



The open road leaves plenty of time to absorb the majesty of this country and to watch the light dance off the mesas.
Facing page: Gerald A. Pinto's gypsum-clay vessel is one of many fine pots available in this region; he sells his work at the Gallup Flea Market. PHOTOS: SERGIO SALVADOR

NORTHWEST REGION

OFTEN CALLED INDIAN COUNTRY, THESE LANDS ARE HOME TO THE ANCIENT HISTORY AND LIVING TRADITIONS OF NAVAJO AND PUEBLOAN PEOPLES. THE DRAMATIC LANDSCAPE RISES SUDDENLY FROM FLAT MESAS TO RED-ROCK BUTTES, AND INCLUDES RUGGED TERRAIN CARVED BY LAVA FLOWS.



- ACOMA PUEBLO
- AZTEC
- BLOOMFIELD
- CROWNPOINT
- CUBA
- FARMINGTON
- FORT WINGATE
- GALLUP
- GRANTS
- LAGUNA PUEBLO
- NAVAJO NATION
- RAMAH
- SHIPROCK
- ZUNI PUEBLO





From left: Tanner's Indian Arts, in Gallup, sells heirloom-quality Navajo blankets. More than 40 feet in diameter, the Great Kiva at Aztec Ruins National Monument is the oldest and largest building of its kind. Julius Charley takes on a course through the Zuni Mountains during the 24 Hours in the Enchanted Forest endurance mountain-bike race. A family casts shadows over the sparse terrain at Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness. Below: Making jewelry is a family affair for Navajo artist Angeline Touchine (front left), who sells her work out of her Church Rock home.



Native Culture

The **Navajo Nation** (928-871-6436; discovernavajo.com) extends 27,000 square miles through northwestern New Mexico, and parts of Arizona and Utah. It is home to several landmarks, including: **Chaco Culture National Historical Park** (505-786-7014; nps.gov/chcu); **Four Corners Monument**, where Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado meet (navajonationparks.org); and **Ship Rock**, a towering volcanic formation near the town of Shiprock known to the Diné as Tse Bitai (Rock with Wings). The Diné (the name preferred by the tribe) are famed for their stunning jewelry and intricate weavings. These items are available at trading posts such as the **Toadlena Trading Post** (888-420-0005; toadlenatradingpost.com), in Newcomb, and at the monthly **Crownpoint Rug Auctions** (505-786-5302; crownpointrugauktion.com). Lucky travelers may encounter Navajo Code Talkers, World War II Marines who created and transmitted messages in an unbreakable code in their native language that was vital to the success of military missions.

Several Pueblos are also located in this region. **Acoma Pueblo** (800-747-0181; acomaskycity.org), west of Albuquerque, includes **Sky City**, the oldest continuously occupied community in North America, which in turn includes the beautifully restored mission church of San Estevan del Rey. The Pueblo is also home to **Sky City Casino and Hotel**. At nearby **Laguna Pueblo** (505-552-6654; lagunapueblo.org), visitors can try their luck at **Dancing Eagle Casino** and **Route 66 Casino and Travel Center**. The Pueblo's six villages welcome visitors to feast days. **Zuni Pueblo** (505-782-723; zunitourism.com), near the Arizona state line, hosts several tours, including those of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission Church, known for its *katsina* murals; the ancestral village of Hawikku; and the homes and studios of local artists. Get a cultural overview at the **A:shiwi A:wam Museum and Heritage Center**.



TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: SERGIO SALVADOR, ADAM SCHALLAU, BRIAN LEDDY, ANA JUNE, BOTTOM: SERGIO SALVADOR

Outdoors

Home to open mesas that stretch as far as the eye can see, this region is also known for its colorful buttes and mountains. Near Grants, **Mount Taylor** (505-287-8833; fs.usda.gov/cibola) is the highest point in the Cibola National Forest. The forested peak is also known as Turquoise Mountain, one of four mountains sacred to the Diné that mark the boundaries of their homeland. Unlike Ship Rock, a monolith considered a holy site and off limits to visitors, Mount Taylor is open to hiking.

Also near Grants, **El Malpais National Monument** (505-783-4774; nps.gov/elma), its name the Spanish word for "badlands," contains 115,000 acres of cinder cones, vast lava flows, natural arches, and caves carved by volcanic activity; it's a top destination for backcountry hiking. Nearby, generations of travelers have carved messages into Inscription Rock, at **El Morro National Monument** (505-783-4226; nps.gov/elmo); see them all on a gentle hike around and up the butte. The **Continental Divide Trail** (continentaldividetrail.org), a National Scenic Trail, cuts through this terrain; most adventurers depart from Cuba. Hikers will find another unusual landscape in the **Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness** (505-599-8900; blm.gov/nm), desolate areas where time has molded spires in exposed shale.

