

NORTHEAST REGION

HERE THE SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS FALL AWAY INTO PLAINS THAT SEEM TO ROLL ENDLESSLY TO THE EAST. ONCE THE DOMAIN OF CATTLE BARONS AND TRAIN ROBBERS, THIS REGION REMAINS HOME TO WORKING COWBOYS AND DUDE RANCHES.



Nicknamed the City of Natural Lakes, Santa Rosa has 12 spring-fed places to take a dip, including Perch Lake, which is also popular for diving. *Facing page:* Shuler Theater, in Ratón, debuted in 1915 and still raises its curtain on stage shows. PHOTO: LAURENCE PARENT. FACING PAGE: TIM KELLER.

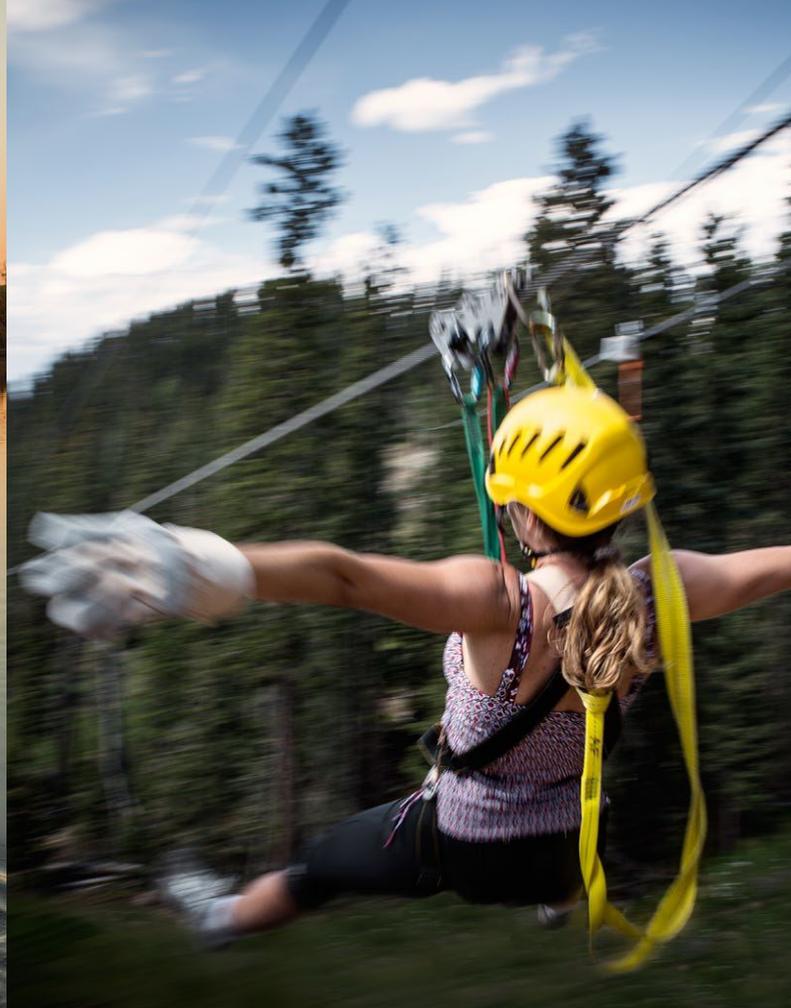
SHULER

1913



ANGEL FIRE
CAPULÍN
CIMARRÓN
CLAYTON
DES MOINES
EAGLE NEST
FOLSOM
LAS VEGAS
LOGAN
MAXWELL
MORA
PECOS
RATÓN
ROY
SANTA ROSA
SPRINGER
TUCUMCARI
WAGON MOUND





Clockwise from top left: Evening falls over Santa Rosa Lake. A visitor takes a heart-pounding ride on the Angel Fire Zipline Adventure Tour, the first of its kind in New Mexico. A family picks from the juicy harvest at Salman Raspberry Ranch, in Mora. Mauricio Lemus opened The Sands Restaurant, a popular spot for Mexican and American cuisines, in Ratón.

Ancient History

Long before humans lived here, dinosaurs walked these lands. More than 500 plant-eating dinosaur footprints and ancient crocodile tracks are preserved at **Clayton Lake State Park** (575-374-8808; nmparks.com), near Clayton. This region also boasts the **Folsom Man Archeological Site**, where the discovery of bison bones and spear points (now called Folsom points) marked a major archeological find that changed the timeline of human history. The **Folsom Museum** (575-278-2122; folsomvillage.com) near Ratón displays some of these finds.

