

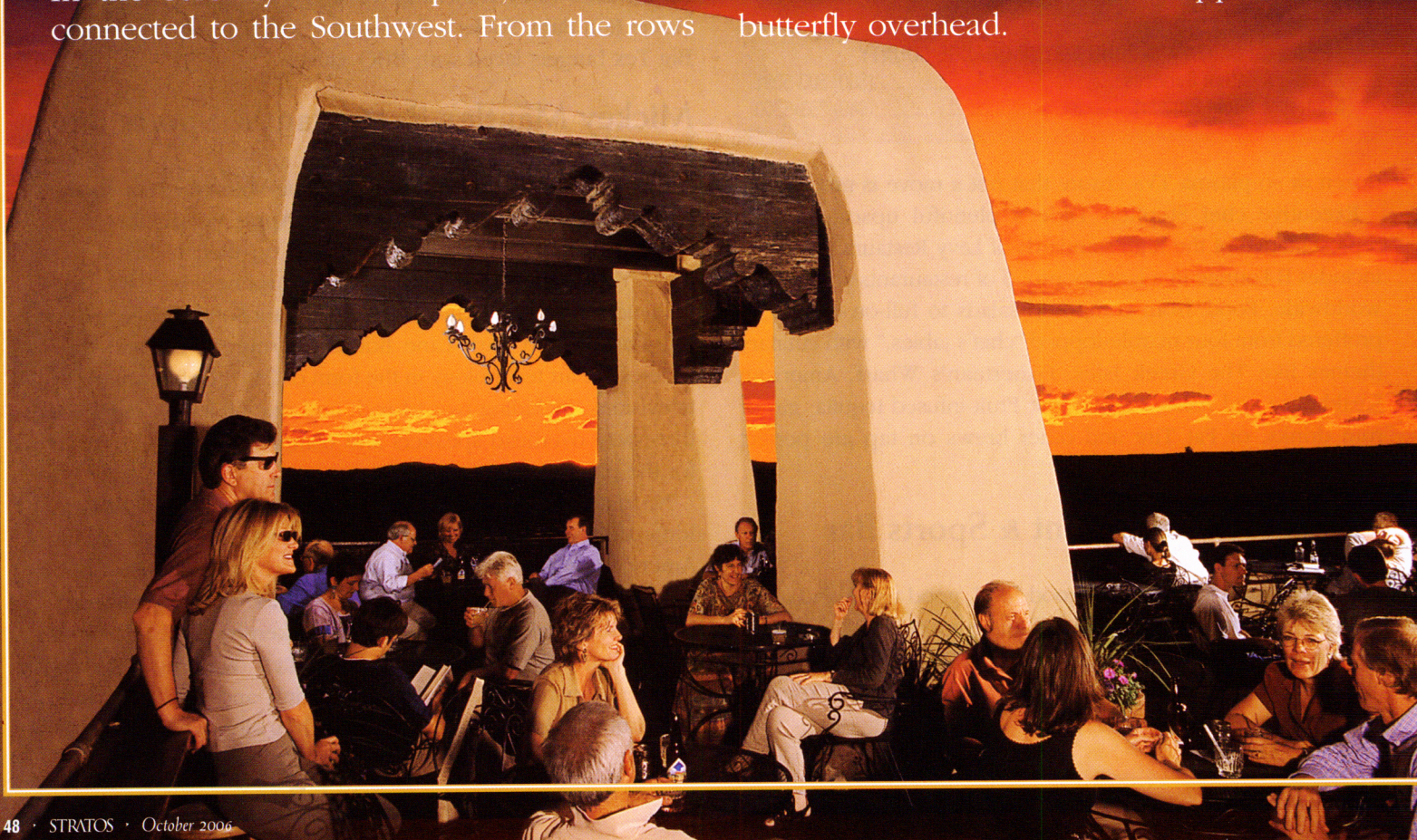
# Savor the Southwest Spirit of Santa Fe

*Two properties epitomize state's moniker: 'The Land of Enchantment.'*

In the early morning, the library at the Inn of the Anasazi felt blessedly tranquil. I slipped out of bed hours before my husband just to sit in the exquisitely Southwestern room with its comfortable leather couches, 1,000-year-old pots and hand-woven Native American rugs. In the serenity of this space, I felt most connected to the Southwest. From the rows



of books lining the dark pine shelves, I could pick up a volume of Zane Grey's complete works or lose myself in Larry McMurtry's *Texas*. But mostly I sat, sipping coffee, wondering at the diversity of pots and woven baskets displayed and listening to the graceful Native American flute music that rose and dipped like a butterfly overhead.



