



On the road to Taos

Historic and Beautiful Taos, New Mexico

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Taos Pueblo



Oil on Canvas from Sharp's Collection

If you are not planning to ski Taos, spring and fall are the ideal seasons to visit this town at the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Moderate temperatures optimize your time to explore main attractions: the Taos Pueblo—the oldest continuously inhabited Native American community, the historic art scene, and the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge National Monument. Taos is less than a five-hour drive from Arvada.

While indigenous people have lived at the Pueblo for over 1,000 years, few settlers resided in Taos until the Taos Society of Artists was established in 1915, just three years after New Mexico achieved statehood. To this day, the town's natural surroundings continue to attract artists. Like Santa Fe, art stores and small museums are ubiquitous.

TAOS PUEBLO

While some prefer to wander around the **Taos Pueblo**, both a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and a National Historic Landmark, I recommend joining a group tour. Our guide used his personal experiences to discuss the Pueblo's history and what it was like growing up in the community. After being surrounded by modern conveniences, I struggled to connect with the small number of indigenous people who choose to live inside the walled area living without electricity and indoor plumbing.

One cannot help but admire the resiliency of these indigenous people who were continually besieged by outsiders. Our young guide's parting words reflect his people's inherent tenacity. "We are still here. We are culturally strong people who have preserved our culture and are willing to pass it on to the next generation."

Before planning a visit to this incredible place, please check the Taos Pueblo website. Festivals, special occasions, and COVID policies may restrict visitation times.

TAOS SOCIETY OF ARTISTS

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Taos Society of Artists was formed by Bert Phillips, Ernest Blumenschein, Oscar Berninghaus, Joseph Sharp, E. Irving Couse, and Herbert Dunton. This artist colony lasted until 1927. Nearly a century later, the region remains a magnet for artists. Numerous museums highlight various aspects of the town's history.

COUSE-SHARP HISTORIC SITE

At the **Couse-Sharp Historic Site**, we stepped into the shoes of E. Irving Couse (1866-1936) and Joseph Henry Sharp (1859-1953) by learning their perspective on Native American art. Sharp is best known for his paintings of Native American subjects and his chronicling of the vanishing West. His works are housed in his first Taos studio, a converted chapel. From 1891 to his death in 1936, Couse created almost 10,000 photographic images of Taos Pueblo models. Sharp is considered the "spiritual father" of the Taos Society of Artists, and Couse was the organization's president for the first five years.

The Couse home is decorated with original furnishings and personal items. The studios are frozen in time. They appear as if the artist has simply taken a momentary break. This site is on the National Register of Historic Places.

TAOS ART MUSEUM AT FECHIN HOUSE

Nicolai Fechin (1881-1955), a notable Russian born artist, is remembered as an award-winning 20th-century portrait painter as well as a painter of Native Americans and desert landscapes. He emigrated to the U.S in the 1920s when the situation in Russia was deteriorating.

In Taos, he enlarged an eight-room adobe home into a magnificent 4,000 square foot house. When his marriage ended in divorce, the five-year project had not yet been completed. Nicolai left Taos with his daughter while his

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ex-wife stayed behind. When the home was completed, it had the first electric stove, oven, and refrigerator in town.

Decades later, the Fechin home remains an incredible masterpiece, filled with a mixture of Russian, Spanish, and Pueblo architectural styles and Russian, Siberian, European, Art Deco, and Native American elements. In 1979, the Fechin house became part of the National Registry of Historic American Homes and the State of New Mexico Registered Cultural Properties.

RIO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE NATIONAL MONUMENT

The **Rio Grande Gorge Bridge National Monument** was established in 2013 during the Obama administration. At

that time, 97,000 hectares adjacent to the Rio Grande were designated as protected land. Lovers of bridges and nature will be pleased with the photographic images taken of the seventh highest bridge in the U.S. and the miles of trails running along the 800-foot gorge which reveal layers of volcanic basalt flows and ash.

Had our trip been longer than a couple of days, we would have visited a few more historical sites. Here are a few other attractions to consider: Harwood Museum, La Hacienda de Los Martinez, the Governor Bent House, the Kit Carson Home and Museum, the Mabel Dodge Luhan House, the Ernest Blumenshein House, and the Millicent Rogers Museum.

DISCLOSURE: The Waite Company hosted the Traveling Bornsteins stay in Taos. They received a complimentary stay at the Historic Inn, complimentary tickets for the trolley which included the tour of the Pueblo, and admission to the two museums.

Black & white print from Couse's collection



Master bedroom in Fechin House



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