Western Heritage

The Santa Fe Trail was carved through this region in the early 19th century, on its way from Missouri to New Mexico's capital city. Remnants are still visible today, and the **Santa Fe Trail Interpretive Center and Museum** (505-425-8803), in Las Vegas, New Mexico, further preserves this history. To protect the route and the territory's new residents, the U.S. army operated **Fort Union** (505-425-8025; nps.gov/foun) from 1851 to 1891. The fort is now a National Monument; visitors can tour ruins of what was once the largest military garrison in the region.

In the 1800s, merchants flocked to Las Vegas, then one of the largest cities in the state, and built Victorian homes—an exception to the rule in this land of adobe abodes. Later, the railroad's arrival galvanized the city's growth and brought about such buildings as the **Castañeda Hotel** (505-426-3205), a Harvey House that no longer provides lodging but remains a stopping point on walking tours of the town's architecture. Business and railroad men weren't the only ones making their homes here. Wild West legends such as Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and Black Jack Ketchum also frequented the area. Bullet holes in the ceiling of the **St. James Hotel** (575-376-2664; exstjames.com), in Cimarrón, and period photos at the **Eklund Hotel** (575-374-2551; hoteleklund.com), in Clayton, testify to this wild and woolly era.

Cowboy Up

Visitors wishing to try their hands at the cowboy life can head to these destinations:

- **Cedar Creek Ranch** Trail riding, antelope hunts, and hiking are available to visitors at this Clayton ranch with guest accommodations. (575) 278-2793; cedarcreekranchinc.com
- **Cimarroncita** This full-service getaway spot provides lodging and dining, as well as fly-fishing, hiking, and hunting in Ute Park. (866) 376-2482; cimarroncita.com
- **Cow Creek Ranch** Visitors will get on target with sport clay shooting, archery, and horseback riding at this Pecos ranch with guest accommodations. (505) 757-2107; cowcreekranch.com
- **Los Pinos Guest Ranch** A historic guest ranch on the Pecos River, Los Pinos provides fly-fishing, bird-watching, and horseback riding. (505) 757-6213; lospinosranch.com
- **JX Ranch** This 7,000-acre working cattle ranch near Tucumcari offers guests horseback riding, ranching chores, and leatherworking. (575) 487-2419; jxranch.com

Outdoors

Described as “The Hi-Lo Country” by famed New Mexico novelist Max Evans, this region is a land of extremes: **Sierra Grande Peak** (575-374-9253; claytonnewmexico.net), one of several volcanic features in the area, towers more than 8,000 feet outside the town of Des Moines, making for prime peak bagging. Reaching a similar elevation, **Capulín Volcano National Monument** (575-278-2201; nps.gov/cavo) offers views of the broad, flat terrain of five states from an easy rim hike. Molten lava from this volcanic field also carved **Sugarite Canyon State Park** (575-445-5607; nmparks.com), near Ratón, a lush area with deep forests, lakes, and abundant wildlife. The mountain slopes of **Angel Fire Resort** (800-633-7463; angelfireresort.com) are the best bet for skiing in the region. The topography dips into the flat prairies of the **Kiowa and Rita Blanca National Grasslands** (575-374-9652; fs.usda.gov/cibola), which preserve 230,000 acres of New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. The 100,000-acre **Valle Vidal**, a.k.a. The Valley of Life (505-586-0502; fs.usda.gov/carson), a lush preserve outside Cimarrón, is popular with fishermen and hikers who seek its pristine terrain and wildflower blooms in July and August.

Anglers can also sample the **Conchas and Ute Lake State Parks**, near Tucumcari, and **Morphy and Storrie Lake State Parks**, outside Las Vegas. **Eagle Nest Lake State Park**, near the town of that name, is a go-to spot for salmon fishing no matter the season (all State Parks: 505-476-3200; nmparks.com). In Santa Rosa, swimmers can dive into **Santa Rosa Lake State Park** (575-472-3110; nmparks.com), and scuba divers can perfect their freshwater skills at **Blue Hole Lake** (575-472-3404; santarosannm.org). Hunters will hit the mark at Ratón's **NRA Whittington Center** (575-445-3615; nrwac.org), which hosts competitions and recreational shooting in a variety of disciplines.