Cyclists will gear up for Gallup's mountain-bike trails, which cut across colorful mesas and through the National Forest near Mount Taylor along 26 miles of designated trails. Outside Farmington, the **Glade Run Recreation Area** (505-326-7602; farmingtonnm.org) covers 19,000 acres of sandy arroyos and slick rock.

Also near Farmington, **Navajo Lake State Park** (505-632-2278; nmparks.com) includes the state's second-largest lake, offering numerous water sports and a full-service marina. Below the dam, anglers will find some of the best fly-fishing in the country in the waters of the **San Juan River** (505-326-7602; farmingtonnm.org).

Shopping

In this region, you have a cultural experience and save by buying Native American art at the source. Artists line the paths at Acoma's Sky City, selling the Pueblo's signature black-on-white pottery, etched with intricate details. Along the **Ancient Way Arts Trail** (ancientway-artstrail.com) and at **Zuni Craftsman's Cooperative** (505-782-723; zunitourism.com), shop for Zuni Pueblo's signature silverwork, inlay jewelry, and stone fetish carvings. Gallup is a one-stop shop for a variety of Native arts, including weavings, jewelry, and clothing. At the **Gallup Flea Market**, try the fry bread and mutton stew—regional dining favorites—while shopping for bargains.

Get Your Kicks

The fabled Mother Road has nearly vanished into the history books, but remnants of the Chicago-to-California highway still remain in New Mexico. Drive **Route 66** (rt66nm.org) in Grants along six miles of Santa Fe Avenue. In Gallup, restaurants and hotels line a nine-mile segment of the original Route 66. Outside Gallup, the route continues as N.M. 118 west to the Arizona state line.

Farmington: Top Attractions

Water Walk: Riverside Nature Center

Stroll along the Animas River. (505) 599-1422; farmingtonnm.org

Family Fun: E3 Children's Museum and Science Center

Learn by doing at this hands-on center. (505) 599-1425; fmn.org

Musical Moment: San Juan Symphony Orchestra

This 65-piece ensemble presents four concerts each season. (877) 599-3331; sanjuansymphony.org

Regional Flavor: Wines of the San Juan

Taste creations from this boutique winery while taking in river views. (505) 632-0879; winesofthesanjuan.com



From left: The doorways of Pueblo Bonito, at Chaco Culture National Historical Park, lead adventurers into the past. Hot-air balloons glide from Bloomfield to Farmington during the San Juan River Balloon Rally. Ranchers herd cattle in the shadow of Cabezon Peak.

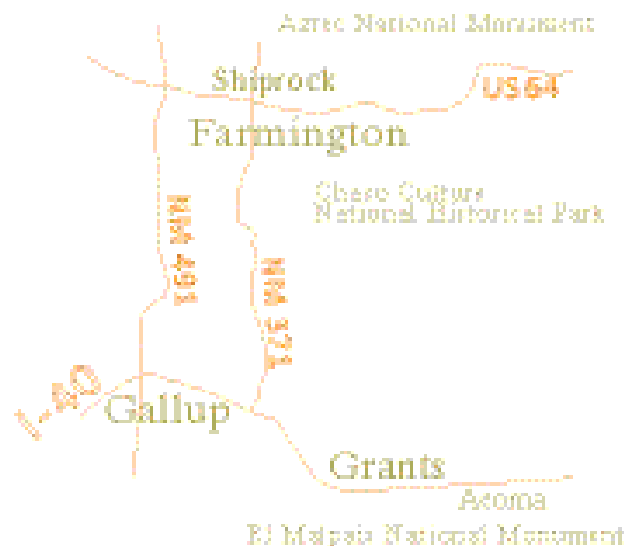
FROM LEFT: ANA JUNE, CHARLES MANN, ANA JUNE

Three-Day Itinerary: Indian Country

DAY ONE: West of Albuquerque, near Grants, visitors can explore the natural lava fields of **El Malpais National Monument**, hike **El Morro National Monument**, and explore the **Bandera Ice Cave**.

DAY TWO: Farther west, the town of **Gallup** sits on the edge of the **Navajo Nation** and is a jumping-off point for exploring these lands and their heritage. Browse shops here for Native art such as rugs, *katsinas*, pottery, and jewelry.

DAY THREE: Farther north, travelers can walk in the footsteps of ancients among the famed ruins of **Chaco Culture National Historical Park**, the center of civilization and commerce in the 12th-century Southwest. Near **Farmington**, more ruins and faithful reconstructions of former buildings stand at **Aztec National Monument**. Farmington is also a jumping-off point for visiting the **Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness Area** and the **San Juan River**.



