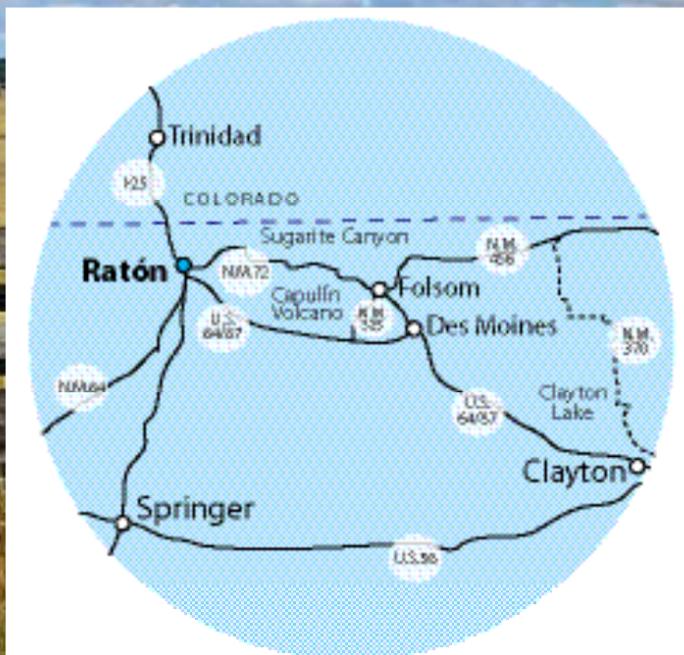




The tiny town of Capulín hugs the base of Capulín Volcano.



NORTHEASTERN NM

Time Travel

An easy, breezy three-pack of history museums up Ratón way

Why Go Now

Northeastern New Mexico is gorgeous in July, when many wildflowers make their late arrival. The region is high in both latitude and elevation, and you can drive with the windows down, A/C off. Clayton's a mile high, Ratón is at 7,000 feet, and Johnson Mesa is at 8,500 feet. Enjoy the region's cool evenings and gazillion stars in the dark night sky. Fill two days exploring three fascinating museums set amid 100 miles of sprawling ranches and ancient volcano fields. The museums, which focus on the rich local history, will heighten your interest and deepen your appreciation for the sights along the route. Meet Folsom Man and Black Jack Ketchum, and find some Taos painters far from the beaten path.

THE ROUTE: Begin in Ratón, 10 miles S. of the Colorado border and 92 miles W. of Oklahoma, where the Mountain Route of the historic Santa Fe Trail spills into New Mexico from the steep Ratón Pass. The Rockies almost touch the **Ratón Museum**, downtown. Head E. on U.S. 64/87, which bisects the Ratón-Clayton Volcanic Field, before crossing the Cimarrón Cutoff of the Santa Fe Trail. Detour N. at Capulín to enjoy the 18-mile N.M. 325 loop, which puts you right back on 64/87 at Des Moines—but not before you enjoy **Capulín Volcano National Monument** and the Folsom History Museum. Continue E. on 64/87 from Des Moines another 46 miles. When you reach Union County's only stoplight, you're a block from Clayton's fascinating **Herzstein Memorial Museum**, which is so big and fascinating that you'll want to save it for morning. Return to Folsom via N.M. 370 and N.M. 456, a route that includes well-kept dirt roads through the Dry Cimarrón Valley and takes you past countless ruins from homesteading's heyday. Or you can backtrack to Folsom the way you came. From Folsom, take N.M. 72 as it winds up and across Johnson Mesa. A rock church, built by homesteaders in 1897, is still used for summer services; the door is never locked. Watch for elk, bear, and turkeys along the canyons, and for working cowboys atop the mesa. After passing **Sugarite Canyon State Park**, N.M. 72 will drop you right back in downtown Ratón.



Above, from top: The Ratón Museum's offerings include baskets by the region's early Apaches. Sculptor Bennie Duran creates life-size animals in his studio, west of Clayton. A Joseph Fleck painting beside an early telephone and switchboard in the Ratón Museum. Right: A roadside view along the Hi Lo Country, between Clayton and Ratón.

