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WHAT'S DOING IN; Santa Fe

By KATHRYN JONES

After the aspens shed their brilliant yellow leaves and the first snowflakes float down, the crowds melt away from Santa Fe, New Mexico's capital, making the winter low season a fine time to visit.

The old Spanish settlement, established in 1607, feels more relaxed; its charm and beauty seem magnified in the cold, crystalline air. Adobe neighborhoods sprawl against the backdrop of the snow-draped Sangre de Cristo mountains, and the smoky smell of pinyon wood burning in fireplaces wafts along narrow streets. A steaming plate of stacked blue-corn enchiladas with spicy chili sauce beckons you indoors, while the mountains lure you out again for skiing or snowboarding.

During the holidays Santa Fe glows with farolitos, the traditional Christmas lights formed by placing a votive candle inside a small paper bag filled with sand. They outline buildings, adobe walls and the downtown plaza, the Spanish version of a town square.

The combination of Indian, Hispanic and Anglo cultures creates a distinctive blend of holiday and winter events. Masses are celebrated in a historic cathedral and nearby pueblos stage ceremonial dances from Christmas Day into January.

Events

Santa Fe cultivates a sophisticated image, but deep down it has a small-town soul. That feeling emerges around dusk on Christmas Eve when residents gather at the plaza for the lighting of 1,000 farolitos. After cider and caroling, many head home or to local restaurants for the traditional Christmas Eve dinner of posole, a regional stew made with dried corn and chilies. Call the Santa Fe Convention and Visitors Bureau, (800) 777-2489 or visit www.santafe.org.

Also on Christmas Eve, Noche Buena, the midnight Mass of the Rooster commemorates the story of the animals in the manger in Bethlehem. The service is held at St. Francis Cathedral, at 131 Cathedral Place. The original 1610 Spanish mission church was replaced in 1869 with the present French Romanesque structure; Santa Fe's first archbishop, Jean Baptiste Lamy, was French. Doors open at 10:30 p.m. and lessons and carols begin at 11 p.m. Call

(505) 982-5619.

Pueblos around Santa Fe hold ceremonial dances throughout the winter, particularly Dec. 24 to 28 (other dates have not yet been announced), where the public is welcome. On Christmas Day dances are scheduled at San Juan, about a 40-minute drive from the city; Tesuque (10 minutes' drive), and Santa Clara and San Ildefonso pueblos (each 30 minutes away). San Ildefonso Pueblo celebrates its annual feast day on Jan. 23, and Picuris Pueblo (60 miles north) its St. Paul's Feast Day on Jan. 25. Dances generally start about 10 a.m. and run until 3 or 4 p.m.; free. For information about events at the northern pueblos, call (505) 852-4265 or, after Jan. 1, visit www.8northern.org.

At the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, 217 Johnson Street, (505) 946-1000, www.okeeffemuseum.org, "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Calla Lily in American Art, 1860-1940," through Jan. 14, explores the use of that flower as subject matter in works by O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, Edward Weston and other artists. A new exhibition, "Debating American Modernism: Stieglitz, Duchamp and the New York Avant-Garde," Jan. 24 to April 20, features paintings, sculpture, photographs (including a grouping of Stieglitz's studies of clouds and sky, which he called "Equivalents"), drawings and prints by such modernists as Stuart Davis and Joseph Stella. Admission is \$8. Open daily through June except Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Friday to 8 p.m.); July through October, open daily.

More than 250 pieces of majolica ceramics from Mexico and Spain fill the showcases at the Museum of International Folk Art, on Museum Hill, on Camino Lejo off the Old Santa Fe Trail, (505) 476-1200, www.moifa.org, through Sept. 7. The museum's exuberant collection includes colorful folk art from around the world. Admission is \$7 (the Museum of New Mexico also offers a \$15 four-day pass to five museums, including this one). Open Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Through Jan. 12, the pottery of the San Ildefonso Pueblo artist María Martínez, known for her black-on-black pottery, will be on display at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology, 710 Camino Lejo; (505) 476-1250; www.miaclab.org. The permanent collection includes art and artifacts from Native cultures of the Southwest. Admission is \$7. Open Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Housed in a restored 1930's-era movie theater, the Lensic Performing Arts Center, 211 West San Francisco Street, (505) 988-1234, www.lensic.org, stages concerts, live theater, dance and poetry readings. The Santa Fe Concert Association is host to performances of classical music on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, each at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$16 to \$55. On Jan. 19 at 4 p.m., the Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra will offer an all-Beethoven program; tickets are \$15 to \$55. And on Jan. 22 at 7 p.m., the Lannan Foundation presents a tribute to William Butler Yeats, with Helen Vendler, professor of English at Harvard, reading from and discussing his work.

Sightseeing

The newest addition to Museum Hill, where many of Santa Fe's art and historical museums are clustered, is the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art, which opened in July at 750 Camino Lejo, (505) 982-2226 or www.spanishcolonial.org. Housed in a 1930 building designed by John Gaw Meem, the architect of Santa Fe's Pueblo Revival style, it features ironwork, religious icons, furniture and other examples of Colonial art. Admission is \$6. Open Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Santa Fe is a city for walking and viewing art. A good place for both is Canyon Road, lined with more than 75 art galleries and numerous shops and some of Santa Fe's best restaurants. The Gerald Peters Gallery, 1011 Paseo de Peralta near Canyon Road, has works by O'Keeffe and members of the Taos Society and Santa Fe Art Colony; (505) 954-5700.