I first discovered Santa Fe a decade ago, driving cross-country from my New Hampshire home to take up residence in Phoenix. I took the canyon road along Route 68 from Taos. The layered folds of the canyon unclenched and flattened as the road dipped into the Rio Grande basin. The mythical river winked in the sun, a line of cottonwoods gracing its flank. Heading toward Santa Fe, junipers dotted the landscape like plump green kisses along the straw-colored grasses of the high desert. Then the city appeared, looking like a modern-day pueblo with its distinctive, flat-roofed architecture. It struck me as supremely beautiful and deeply spiritual. I believed I had stumbled upon the very soul of the Southwest.

Santa Fe is the oldest continuous capital in the United States. Its Palace of Governors served as the capitol building for Spanish, Mexican and Territorial governors. But long before the

Spanish arrived 400 years ago, Native Americans lived here. The city is built on top of the ruins of a pueblo, and the Spanish and Indian cultures mixed for 300 years before Anglos arrived in the mid-19th century. That these cultures co-existed for so long without interference perhaps accounts for the unique character that still defines the city.

To truly experience that character, I wanted to stay at places that honored the city's cultures. Two hotels fit the bill perfectly: **The Inn of the Anasazi**, a Rosewood Hotel, and the venerable landmark, **La Fonda**.

The name Anasazi is Navajo for "ancient ones," a civilization that flourished, then disappeared, 700 years ago. The mud and stone pueblos of these ancients inspired the design of the 15-year-old Inn of the Anasazi, but the property represents the whole stew of Santa Fe culture. The building is built in pueblo style, with smooth plaster walls finished to resemble adobe. Herringbone latillas cross vigas of peeled yellow pine on the ceiling. Hand-woven Native American rugs cover stained pine and polished flagstone floors, set with oversized leather chairs and couches and rustic pine tables. Ironwork wall sconces, recessed lights and dramatic spotlights suffuse the whole effect with a warm glow.

Displays of pots and woven baskets represent a number of

*A daily tradition at La Fonda is to sip cocktails at sunset atop the Bell Tower and take in the majestic Santa Fe landscape.*

*(Inset) The name Anasazi is Navajo for "ancient ones," a civilization that flourished, then disappeared, 700 years ago. The mud and stone pueblos of these ancients inspired the design of the 15-year-old Inn of the Anasazi in Santa Fe.*



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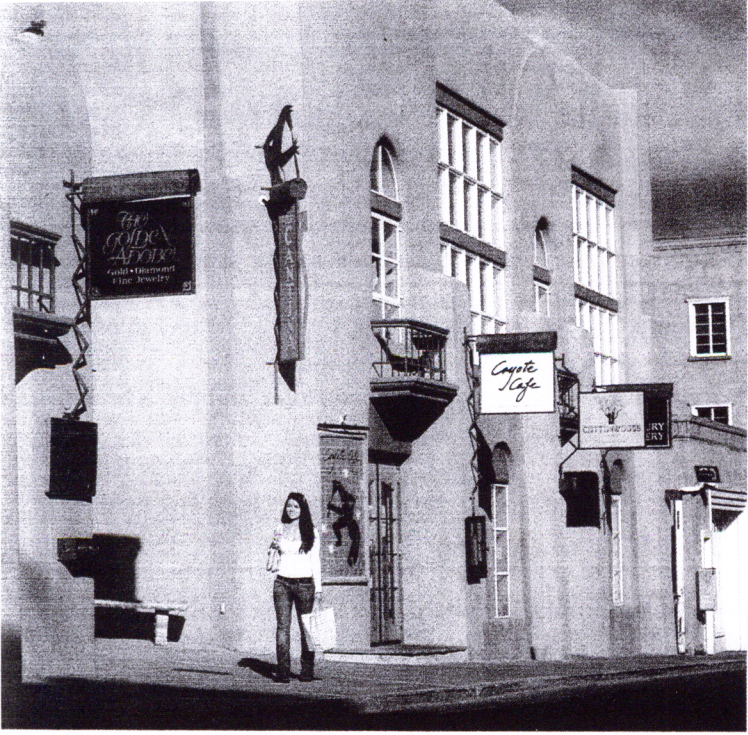


