a guided tour of the X-rated artwork by DH Lawrence called "Forbidden Art" and learned some about his life. What was banned in the 20s wouldn't be now but it was still pretty graphic. It also required an entry fee and guide at the oldest hotel in Taos.



We had a reading list and that was most helpful because in both Santa Fe and Taos I saw buildings and statuary of historical significance that would have been lost on me had not I read the history books.

Entering my 70th year this July. - Touchwood quickly, but my legs seem to be behaving properly and I never had any soreness or difficulty in keeping up. I carried extra weight in my backpack and even carried some other people's weight to give them some assistance. Trainer Jeff will be pleased that I got some upper body workout as a result.

Where we stayed - Ojo Calientes is rather in the boonies if not downright remote. Then the next hotel location was Santa Fe which gave us quite the opposite feel since we were in the downtown area. I had only previously had a day trip to Santa Fe so was pleased to have two nights there. It was much too short and I chose to do the hikes instead of the three main museums. It was a hard choice to make. One day we came off a hike and when we returned to the hotel I rushed off so quickly that I was still with my backpack and walking sticks to take the historical walking tour. (An indication of how different we all travel or how weird I am is that it was the same walking tour taken by two others that morning and they did not like it. I thought it was super.).

At the mineral spa my sister and most others love soaking in the different mineral pools. Another indication of how we all travel differently is that I might take an extra walk but I never put my toe in a pool or spa. Well, I say never, and in fact in Reykjavik Iceland I did get myself into the Blue Lagoon with the help of a friend. Once was enough.

Girl's trip? - I miss the boys for lots of reasons. I'll only do another girls trip if the location is irresistible or if all the friends are going. Yet when I went on the Glacier hiking trip last year, it just happened to turn out to be all girls.

Food - I'm tired of it though I eat every couple hours. Dinners at the spa were absolutely wonderful with a very creative menu. Dinners in Santa Fe probably were equally excellent but they were so noisy that I had no sense of enjoyment. I typically leave as soon as the main entrée is done and before desserts are even ordered. Our leaders don't seem to mind, I don't care for the desserts, and I'd prefer to take my calories in a brandy and I enjoy an additional walk through town after dinner. I can only hope my independent nature didn't cause someone to think I was being uppity. It was as much I couldn't hear anything anyway.

Historic walks of Santa Fe

<http://historicwalksofsantafe.com/index.htm>

Sisters of Loretto

<http://www.snopes.com/horrors/ghosts/loretto.asp> - I like the mysterious story the best.

From me to you – I wanted to sign off with a look that's different than my usual hiking pictures so I took a selfie in a mirror and sent it home for Tom.



Since it was Easter

The week before I was in NYC where they were having a Giant Easter Egg hunt. Like the days of hunting cows decorated with art work, here are some of the Eggs I found:



Itinerary

Fri Apr 18

3:02pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#1107
5:26pm Arrive Denver DEN for plane change

7:25pm Depart Denver DEN via UA#6186
8:49pm Arrive Albuquerque ABQ

Hotel shuttle available from airport to hotel – runs 5am to 10pm

Rental Car with Hertz until 7pm Saturday

Hotel La Quinta Albuquerque Airport – 1st of 2 nights
2116 Yale Boulevard, SE, Albuquerque NM 87106

Directions: I-25, Exit 222A-Gibson Boulevard; east to Yale Boulevard, S.E.

Sat Apr 19

Packet pickup on race morning is available: 7:00-7:30am at the Alvarado Elementary School gym per RD Stephen Pino

Diana - 10K Start: 8:30am in the Los Poblanos Fields just south of Alvarado Elementary School/Finish near the metal east of the Half Marathon and 5K starts. Please report to the start by 8:15am. Finish at Alvarado Elementary School.

Bev - 5K Run or Walk Start: 8:45am in the Los Poblanos Fields just south of Alvarado Elementary School/Finish. Please report to the start by 8:30am. Start and finish same as 10K

Hotel to race start is approximately 9 miles or 16 minutes

Afternoon Open with ideas (1) walk old town, (2) drive to Acoma village – didn't check distance, (3) drive to Sandia and take cable to the top

Hike

Summary from www.ParksPlusHiking.com - Northern New Mexico is a land of contrasts. The deeply ingrained southwestern culture of old Santa Fe town; the soul-easing comfort of mineral hot springs; the nourishing life blood of the Rio Grande river—all these and more are central to our New Mexico hike. Enchanted seemed an appropriate addition to the tour's title. Note that this offering of "Enchanted New Mexico" is open to women only and will feature two female guides; Nola Stewart will be joined by a second exceptionally qualified female guide (rumored to be Megan!)

Sun Apr 20 – Day 1 of hike

9:00am Hike starts with meeting in lobby ready to hike

Tent Rocks National Monument - Distance: 4 mi Difficulty: 3

(We would later switch first and last day's hikes due to a pilgrimage keeping Tent Rocks area closed.)

