

Albuquerque Old Town

Church of San Felipe de Neri © Betsy Malloy 2001



Old Town Albuquerque is the center of an area that has known a European presence for over 500 years, in a city that was founded in 1706. Flags flying in the plaza represent countries of Albuquerque's history: Spain, Mexico, the United States. The Confederate States of America even ruled for a few short weeks. Buildings around the Old Town plaza and on the side streets are authentic adobes up to 300 years old, many built in Albuquerque's distinctive "Territorial Style" architecture combining traditional adobe building methods with Greek details.

Today's Old Town is a religious center, with the Church of San Felipe de Neri used as a parish church for over 200 years. It's also a shopping center with shops selling goods ranging from fine arts and jewelry to tourist trinkets, and Indians selling their wares on the sidewalk. It's a lively place, and one of Albuquerque's premier tourist attractions. It's at its most beautiful near Christmas when the streets are lined with glowing candle-in-a-paper-bag luminarias.

Legends, folklore, ghost stories and history come to life as **real Ghost Hunters** lead you on an intriguing excursion through 300 years of haunted history. Old Town was founded in 1706, and for more than three centuries people have lived and died around the Old Town Plaza. The historic buildings and dark alleys conceal the long-forgotten secrets of battles, murders, hangings, and hidden cemeteries.

Things to Do in Old Town

Shopping is a very popular activity in [Old Town](#), and it's easy to understand why. With over 25 art galleries and almost 100 boutiques and shops in total, there are plenty of places for purchases. You may want to browse around the shops to get a good idea of prices, then make your selections.

Take a Walking Tour. Docent-led tours start at the [Albuquerque Museum](#), or pick up their self-guided tour brochure. For a spooky good time, take an evening tour with [New Mexico Ghost Tours](#) and learn where the haunts hang out.

Several fine museums cluster around Old Town. They include:

-) Turquoise Museum (2107 Central Ave. NW, next to Walgreen's) - A good place to learn about turquoise and silver jewelry to prepare for a shopping expedition.
-) [Albuquerque Museum of Art, History and Science](#) - The museum explains 400 years of New Mexico history. Old Town walking tours start from here, and they have some nice children's exhibits including a dress-up area. Pick up a copy of their self-guided walking tour if you can't make the guided one.

-) [New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science](#) - A fun museum where science comes to life. Features include a life-sized Quetzalcoatlus soaring in the atrium, a planetarium show, a walk-through volcano and a comet-busting adventure ride.
-) [American International Rattlesnake Museum](#) (202 San Felipe NW) - Located inside a gift shop, they claim to have the world's largest collection of live rattlesnakes.

The cuisine of New Mexico is a unique blend of three different cultures: Native American, Mexican and European. It's the nation's oldest culinary heritage with roots which can be traced back to the Anasazi, or "ancient ones," who were the ancestors of the Rio Grande Pueblo Indians.

Because of some common dishes, there is a tendency to lump the cuisines of the Southwest together, but New Mexican food is distinctly different from the foods of Arizona and Texas. Here is a great recipe:

This is the beef stew of New Mexico--a basic dish with as many variations as there are cooks. It is one of the most popular dishes in New Mexico, and is certainly one of the favorites. Like all stews, it can be prepared in a variety of ways. Sometimes you can make it with just pork and green chile or use mild varieties of green chile so that you can then add a lot and get a strong chile flavor, without it becoming too hot to eat. Add a warmed flour tortilla and you have a complete meal.

2 pounds lean pork, cubed
 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 1 large onion, chopped
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 6 to 8 green New Mexican chiles, roasted, peeled, stems removed, chopped
 1 large potato, peeled and diced
 2 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
 3 to 4 cups water
 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano, Mexican preferred

Place the pork in a skillet and brown it in the oil, remove the pork and place it in a kettle or stock pot. Put the onions in the skillet, adding more oil if necessary, and sauté until they are browned. Add the garlic and cook for an additional couple of minutes. Remove them from the skillet and add to the pork. Pour a little of the water into the skillet, bring to a boil, and deglaze. Pour the liquid over the pork. Add all the remaining ingredients, and simmer for 1 to 2 hours or until the meat is very tender and is starting to fall apart. Serves: 4 to 6

Practicalities

Old Town is located just north of Interstate 40 at the Rio Grande Blvd. exit. Follow the signs.

Parking in Old Town can be difficult. Follow the signs to one of the public lots. The city parking lot at the Albuquerque Museum is very reasonably priced by the hour and just a few feet from Old Town.