Photo by Doug Merriam

*In addition to rich history and beautiful scenery, Santa Fe features a vibrant retail and art gallery scene.*

Indian cultures. Replica Anasazi pots line the lintel over the bar. In the library and living room, two Socorro pots dated 1,000 A.D. share space with a 19th century Pima basket and contemporary pottery from the Santo Domingo and Acoma tribes. Crosses carved into window mullions and doors represent the Spanish influence. Framed artwork echoes the theme, and rustic wooden crosses hang above kiva fireplaces in guestrooms.

My husband and I occupied a 500-square-foot deluxe corner room, with shuttered windows on two sides, a cushioned banco and kiva fireplace. The room included a polished red river sandstone vanity, hand-woven rugs and a pair of cocoa-colored lounge chairs with soft, white cotton throws. We enjoyed the added luxury of an entryway with an extra closet, lamps with dimmer switches and a humidifier that softened the dry desert air.

The housekeeping staff delivered ice each afternoon. Then, each night after dinner in the Inn's four-star, four-diamond restaurant, my husband and I returned to a homey scent emanating from a plate of cookies, presented with an Indian creation story. We slept deeply and well, cocooned in our pillow-topped bed with 300-thread count Egyptian cotton linens, double twisted for softness. I would have dozed there until noon had it not been for the pull of the hushed library.

We checked out with regret. But we wanted to try a hotel that celebrated the Anglo influence on Santa Fe during the westward expansion. So we headed for La Fonda. Occupying a city block, the massive, pueblo-style structure was one of the first great buildings in the city. The present-day incarnation dates to 1922, but the hotel gained prominence

after the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad bought the inn and leased it to Fred Harvey in 1926. It remained a Harvey House until 1969.

The Fred Harvey Company operated as many as 87 hotels and lunchrooms along the rail line throughout the Southwest emphasizing "neatness and cleanliness" for the traveling public. A painted wooden sign behind the concierge desk in the lobby still advertises the desert car tours that were a hallmark.

Harvey also employed renowned architect Mary Jane Colter, who renovated La Fonda with John Gaw Meem. Colter, who died in Santa Fe in 1958, was among the first architects in America to embrace indigenous materials and styles. She filled the Harvey Houses with locally made furniture and native crafts. Her touches at La Fonda remain in the sand-colored frieze above the fireplace on the south side of the dining room and the chandeliers and tinwork in the Creperie.

But while the ground floors represent the past, a new concierge level features gloriously updated accommodations. The Terrace level, or La Terraza, features 14 luxury rooms built around a rooftop courtyard. Only La Terraza guests have access to the level, which includes a private concierge, gathering room, hot tub and small exercise facility.

Our room was bright and spacious, with hand-trawled plaster, viga-latilla ceiling and antique pine floor. The bathroom, with heated floor, punched tin fixtures and hand-painted tile murals, was large enough to host a party. From our sitting room, we looked out over a small patio, courtyard fountain and the magnificent stone face of St. Francis Cathedral. We felt blessed with an abundance of space, even though our room was among the smallest on La Terraza. Larger suites offer a kitchenette, heavy wooden doors separating the bedroom from the sitting room and an expansive patio with bi-directional views of the Cathedral and Sangre de Christo Mountains.

We hated to go. But Santa Fe will surely remain much as we left it, as it has for hundreds of years. And I feel comforted in knowing that these two hotels in the city whose name means "holy faith" preserve its essence with something like religious reverence. ☸

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