Indian jewelry makers spread blankets and sell their silver and turquoise wares each day from about 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. under the portal at the Palace of the Governors, 105 West Palace Avenue on the plaza; (505) 476-5100 or palaceofthegovernors.org. The building dates from 1610 and was the seat of Spanish government in New Mexico. Current exhibits at the museum include "Jewish Pioneers of New Mexico" and "Art of Ancient America." Admission is \$7. Open Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Snow fell early this year at Ski Santa Fe, at the end of Hyde Park Road about 16 miles from the downtown plaza. There are 44 downhill runs and miles of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails in the nearby Santa Fe National Forest; (505) 982-4429 or www.skisantafe.com. All-day lift tickets are \$44; ski rentals from \$18 a day; no fees for Nordic trails.

Where to Stay

Many hotels, historic inns and B&B are within a mile or so of the plaza. Busy Cerrillos Road has a string of chain hotels and renovated retro-style motels. Winter rates, except for the Christmas to New Year's period, drop at least 10 to 20 percent.

Old Santa Fe Inn, 320 Galisteo Street, (800) 745-9910, fax (505) 995-0400, www.oldsantafeinn.com, is a new Pueblo-style hotel downtown with 43 rooms tastefully furnished in neutral colors, with wrought-iron lamps and woodcut prints. Many rooms have kiva fireplaces. Doubles with a queen bed start at \$119.

A renovated white adobe houses El Rey Inn, 1862 Cerrillos Road, (800) 521-1349, fax (505) 989-9249, www.elreyinnsantafe.com, a Spanish Colonial-style motel with 86 rooms and 11 suites. Amenities include a hot tub, sauna and whirlpool, and Continental breakfast. Doubles with a fireplace start at \$105.

Budget: Santa Fe Plaza Travel Lodge, 646 Cerrillos Road, (800) 578-7878, fax

(505) 983-8624, www.travelodge.com, is a short drive from the plaza. Its 49 rooms are equipped with small refrigerators, coffeemakers and cable TV. Doubles from \$49.

Six blocks from the plaza, the Santa Fe Budget Inn, 725 Cerrillos Road, (800) 288-7600, fax (505) 984-8879, www.santafebudgetinn.com, has 160 rooms with satellite TV and queen beds with Southwestern-style spreads. Doubles start at \$72.

Luxury: The Inn of the Turquoise Bear, 342 East Buena Vista Street, (800) 396-4104, fax (505) 988-4225, www.turquoisebear.com, is a B&B on the estate of the late essayist and poet Witter Bynner. His guests included D.H. Lawrence, Willa Cather and Ansel Adams. The inn's 10 units cost \$95 to \$325 (two-bedroom suite). They are furnished with rustic Southwestern furniture and art; most have private baths. The house, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has two pieces that belonged to Bynner: a Chinese decorative panel in the living room and a large Chinese vase in the dining room. The buffet breakfast features homemade breads and muffins.

The on-site Spa Perre at the Inn at Loretto, 211 Old Santa Fe Trail, (800) 727-5531, fax (505) 984-7988, www.hotelloretto.com, offers Indonesian treatments such as a Balinese massage and a Sacred Stone massage using heated stones. Afterward, guests can relax in 135 oversize rooms and suites with hand-carved furniture, many with private or shared balconies. Doubles from \$199.

Where to Eat

New Mexican cooking is well represented, but other cuisines can be found, too. Nowhere is that truer than at Cafe Pasqual's, 121 Don Gaspar Avenue, (505) 983-9340, an unpretentious Santa Fe institution whose expansive menu includes Mexican, New Mexican, Southwest, Asian, Mediterranean and vegetarian dishes, such as chicken mole enchiladas, Thai shrimp with lemongrass-coconut sauce or grilled lamb chops with a pomegranate glaze. The kitchen does them all surprisingly well, which accounts for the long waits at prime dining hours. Lunch for two is about \$25; dinner for two, with beer or wine, about \$50. Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

To settle the great gastronomic question that New Mexicans love to debate -- red or green chili on that plate of enchiladas -- head for the Shed, 113 3/5 East Palace Avenue, (505) 982-9030, a popular, inexpensive stop for New Mexican fare like stacked blue corn enchiladas. The rambling adobe has cozy dining rooms with colorful folk art. A meal for two with beer is about \$30. Lunch and dinner Monday to Saturday.

Geronimo, 724 Canyon Road, (505) 982-1500, has dazzling white adobe walls and a global eclectic menu. A recent dinner included black sesame tempura shrimp and elk tenderloin. Dinner for two, with wine from the extensive list, is at least \$120. Dinner only in winter (lunch also April through November);

closed Monday.

Julian's Restaurant, 221 Shelby, (505) 988-2355, serves some of the city's best Italian food in a romantic space where candlelight flickers on adobe walls. The selection of homemade pasta, like ravioli stuffed with butternut squash and finished with a light cream sauce laced with sage, is superb. Dinner for two, with wine, about \$100. Open for dinner daily.

Zia Diner, 326 South Guadalupe Street, (505) 988-7008, has a soda fountain, full bar and a classic diner menu with burgers, meatloaf and daily specials. A meal for two is under \$20. Open daily.

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