Lodging: Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort & Spa – 1st of 3 nights
50 Los Banos Drive, Ojo Caliente, New Mexico 87549 Tele: 505 583 2233

guestrelations@ojospa.com www.ojospa.com - *Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs is one of the oldest natural health resorts in the country. Our sulphur-free, geothermal mineral waters have flowed from a subterranean volcanic aquifer for thousands of years. Over 100,000 gallons per day come to the surface, revitalizing those who soak in the long believed, healing waters. Winner of top 10 best spas springs in the world.*

After pick-up at our assembly hotel near the Albuquerque airport we'll head north. On the way we will divert west a bit to Tent Rocks National Monument for our first hike among the namesake formations, a narrow but negotiable slot canyon, and of course, a moderate climb to a scenic ridge line. Following Tent Rocks we'll continue on to luxurious Ojo Caliente.

Mon Apr 21 - Day 2 of hike

Rim Vista - Distance: 6 mi Difficulty: 4

Lodging: Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort & Spa – 2nd of 3 nights

On to Santa Fe National Forest and the little known Rim Vista hike. It is unlikely we will see another soul as we climb through beautiful desert terrain to a scenic vista overlooking the stunning landscape that inspired artist Georgia O'Keeffe.

Tues Apr 22 - Day 3 of hike

Ojo Caliente Trails - Distance: 6 mi Difficulty: 3

Lodging: Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort & Spa – 3rd of 3 nights

The key words for today's agenda are "close to home" as our plan is to explore the low-key but lovely trails in and around Ojo Caliente itself. Although our itinerary lists eight miles as the planned hiking distance, we will actually tailor the day to suit individual wishes. So book that massage, plan that extended soak, or perhaps join us in an optional afternoon "field trip" to Taos for some gallery hopping.

Wed Apr 23 - Day 4 of hike

Bandelier National Monument - Distance: 8 mi Difficulty: 4

Lodging: Inn of The Governors – 1st of 2 nights
101 West Alameda Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501 Tele: 505 982 4333
info@innofthegovernors.com; Yes mini bar, 2 queens, 280SF

<http://www.innofthegovernors.com> - *In the Heart of Santa Fe. The Inn of the Governors is one of the premier Santa Fe Hotels located in downtown Santa Fe, perfect for weekend getaways, family vacations, friend retreats, or escaping into Santa Fe's enchanting landscape, culture, and history. Let us pamper you at our Santa Fe Hotel with our personalized service, a complimentary Mountain Sunrise Breakfast, daily tea and Sherry in our lobby, free parking, and a location just three blocks from Santa Fe's world renowned plaza. Our year round heated pool accommodates families with children or a casual pool-side meal while enjoying Santa Fe's enchanting sunsets.*

The Santa Fe Inn's saloon, Del Charro was voted Santa Fe's Best Bar in the Santa Fe Reporter's annual 2012 Best Of publication! Del Charro's house margarita received the award for third best margarita and the award for the most affordable restaurant in Santa Fe as well!

Bandelier National Monument is our hiking destination. After descending into the Monument via the Frey Trail, we'll explore the main loop past Tyuonyi ruins and out toward Alcove House where we'll ascend several (well-maintained) ladders to fascinating ancestral Puebloan Indian ruins. We will also hike to a spectacular overlook in the isolated Tsankawi section of the monument.

Moving past the halfway point of our tour, we'll transfer from quiet Ojo Caliente to historic Santa Fe.

Thu Apr 24 - Day 5 of hike

Atalaya Mountain - Distance: 9 mi Difficulty: 4

Lodging: Inn of The Governors – 2nd of 2 nights

Two very different but entirely complimentary destinations highlight our plans. After breakfast we make the short commute to our trailhead and climb to local favorite Atalaya mountain. From the top, we'll enjoy lunch as we gaze down on the Rio Grande Valley and Santa Fe itself. After the hike, we'll treat ourselves to a leisurely soak at nearby Ten Thousand Waves Day Spa. For those desiring other options, ample shopping and sightseeing are available within walking distance of our hotel back in town.

Fri Apr 25 - Day 6 of hike

Dale Ball Trail - Distance: 5 mi Difficulty: 3

Concluding our Enchanted New Mexico tour, we head to the Sierra Del Norte trailhead and Santa Fe's elaborate Dale Ball trail system. We'll climb to views of the distant Jemez and Sandia Mountains as we hike through the foothills of the Sangre de Cristos. Then it's back to Santa Fe for a scrumptious lunch before our return to Albuquerque.

Hotel La Quinta Albuquerque – as above

Sat Apr 26

10:41am Depart Albuquerque ABQ via UA#3456

1:50pm Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

3:52pm Depart Houston IAH via UA#387

8:32pm Arrive Newark EWR

Note that I depart on Friday May 2 to SLC for Canyonlands hike

Participants:

Diana

Beverly – arriving Friday thru Denver via UA4907 at 4:38pm

- Departing Saturday at 10:15am via UA#4923
- Remind to bring Dick Button book for Nola

Cheryl and daughter Jenny –

- arriving Saturday 9:00pm #2914 US Air
- departing Saturday 8:30am #2937 US Air

Rebecca – arriving Saturday via SW#1117 at 12:10pm from LAX

- departing Friday via SW1807 to LAX at 7:30pm

Sonya – arriving Friday via AA#1467 at 9:55am from DFW

- departing Saturday via AA#1332 at 8:30am