Entertainment

- **Plaza Hotel's Landmark Grill** Grab a beer and a steak at this Las Vegas saloon. (505) 425-3591; plazahotel-nm.com
- **El Ratón Movie Theatre** This historic destination still screens first-run movies. (575) 445-7008; elratontheatre.com
- **Shuler Theater** Located in Ratón, this 1915 theater is the center for performing arts in the region. (575) 445-4746; shulertheater.com
- **Music from Angel Fire** This summer chamber-music festival offers concerts in its namesake town. (575) 377-3233; musicfromangelfire.org

Get Your Kicks

The siren call of Route 66 still beckons travelers today. An original 20-mile stretch of the iconic highway runs from Glenrio (at the Texas state line) to San Jon; another 24-mile stretch cuts from San Jon through Tucumcari, a town that harks back to the Mother Road's heyday. Artifacts in the **Tucumcari Historical Museum** (575-461-4201; cityoftucumcari.com) commemorate the Mother Road. Santa Rosa lays claim to four miles of the route and is home to the **Route 66 Auto Museum** (575-472-1966; route66automuseum.com).

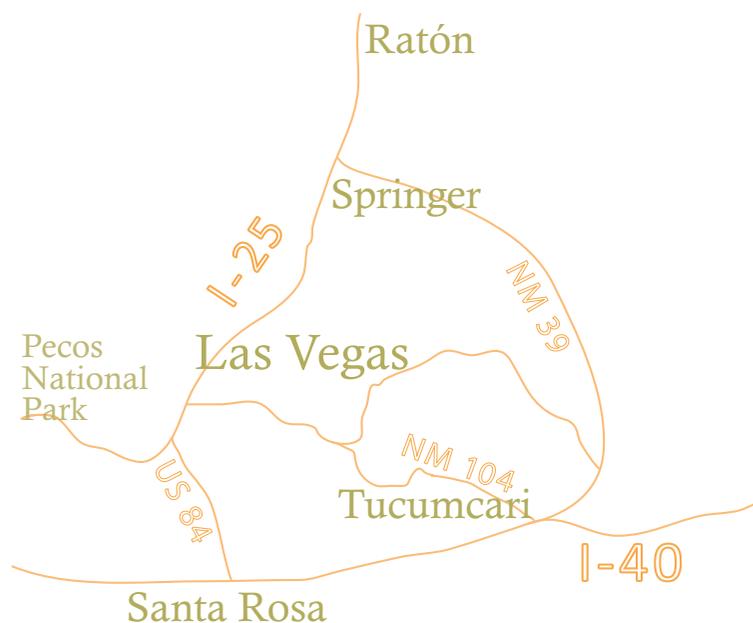


Three-Day Itinerary: The Hi-Lo Country

DAY ONE: From Santa Fe, head north on I-25 through **Pecos National Historic Park**, which boasts Puebloan ruins that once reached five stories high. Stay in **Las Vegas**, a town known for Victorian homes and Rough Rider history.

DAY TWO: Visit **Ratón**, a jumping-off point for outdoor adventures at **Capulín Volcano National Monument** or **Sugarite Canyon State Park**. Connect with the ancient past and Western heritage with side trips to towns such as **Clayton**, **Cimarrón**, and **Springer**. Seek out remnants of the **Santa Fe Trail**, an 1800s trading route, whose wagon-wheel ruts can still be seen today.

DAY THREE: Drive south through cowboy country to **Tucumcari**, known for its **Route 66** connections. Heading west again, take a dip in one of the lakes in **Santa Rosa**.



Left to right: Classic-car owners rally at this Route 66 hotel in Tucumcari. Mother and son ride the plains in Des Moines. A local denizen bellies up to the bar of Byron T's Saloon, at the Plaza Hotel in Las Vegas.

TOP EVENTS: NORTHEAST REGION

January 1:

Polar Bear Plunge

Brave swimmers ring in the New Year with an ice-cold plunge into Storrie Lake, outside Las Vegas. (505) 425-7278; nmparks.com

February 8–10:

World Famous Shovel Races in Angel Fire

See “Skiing,” p. 23.

