2  Automobile Tour of Santa Fe - 8 miles

0.0 Mile. Santa Fe plaza; go south on Old Santa Fe Trail.

Left. Pass buildings of the old Loretto Academy which played a historic role in New Mexican education between 1852 and 1968. The old school building (1880), Loretto Chapel (1873) and the brick convent.

Left. San Miguel Chapel. Despite claims of "oldest church in America," the present structure is conclusively known to date from 1710. Though built on the site of an earlier church (in existence by 1628) of the same advocacy, the new fabric was quite independent of the earlier whose foundations were discovered during the general restoration of 1955. Without transepts but using a polygonal apse, the present church follows the plan used for earliest edifices in the province.

The facade has been rebuilt several times and a photograph of 1868 shows an adobe entrance tower of three stages. Of particular interest on the interior is the main retable (c. 1798, restored 1955) which conceals traces of an early mural painted on mud plaster, like the one at Las Trampas. Important also is the elaborately carved beam supporting the choir loft, inscribed “The Lord Marquess de la Penuela had this structure made by his aide, Royal Ensign Don Augustín Flores de Vergara in the year 1710.” Carved with borders and geometric designs, it is more elaborate than any that survives in New Mexico. Architectural historian, George Kubler, however, points out that it is less well executed than one in the church of 1662 at Ciudad Juarez across from El Paso.

0.4 Mile Left. Saint Michael’s College was built by the Christian Brothers as a boys school in 1878. Capped originally with a mansard roof, there was also a porch of two levels on the facade, as one can see from the double doors on the second level. The mansard roof and front porch were destroyed by a disastrous fire in 1926. A similar portal still extends across the rear elevation. The utilization of stone trim for the frame of the main entrance indicates the presence of a new class of workmen and tools in the territory, attracted to the area without doubt by the construction of the cathedral. The school property has been purchased by the state, and the remaining buildings have been remodelled for office use.

Right. State Capitol (1966, Willard Kruger Associates). Because it uses pedimented openings and Territorial trim, this design satisfies the architectural control ordinance. Two semi-circular legislative chambers constitute the core of the building with offices on the periphery while basement parking facilities create a moat that isolates the structure from its site. Other state buildings in area are by the same firm.

Continue south on Old Santa Fe Trail and note the characteristic one-story adobe houses with brick copings.

0.6 Mile. Turn left on Arroyo Tenorio. As this unpaved street winds between high walls, it recalls the flavor of 19th century Santa Fe. Expensive homes alternate with modest ones, each cloaked by walls and turned inward on a sheltered terrace or garden, and often built out to the property line. Even modest dwellings are interesting and avoid the anonymous monotony of tract developments. Many travelers agree that the elusive charm of Santa Fe derives from inconspicuous lanes and cul de sacs like this one rather than from the more familiar monuments in the
center of the city. Continue across García Street to Acequia Madre.

Acequia Madre takes its name, "mother ditch," from the old irrigation canal which parallels the road. In early times no houses bordered the left (north) side since this land was irrigated. Another big difference a century or more ago would have been the relative bareness of the city. The yearly burning of fields contributed to the absence of trees, and nurserymen from the Midwest had not yet begun to import trees and shrubs.

1.4 MILES. The intersection of Calle la Peña, Camino del Poniente and Abeyta Streets summarizes the visual quality of the area, though no one example is typical since each street and intersection is so individual. When Acequia Madre merges with Canyon Road, continue east to:

2.0 MILES. Cristo Rey Church (1940, John Gaw Meem). Built of adobe, it is the most successful modern attempt to reproduce the traditional design. But this was done in 1939-40 when labor costs were moderate; today a structure requiring so much hand labor would be out of reason.

The interior is dominated by the magnificent stone retablo from the destroyed La Castrense (military chapel) of 1760. Dedicated to the Virgin of Light and paid for by Governor Marín del Valle, it was executed by stone carvers brought from Mexico for the purpose. Cut of stone quarried near Bishop's Lodge, north of Santa Fe, it is the only significant example of stone carving in colonial New Mexico. The presence of this piece in the capital was later reflected in simpler retablos made of wood such as the one at Las Trampas (See page 41). Return on Canyon Road.

Canyon Road was originally part of an Indian trail that led into the mountains and across to the Pecos Valley. Today it is the most famous Bohemian section of town. There are innumerable old buildings of interest, but three have particular interest:

2.6 MILES. The Borrego house (Three Cities of Spain restaurant, #724). Part of the dwelling existed in 1769 though the large front sala probably was added in 1856 when a mortgage was briefly placed on the building. It is a textbook example of Territorial architecture, the characteristics of which are pedimented lintels, square portal posts enlivened with moldings to recall Classical capitals, and brick coping. In 1931 the house won an award as the best work of restoration done in Santa Fe within the previous two years.

2.8 MILES. The Olive Rush studio (#630) which now serves as the Friends Meeting House. A U-shaped house, the delightful portal opens to the east, sheltered from street noises and north winds. Originally it looked onto a simple garden where the building next door now stands. Barely wide enough to accommodate two rooms across the front, the lot is characteristically very deep (300 feet). No dates are known for this structure, but it may have been done as late as 1855, a tree ring date.

2.9 MILES. El Zaguán (#545) is now fortunately controlled by the Old Santa Fe Association, as is the Borrego house. The building assumed its present form sometime after 1849 when Charles Johnson, an early Santa Fe trader, enlarged the old three-room house on the site. He also planted the horse chestnut trees and laid out the small formal garden, a sensational innovation for Santa Fe at the time. The lower garden has been subdivided into pleasant apartments and houses which are worth exploring.

3.5 MILES. Turn left on Delgado Street and left again on Acequia Madre. Turn right onto Camino del Monte Sol. This street was one of the most famous streets in Santa Fe in the 1920's. Here several of the city's leading artists built studios and homes: Will Schuster, Josef Bakos; Laura Gilpin, the photographer, who still lives at #409.

4.2 MILES LEFT. Camino del Cruz Blanca, turn left to St. John's College.

4.9 MILES. The Santa Fe campus of the well known Maryland college was opened when the first buildings were ready for use in 1964. As recently as 1969, several new dormitories have been added. Architects were Holein and Buckley, successors to John Gaw Meem. The student union is notable because of interiors by Alexander Girard (1964), another Santa Fe architect. Return to Camino del Monte Sol and turn left. On the left is the house of architect John McHugh.

5.7 MILES. National Park Service Building (1939, Drafting Department, National Park Service). Recently nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, this is perhaps the best of the buildings in the so called Santa Fe style, a regional movement dating 1904-1940 which looked to the traditional architecture of New Mexico for inspiration. Earlier examples of the style (in Santa Fe the Museum of Fine Arts and the New Mexico School for the Deaf, both 1917) were restless in their desire to be picturesque. Few examples achieve such dignified monumentality without sacrificing variety of mass and fenestration. It also has a high "rating" with employees who work in it.

5.8 MILES. Return to Old Santa Fe Trail, turn left, then turn left on Camino Lejo leading to the museum complex.

6.1 MILES. The Laboratory of Anthropology is another outstanding achievement of the Santa Fe style (1931, John Gaw Meem). Conceived as one unit of an unrealized multi-million dollar southwest center for anthropological and ecological research, the present building was designed as a museum research and administrative center.


8.2 MILES. Return to plaza.

And now off to Taos.