The Ratón Museum

Open since 1939, **Ratón Museum** moved into its expansive two-story location six years ago. Host Roger Sanchez has been curator for 14 years, and there's little about local lore that he can't tell you. Ask to see New Mexico's first auto license plate, minted in Ratón in 1913 and now stored in an ornate 1891 safe from a local bank. Displays of pristine Apache baskets and handmade retablos (Hispanic religious icons) highlight Ratón's multicultural history. Extensive archival photography portrays the evolution of this town, as well as of Dawson, Sugarite, and other company coal-mining towns that once dotted the landscape surrounding Ratón. Mining, ranching, the railroad, and the Santa Fe Trail all provide rich histories going back to the town's rough and rowdy frontier days. More surprising are the dozens of valuable paintings by well-known artists from Santa Fe, Taos, and Ratón. Taos painters include Joseph Fleck, Bert Phillips, and Dorothy Brett, but Ratón's own painters make a strong showing, including four oils by Manville Chapman, renowned for the WPA murals he painted inside the **Shuler Theater**, just up the street—one of 70 downtown buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Ask Roger Sanchez for a Walking Tour brochure. **Heart's Desire Inn B&B**, in an exquisite 1885 Victorian, is just around the block: a great home base for this road trip.





The Folsom Museum

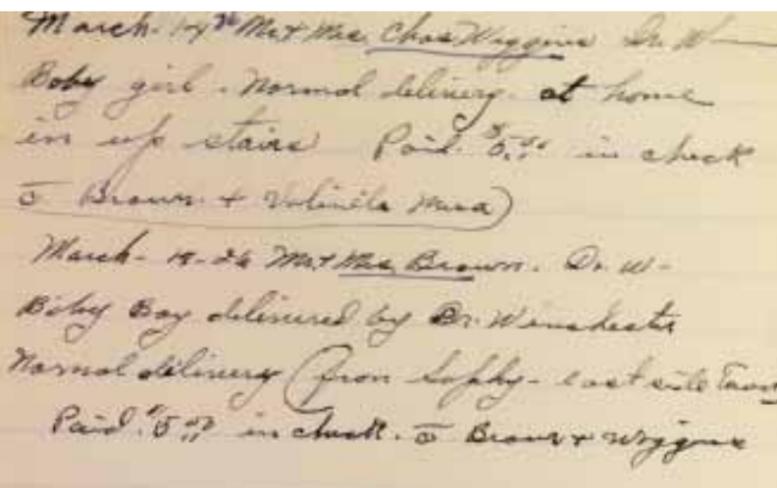
Doherty Mercantile Company opened in 1896 as a general store for ranches along the Dry Cimarrón River and up to Johnson Mesa. When the building turned into the **Folsom History Museum**, in 1966, the volunteers who run this fascinating collection left the store largely intact, including its office, walk-in safe, shelves, scale, and cash register. The rest of the country store is filled with disparate displays of materials donated by area families, including period items such as plows and other ranch hardware, along with grinders, churns, irons, and other household items. Via a fossil turtle, the area's unique geological history is represented all the way back to when the region sat beneath a sea. Capulín Volcano looms out the front window. The nearby **Folsom Man Archaeological Site**, which contains prehistoric bison fossils and spear points—game-changing evidence that humans lived in North America 12,000 years ago—[read more on this topic in “Legacy,” p. 76] is illustrated alongside maps of famous trails that traversed this crossroads, including the Goodnight-Loving Trail, which was used to drive longhorn cattle from Texas to Denver. Tree-shaded yards host community events all summer long, and local cattle brands are burned into the fence. Find out more at folsomvillage.com, including details about the museum-sponsored Folsom Man Archaeological Site tour on August 17.

Clayton's Herzstein Memorial Museum

The **Herzstein's** two floors of displays, covering 9,500 square feet of Clayton's renovated Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1919, can hold you for hours. Alongside a conquistador's spur and 100-year-old cowboy chaps are unique re-creations of a vintage local hair salon, the downtown Herzstein Store for ladies' clothing and hats, and the examination room of Dr. James Winchester, Clayton's family doctor from 1907 to 1962. The town's cultural highlights are illustrated with archival photographs and objects: guitars, footballs, and wedding dresses. Huge collections of antique dolls span two long walls. Thomas “Black Jack” Ketchum has his own room: after robbing the train near Folsom, he was hanged just down the street in 1901. Clayton was later at the heart of the Dust Bowl; when Ken Burns made his PBS film *The Dust Bowl*, he came here and worked with museum director Victoria Baker, who is always on hand for tours and questions. Ask her to show you the WPA exhibit and New Deal-sponsored artwork. Baker also offers daylong history tours that feature dinosaur tracks, arrowheads, cemeteries, old homesteads, and schoolhouses. Her take on the area's rich history will whet your appetite for the drive back across the volcano fields to Ratón. ✦

Tim Keller is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Ratón.