TOP EVENTS: NORTHWEST REGION

Second Friday of Each Month:
Crownpoint Rug Auctions See “Art,” p. 31.

January 4–5:
Casper Baca Bares, Broncs & Bulls Spectacular 200 rough-stock riders compete in a rodeo at the McGee Park Memorial Coliseum, between Farmington and Bloomfield. (505) 287-9534

February 21:
Mt. Taylor Winter Quadrathlon Competitors bike, run, ski, and snowshoe from downtown Grants up Mt. Taylor and back. (800) 748-2142; mttaylorquad.org

February 22–24:
High Desert Fine Art Festival Four Corners–area artists display creations in Farmington. (505) 716-6057; mttaylorquad.org

April 12–14:
San Juan College Contest Powwow Native dancers compete at the McGee Park Memorial Coliseum, between Farmington and Bloomfield. (505) 566-3321; farmingtonnm.org

April 21:
San Juan Symphony Concert Season Begins The symphony begins its season of performances with *Bach and Beatlemania*, in Farmington. (505) 566-3430; sanjuansymphony.org

April TBA:
Dawn ’til Dusk Racers take on the challenge of a 12-hour mountain-bike endurance race. (505) 722-2228; ziarides.com

First weekend of May:
La Fiesta de Colores This multiday festival of Hispanic culture in Grants includes an art show, religious processions, and entertainment. (800) 748-2142; lafiestadecolores.com

May 24–26:
Riverfest Farmington recognizes the role of the Animas River in its community with music, art, food, trail walks, and raft rides. (505) 599-1140; riverreachfoundation.com

May 27–September 2:
Nightly Dances Native American dancers give free performances at Courthouse Square, in downtown Gallup. (505) 722-2228

May–June TBA:
SunRay Park & Casino Live Horse-Racing Season Begins Horses hit the track for races in Bloomfield on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Tuesdays through June. (505) 566-1200; sunraygaming.com

June 1:
XTerra Four Corners Off-Road Triathlon This race, part of the XTerra America Tour Series, takes place in and around Farmington Lake. (800) 448-1240; exterraplanet.com

June 15:
24 Hours in the Enchanted Forest Riders endure a 24-hour mountain-bike race in Gallup. (505) 722-2228; ziarides.com

June TBA:
San Juan River Balloon Rally A dozen balloons take flight from Bloomfield and glide down the San Juan River. (505) 632-0880; bloomfieldnm.info

July 12–13:
Wild Thing Bull-Riding Championship Top rodeo riders compete at Red Rock Park, in Gallup. (505) 722-8839

Third weekend in July:
Fire & Ice Route 66 Bike Rally Motorcycle enthusiasts descend on Grants for festivities such as group rides. (800) 742-2142; fireandicebikerally.com

August 2–9:
Connie Mack World Series See “Family Travel,” p. 45.

August 7–11:
Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial See “Top Events,” p. 13.

August 31–September 1:
Totah Festival Native peoples compete in a contest powwow, and sell arts and crafts (including Navajo rugs), in Farmington. (800) 448-1240; farmingtonnm.org

September 21–22:
Squash Blossom Classic Mountain Bike Race In Gallup, riders compete in a mountain-bike race; runners take on 5K and half-marathons. (505) 862-1865; squashblossomclassic.com

September TBA:
Mt. Taylor 50K This ultramarathon on the trails of Mt. Taylor, near Grants, takes place entirely above 9,000 feet and requires more than 4,500 feet of vertical change. mttaylor50k.org

October 5:
Road Apple Rally Started in 1981, this Farmington competition is the longest-running mountain-bike race in the state. (800) 448-1240; roadapplerally.com

October TBA:
Deadman Peaks Trail Run An ultramarathon along the Continental Divide south of Cuba benefits the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. dp50.org

October TBA:
Ancient Way Fall Festival Communities along N.M. 53, among them Grants and Acoma Pueblo, celebrate the season with events including the Ancient Way Bike Race. (888) 423-2283

October TBA:
Northern Navajo Nation Fair This oldest Navajo Nation fair features a parade, fair, and rodeo in Shiprock. (505) 368-3727

December 6:
Riverglo Luminarias light up the Animas River’s banks in Farmington. (800) 448-1240; riverreachfoundation.com

December 6–7:
Navajo Kehmish Festival This seasonal festival features a wide array of products made by Navajo artists. indiancountrynm.org

December 6–8:
Red Rock Balloon Rally Some thirty hot-air balloons take flight at Red Rock Park, in Gallup. (800) 380-4989