

The Five-Point Weekend Escape Plan

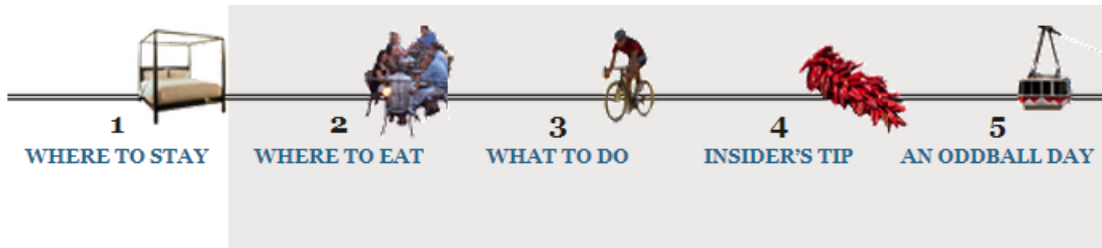
Pedal Your Way Through Albuquerque

With miles of trails, food-focused cycling tours, and breweries and wineries accessible by bike, the best way to explore New Mexico's biggest city is on two wheels.

By Jenny Miller Published Jul 18, 2014 [Share](#)



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1. Where to Stay



The serene rooms at Los Poblanos come with free bikes to explore the on-premises farm and local vineyards. (Photo: Courtesy of Mike Crane Photo)

Wander amid fields of lavender and veggies at **Los Poblanos** (from \$180), a 1932 Spanish-style inn surrounded by a 25-acre organic garden. Opt to stay in one of 20 rooms at the main building, appointed with New Mexico antiques, original artwork (including WPA New Mexican pieces and R.C. Gorman lithographs), carved ceiling beams, and kiva fireplaces. Or choose one of the airy rooms in what's known as the Farm—a row of wooden cottages with pitched tin roofs that made up the 1930s dairy. The property's bounty goes into house-made lavender salve and other products sold in the on-site Farm Shop, and onto the menu at La Merienda, the hotel's terrific under-the-radar restaurant. Borrow a free cruiser bike for a jaunt past nearby wineries in the afternoon; then try out chef Jonathan Perno's "Rio Grande Valley cuisine" for dinner—think spinach tagliatelle with red chiles and New Mexico piñon (\$20) and a Rio Grande fritto misto with green chile pepper jelly, El Trigal Manchego, and local chevre (\$15).

Head downtown to the 107-room **Hotel Andaluz** (from \$149), debuted by New Mexico native Conrad Hilton in 1939. It reopened in 2009 with a \$30 million boutique update and Moorish-inflected makeover, like the lobby's courtyard fountain with "casbahs" underneath archways on each side. Even if you don't stay in the Penthouse suite, where Hilton and Zsa Zsa Gabor checked in on their wedding night, your room will have Moulton Brown toiletries, Northern Canadian goose-down comforters, and a pillow menu with seven different options. To re-create some of that couple's romance, grab a glass of sherry (\$6-\$14) at rooftop bar Ibiza, where private booths are sheltered by strands of vines. For dinner, nibble on Iberian bites at Mas, the hotel's new tapas bar, where Spanish favorites include morcilla (blood sausage) with peppers (\$12) and boquerones (white anchovies; \$10).

Stay within a quick bike ride to Albuquerque's Old Town at the 188-room **Hotel Albuquerque** (from \$83). Decorated in Spanish colonial style (think tiles and iron chandeliers in the lobby) with a few Southwestern adobe touches, the property boasts a landscaped outdoor pool area surrounded by lounge chairs with views of the Sandia mountains. Grab a seat on the patio of the hotel's outlet of local New-Mex favorite Garduños for lunch—try the margarita flight with flavors like strawberry-basil and green chile (\$14), and the carne adovada (pork simmered with red chilies, \$15.45). After a day cycling around the city, kick up your heels at Casa Esencia, a 1783 home that has been transformed into one of the city's swankiest nightclubs, and is located right on the grounds (i.e., stumbling distance from your room).