March TBA:

Civil War Anniversary Weekend

Speakers commemorate the anniversary of the Civil War’s Battle of Glorieta Pass at Pecos National Historical Park. (505) 757-7241; nps.gov/peco

May 9–12:

Eastern New Mexico Bluegrass and Old Tyme Music Association Festival

Bluegrass bands, food, and more; in Tucumcari. (575) 461-1694; tucumcarinm.com

Early June:

Chile Challenge Mountain Bike Festival

One of the biggest mountain-bike races in New Mexico lights up Angel Fire Bike Park with downhill and cross-country races. (800) 633-7463; angelfirebikepark.com

June 6–9:

Wheels on 66 and New Mexico Motor Tour

Celebrate Route 66 in Tucumcari with the Mother Road Rally; motorcycles and vintage cars parade through town. (575) 461-1694; tucumcarinm.com

June 8–9:

Clayton Lake Trout Derby

Cast for cash by landing the biggest trout at this event outside Clayton. (575) 374-9253; claytonnewmexico.org

June TBA:

Cimarrón Days Along the Santa Fe Trail

Celebrate the historic Santa Fe Trail at this 34th annual festival featuring artisans, wagon rides, and tours of the historic Express St. James Hotel. (888) 376-2417; cimarronnm.com

July 4–7:

Fourth of July Celebration

This multiday event in Logan includes a street dance, parade, barbecue, and fireworks. (575) 487-2234; utelake.com

July 13–14:

Angel Fire ArtsFest

Angel Fire hosts this juried showcase of art by local craftspeople. (575) 613-8184; morenovalleyarts.org

July 20:

Viva New Mexico Music Festival

This outdoor concert and dance in Clayton features some of the state’s top musicians. (575) 374-9253; claytonnewmexico.org

July 26–28:

Rough Rider Motorcycle Rally

Bikers gather in Las Vegas for group rides and other events. (505) 617-5632; roughridermotorcyclerrally.com

July TBA:

Pecos Cowboy Church Rodeo

Amateurs compete in rodeo events at the Pecos Rodeo Grounds. (800) 832-5947; pecosrodeo.net

August 2–10:

Las Vegas Heritage Week

The town celebrates the history of Las Vegas with a variety of events, including tours of historic buildings and Montezuma Castle. (505) 425-8803; lasvegasmcchp.com

Mid-August through Labor Day:

Music from Angel Fire

This classical chamber-music festival brings music to Angel Fire, Taos, Ratón, and Las Vegas, New Mexico. (888) 377-3300; musicfromangelfire.com

August TBA:

San Miguel/Mora County Fair

Las Vegas hosts this county fair, which includes a homemade chili contest. (505) 617-4291; sanmiguelmoracountyfair.com

August TBA:

Old West Days

Experience the Old West in Clayton with cowboy gunfights throughout the day. (575) 374-2977; herzsteinmuseum.com

August TBA:

Union County Fair

Clayton celebrates the fall harvest with agricultural exhibitions, a carnival, and more. unioncountyfair.net

August–October:

Salman Ranch Raspberry Picking

Pick berries and gobble them down in Mora. Dates vary due to season. (866) 281-1515; salmanranch.com

August 10:

Fort Union Candlelight Tours

Skits at dusk demonstrate the role Ft. Union played in New Mexico’s defense during the Civil War. (505) 425-8025; nps.gov/foun

August 31–September 1:

Cleveland Roller Mill Festival

Volunteers demonstrate the workings of this historic Mora mill. The event also includes an arts and crafts fair, music, and family activities. (575) 387-2645.

Labor Day Weekend:

Bean Day Celebration

Wagon Mound celebrates its top crop with a barbecue, parade, rodeo, and dancing. (575) 387-6072; nenenewmexico.com

September TBA:

Ain’t Got No Frijoles Blues Festival

Regional bands perform Chicago- and Delta-style blues in Las Vegas. (505) 454-6771

September TBA:

Capulín Volcano Run

Runners take part in 5K, 10K, and fun runs at Capulín Volcano National Monument. capulinvolcanorun.com

September TBA:

Short Grass Music Festival

During this weekend-long event, several folk and country-western acts strike up tunes in and around Cimarrón. (575) 376-2417; cimarronnm.com

October 5–6:

Clayton Arts Festival

Shop for handmade art at this juried show in Clayton. (575) 374-9810; claytonnm.org

October TBA:

Día de los Muertos

Las Vegas celebrates the Day of the Dead with art exhibits. (505) 454-6711; lasvegasnewmexico.com

November 3, 10, 17, 24:

Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge Fall Wildlife Drive

Speakers educate visitors about migratory waterfowl. (505) 425-3581; fws.gov/southwest/refuges/newmex/lasvegas