Clockwise from above: The Folsom Museum lives in the former Doherty Mercantile Company. A bishop's robe donated by Folsom's Catholic church. Clayton's Herzstein Memorial Museum contains a restored doctor's office that includes this circa 1926 notebook. Another glimpse of the Herzstein Museum's offerings.



NEED TO KNOW

CLAYTON

Best Western Kokopelli Lodge
From \$125. 702 S. First St. (575) 374-2589; bestwestern.com

Crossroads Coffee Mill Fabulous breakfasts, sandwiches, and espresso. Mon.–Fri. 6:30 a.m.–3 p.m.; Sat. 8 a.m.–11 a.m. 2 S. Front St. (575) 374-5282; crossroadscoffeemill.com

Herzstein Memorial Museum
Tues.–Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Free. 22 S. Second St. at Walnut. (575) 374-2977; herzsteinmuseum.com

Hotel Eklund 19th-century hotel and restaurant. 15 Main St. (575) 374-2551; hoteleklund.com

Rabbit Ear Café Popular Mexican and American dishes. Tues.–Sat. 7 a.m.–3 p.m.; Sun. 8 a.m.–2 p.m. 1201 S. First St. (575) 374-3277

Wild Horse Grill & Steakhouse
Lunch 11 a.m.–2 p.m. daily; dinner 5–9 p.m. except Sun. 22 Pine St. (575) 374-8220

FOLSOM

Folsom History Museum N.M. 325 at N.M. 456. \$1.50. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. daily through Sept. (575) 278-2122; folsomvillage.com

Folsom Man Archaeological Site Tour Aug. 17, 8 a.m. Free. Folsom Museum. folsomvillage.com

RATÓN

Heart's Desire Inn B&B From \$98. 301 S. Third St. (575) 445-1000; heartdesireraton.com

Holiday Inn Express From \$139. 101 Card Ave. (575) 445-1500; ratonsfinest.com

Pappas' Sweet Shop Restaurant
This 90-year-old soda fountain is on the state's Culinary Treasures Trail. 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. lunch weekdays, 5–8 p.m. dinner daily. Closed Sun. 1201 S. Second St. (575) 445-9811

Ratón Museum Tues.–Sat. 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Free. 108 S. Second St. (575) 445-8979; ratonnm.gov/arts/the-raton-museum

Sands Restaurant Great Mexican dishes. 7 a.m.–10 p.m. daily. 350 Clayton Rd. (575) 445-4024; sandsrestaurantraton.com

Shuler Theater Sixty shows a year, since 1915. Open daily. 131 N. Second St. (575) 445-4746; shulertheater.com

ALONG THE WAY

Capulín Volcano National Monument N.M. 325 N. of Capulín. \$5/vehicle. 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m. daily. (575) 278-2201; nps.gov/cavo

Clayton Lake State Park Dinosaur tracks. 13 miles from Clayton on N.M. 370. (575) 374-8808; clayton-newmexico.net/claytonlake.html

Sierra Grande Restaurant Truck-stop diner with colorful locals. 6 Sierra Grande Rd., Des Moines. 7 a.m.–8 p.m. daily. (575) 278-2721

Sugarite Canyon State Park
Three lakes, fishing, hiking, camping. 8 miles from Ratón, N.M. 72 to N.M. 526. (575) 445-5607; emnrd.state.nm.us/spd/sugaritecanyon-statepark.html

“Baylor successfully treated my child's feeding disorder.”

Tara D'Alessandro, born severely premature, needed a tube down her throat for the first five months of her life to help her breathe. As a result, she couldn't stand to have anything near or in her mouth. Her mother, Cassie, brought Tara, now 3 1/2, to the inpatient feeding program at Our Children's House at Baylor. There, a team of health care professionals, including a physical therapist, occupational therapist and speech-language pathologist, used positive reinforcement to gradually change her eating behavior. Tara now eats four meals a day and is being weaned off her tube feedings. “Baylor was the only place that was able to help her. She has so much more energy since she began eating. It's wonderful to see her eating like a typical child.”



For a physician referral or for more information about pediatric services, call **1.800.4BAYLOR** or visit us online at BaylorHealth.com/OCH.

1208 N. Hall Street, Dallas, TX 75204

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