2. Where to Eat



Extremely local New Mexican produce shines at Farm & Table.
(Photo: Sergio Salvador)

Explore the city's burgeoning food-truck scene with **Curbside Cuisine**, a mobile-eatery lineup that started in March 2011 in Albuquerque's International District and now happens every Wednesday from about 11 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m. in the **Talin Market** parking lot. The roster changes, but might include the Rustic Truck's American fare, like a green-chile cheeseburger (\$8); the Supper Truck's eclectic spread featuring fried-chicken bánh mì (\$8) or grilled shrimp tacos (2 for \$7); or Hot Off the Press, panini-makers offering specials like apple chutney and Cheddar (\$7).

Think hyperlocal at **Farm & Table**, which sources its 80 percent New Mexico-produced fare from more than 40 nearby vendors. A seasonally changing dinner menu is offered Wednesdays through Saturdays in F&T's wood-beamed dining room. At the moment, the operation's own grass-fed steak (market price), raised on the farm in back, and mushroom-and-kale empanadas (\$8), made with roasted green chilies and local Tucumcari Cheddar cheese, are among the selections. The restaurant also serves Saturday and Sunday brunch, with dishes

like eggs Benedict made with locally raised pork and bacon (\$13), and hosts a farm stand on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., peddling freshly harvested produce like kale, chard, and mustard greens.

Dig into properly Mexican fare at **Zacatecas Tacos + Tequila**, located in the trendy Nob Hill area. The lively indoor-outdoor eatery (with garage-style doors that get raised in nice weather) received a James Beard nomination for Best New Restaurant in 2013, but the real evidence of quality is in the hordes of hungry diners. Grab a high-top table underneath the display of Mexican calaveras (skull masks) and dip into queso fundido with housemade pork chorizo (\$8); then try the duck relleno, an Anaheim chile stuffed with duck confit and goat cheese (\$10). Leave room for a sampling of the two-bite tacos in flavors like spicy chicken tinga (\$10 for 4) or Mazatlan-style shrimp with pickled cabbage (\$13 for 4).

3. What to Do



Thanks to the city's 16-mile long Bosque Bike Trail, a new brewery district, and two-wheeled eating tours, a bike is the best way to see Albuquerque today.

(Photo: Courtesy of Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau)

Get out of the city on the beautiful **Bosque Bike Trail**, a 16-mile-long paved path blissfully uninterrupted by car traffic. If you haven't opted to BYOB (that's bring your own bike), rent some wheels at **Bike Smith** (\$35–\$50 per day), located near the entrance. (Choose from a road bike, hybrid, mountain bike, or junior models by cycling-nerd favorite Fuji.) Several city attractions are accessible via the trail: A few miles in, brake for the **Rio Grande Nature Center**, which is free for cycle-in visitors and offers an up-close look at a three-acre pond (via glass walls that look underwater) with its resident ducks, turtles, and other critters. A little farther down the trail you'll find the **National Hispanic Cultural Center** (free on Sundays; \$2–\$3 otherwise), which offers rotating visual arts exhibits (currently, one of Oaxacan block prints). Just beyond that, cycle through the **Albuquerque Biological Park** (admission \$4–\$20), which encompasses one and a half miles of paths through a botanical garden, plus a zoo and an aquarium.

Combine suds and cycling by peddling over to Albuquerque's new **Brewery District**, a formerly industrial stretch that the city officially designated a booze hub this year (with street signs and a map likely in the near future). Start out at **Nexus Brewery** with a refreshing white ale (\$2.5–\$5.50), spiced with orange peel and coriander, and some carbo-loading for the rest of your ride—there's a full food menu of Cajun and New-Mex grub, like red or green chile nachos (\$11) and gumbo (\$9.50). Ride over to **Il Vicino Brewery Canteen** for a pint of the hearty Dark & Lusty Stout (\$4.50) accompanied by the aptly named “beer sponge” megapretzel

(\$2.95). If you still have energy and thirst left, the city's first craft distillery, **Left Turn Distilling**, is just down the street; have a taste of its vodka or gin (rum and blue corn whiskey will emerge from the stills later this summer) before walking back to your bike.

