



WRITING SAMPLE

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Family Trip: Snow Leopard Days

By Gretchen Heber

Albuquerque might not get as much attention as its illustrious neighbor to the north, Santa Fe, but this handsome and sunny city should definitely be more than just a pit stop on your way to other destinations in The Land of Enchantment. This city of more than half a million residents in the northern tip of the Chihuahuan Desert is home to artists, outdoor enthusiasts and a stretch of the fabled Route 66. Visitors also enjoy the area's legendary cuisine, a mashup of Native American and Mexican with European influences.

The city that boasts almost endless sunshine is a hospitable place to visit any time of year, and travelers who visit at the end of June might be happy to attend the area's 15th Annual Pork & Brew festival, a three-day extravaganza of barbeque, beer, music and general revelry. Held at the Santa Ana Star Center in Albuquerque suburb Rio Rancho, the festival is expected to attract 15,000 revelers from June 29 through July 1. Music, old west-style skits and watermelon- and pie-eating contests are among the attractions at this festival. And when stomachs are filled to capacity with brisket, ribs, chicken, shaved ice and more, visitors might enjoy browsing local arts and crafts, or watching the kids jump in bouncy houses. Face painting will be also available to youngsters who want to add a little sparkle and color to their appearance before venturing over to the petting zoo or to the pig races. For more information, visit <http://www.riorancho.org/142/Pork-Brew>

Hot Air Ballooning

Where: All around Albuquerque

Phone: World Balloon: (505) 293-6800; Rainbow Ryders: (505) 823-1111

Website: <https://www.worldballoon.com/>; <https://www.rainbowryders.com/>

Albuquerque is famous for the spectacular October display of colorful hot air balloons that punctuate the blue sky, but visitors at other times of the year can enjoy awe-inspiring balloon rides from any of a number of vendors that offer rides to tourists. Various balloon companies offer champagne flights, balloon weddings and even team-building rides, which may come in handy if the family is in vacation-induced meltdown mode.

Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway

Where: 30 Tramway Road N.E.
Phone: (505) 856-7325
Website: <http://www.sandiapeak.com/>

If ballooning isn't your thing, consider reveling in breathtaking views from the 2.7-mile Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway, a 60-person tram that lifts passengers 4,000 feet over vast canyons and verdant mountains. Upon arrival at the 10,378-foot Sandia Peak, riders can take in spectacular vistas of the city and Cibola National Forest with an 11,000 square-mile panoramic view of the Rio Grande Valley. Wintertime visitors ride the tramway to access a cozy ski area that offers beginner and intermediate skiers long, cruising runs.

ARTSCrawl

Where: All over town
Phone: 505-244-0362
Website: <http://artscrawlalbq.org/>

On the first Friday of every month, experience Albuquerque's dynamic art scene by taking a self-guided gallery walking tour. You'll see exhibit openings and demonstrations as well as enjoy receptions and special events. Download a list of participating member galleries, and use the list and gallery map to plan your own custom tour. Works in a variety of media from artists in Albuquerque, New Mexico and beyond is featured in dozens of galleries. You'll see paintings, ceramics, jewelry, scarves and wood carvings.

ABQ BioPark

Where: 903 10th St. S.W.
Phone: 505-768-2000
Website: abqbiopark.com

The ABQ BioPark offers more than 100 acres of exploration — including a zoo, botanical garden, aquarium and fishing area. The zoo offers glimpses of and education about more than 300 native and exotic animal species. Visitors to the botanical garden enjoy 1.5 miles of walking paths, a 10,000 sq. ft. glass conservatory, a butterfly pavilion, a heritage farm and Japanese and Fantasy gardens. The aquarium features a 85,000 gallon shark tank and numerous other exhibits. Tingley Beach offers guests the opportunity to fish, boat, picnic and hike.

Golf

Where: Several courses around town
Website: <https://www.visitalbuquerque.org/things-to-do/outdoors/golf/>

Several top-notch golf courses beckon players looking for award-winning links with unbeatable scenery. For example, consider Paa-Ko Ridge Golf Club, one of 17 in America awarded a 5-star rating by readers of Golf Digest. Sitting on the eastern side of the Sandia mountains, its moderately high elevation range of 6,500 to 7,000 feet means its summertime high temperatures are a bit cooler and more comfortable than courses at lower elevations. That's not to say golfers should discount the city's other fine courses, which include Twin Warriors Golf Club, Isleta Eagle Golf Course, Sandia Golf Club and Santa Ana Golf Club.

Petroglyph National Monument

Where: Western Trail NW

Phone: (505) 899-0205 x 335

Website: <https://www.nps.gov/petr/index.htm>

In less than a quarter hour's drive from Albuquerque, visitors can find themselves transported hundreds of years into the past at Petroglyph National Monument. This 7,244-acre monument is one of the largest petroglyph sites in North America and protects designs and symbols carved into volcanic rocks 400 to 700 years ago by Native Americans and Spanish settlers. Visitors can access four major sites within the monument: Rinconada, Boca Negra and Piedras Marcadas canyons, and the Volcano Day Use trails. There, they will see images of humans, animals, cattle brands and other designs, many of which hold spiritual significance for Native American and descendants of early Spanish settlers.