Burn (and then replenish) calories on a two-wheeled eating excursion. **Routes Rentals & Tours** added the New Mexico Chile Bike Tour (\$50 with bike rental; \$45 if you bring your own) this year, which takes participants to see how the state's red and green chilies are eaten. Tours make four or five pit stops which change regularly, but might include Golden Crown Panaderia for its famous green chile cheese bread or Xocolatl Chocolate Cartel for green chile chocolate. Or take a solo spin down to **Bike-In Coffee**, held weekends from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at **Old Town Farm**, a 12-acre spread within the city limits. Purchase cold brew Kona coffee (\$3), silver-dollar-size red-pepper and goat cheese "quiche babies" (\$3), or "Skookies" (a cross between a scone and cookie made with fruit grown in the garden and orchard; \$3) in a parked 1973 Winnebago (which might bring to mind the ABQ-filmed *Breaking Bad*). Enjoy your bites at a table or wooden bench, and hit up Old Town Farm's recently added bike repair station if your ride is in need of a tune-up.

4. Insider's Tip



At a quality grocery like Nob Hill's La Montañita, find fresh chiles you'll be able to transport home without sacrificing flavor.

(Photo: Courtesy of La Montañita Co-op)

Any trip to Albuquerque will leave even those with the weakest spice thresholds with a yen for green chilies. For those who plan accordingly, it's possible to enjoy them at home, as fresh as they'd be just off the grill. Purchase the peppers from a high-quality grocery like **La Montañita** co-op in Nob Hill, which sells a couple of varieties of peeled frozen peppers out of season (\$7–\$14), and whole raw chilies, as well as peeled and vacuum-packed ones in season (prices vary). Should you opt to take fresh chilies home, Jim Garcia, the VP of beloved restaurant Sadie's of New Mexico, recommends poking fork holes in the whole peppers and blistering them in a broiler or over an open flame, then putting them into a plastic bag to "sweat," before peeling them under cold running water. Then slice lengthwise and remove the seeds and stem, for a souvenir you can freeze or serve right away.

5. Oddball Day



Hop aboard a tram to the top of Sandia Peak.
(Photo: Courtesy of Sandia Peak Ski & Tram)

Set aside your bike to explore Albuquerque's history and heights. Begin your day with a Native American–style breakfast of atole, blue corn porridge with dried fruit, (\$6.99) at the **Harvest Café**, part of the **Indian Pueblo Cultural Center**. Then tour the museum (\$3–\$6) to learn about some of Albuquerque's earliest residents via displays of ceramics, jewelry, and other handicrafts from each of the 19 Pueblo villages. Afterwards, set off for a ride of a different kind up **Sandia Peak** (so-called because the sunset hitting its half-moon-shaped slope colors it red like a watermelon, *sandia* in Spanish). Once the **Sandia Peak Tramway** (\$12–\$20) drops you at the top, wander and take in the two-mile-high views of the surrounding mountains and starkly flat valley below. Grab lunch at the cheekily named **High Finance**, a fine-dining restaurant in the evening but a casual lunch spot by day; try the green chile stew (\$6–\$8) or the Albuquerque Turkey sandwich (\$10), made with green chile, pepper jack, and avocado. Back down the mountain, jaunt over to Albuquerque's Old Town, founded in 1706 and still populated by quaint flat-roofed adobe houses (now converted into shops and restaurants). Skip the kitschy souvenir stores, and instead poke into historic marvels like the **San Felipe de Neri Church** (the oldest building in the city, dating back to 1793), with its two spires and soaring white interior decorated with colorful religious artwork; or the pocket-size, arty **Chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe**. Built in the 1970s as a place for students of a nearby art school to pray, it features several funky art installations, including a stained-glass lunar calendar. End the day with dinner at **Sadie's of New Mexico**, a local institution that celebrated its 60th birthday this year. Gorge on chips and Sadie's famous salsa, which runs from mild to four-alarm, and order the house special, beef enchiladas with red or green chile (\$13.57) along with a crisp Gold Margarita, made with Patron (\$9).

6. Links

The Albuquerque Convention and Visitors' Bureau offers helpful trip-planning help at www.itsatrip.org.

The "**New Mexico Travel**" section of the Albuquerque *Journal* features coverage of dining, culture, outdoor activities, and more in ABQ and the rest of the state.

Toggle over to ABQ365.com for a daily event calendar highlighting unique and fun things to do around town, as well as a blog with newsy updates.