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Albuquerque Travel International Travel Examiner



What's hip and fun and not even international?

October 28, 9:31 AM International Travel Examiner Rita Cook



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Ballooning in Albuquerque

What's hip, fun and the place to be these days? Well, if you said the bustling little city of Albuquerque, New Mexico you'd be right. In fact, Albuquerque is so cool that people are moving there in droves, but for now, check it out on a visit and discover why the locals are trying to keep this place a secret (or, at least sort of anyway). Everyone's heard of the big balloon festival in Albuquerque held every year so no need to go into that (except to say it's amazing). You can also go ballooning when the festival is not going on

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(www.rainbowryders.com), early in the morning, while enjoying breathtaking views of not only the Sandia Mountains (Sandia means watermelon in Spanish), but also the Rio Grande Valley. After landing there is breakfast and champagne to toast your memorable adventure. Take the time to enjoy Petroglyph National Monument. Highlights of this excursion include views of the 17-mile-long table of land that is the West Mesa with over 20,000 prehistoric and Indian images etched into the stone thousands of years ago. You can hike several trails depending on how much you want to see. While I was there I got more than I bargained for seeing a small rattlesnake, probably as scared of me as I was of it before I went running. Once you've had enough of the great outdoors consider taking a salsa lesson at the Ballet Repertory Theatre (www.btrnm.org). We spent a few hours and while I discovered I probably won't be chosen for Dancing with the Stars, I had a good time and came away with three dance steps that I also taught my husband.

For those real adventure seekers a glider plane experience is a must while in Albuquerque. Sundance Aviation (www.soardance.com) will take you up for a ride and it's just you and the wind as the plane utilizes the naturally occurring vertical air current in the atmosphere climbing to as high as 18,000 feet.

In the evening one trip you won't want to miss is the trolley tour along Route 66. The trolley company, called ABQ Trolley (www.abqtrolley.com) has been around a few years and offers a 66-minute, 18 mile tour. An open air trolley, the owners say it is completely custom and unique to the city.

If you like heights then make sure you take some time to experience the Sandia Peak Tramway (www.sandiapeak.com). Sitting above the Cibola National Forest with an elevation of 10,378 feet on the way to the top enjoy the breathtaking views. Interesting fact too, the Eiffel Tower could fit into the valley beneath. The Sandia is a landscape that is such a part of the city you won't want to miss it from this vantage point, and with 2.7-miles you will see exactly what the local love so much. Finally, before leaving Albuquerque be sure and stroll in the Old Town area for a few hours. Founded in 1706 you can relax under the trees and people watch or shop at one of over 100 stores and galleries in the plaza.

Good Eats:

Kelly's Brew Pub
3222 Central Avenue, SE
505-262-2739
www.kellysbrewpub.com

It's a classic Route 66 diner and local hotspot and comes with free wifi.

KISS (Keep it Simple Stupid) Coffee
404 San Felipe, NW, Suite C-5
505-243-3033
www.nmkeepitcoffee.com

Eco-friendly and in the heart of Old Town – you will also find some great local art to admire or collect.

Scalo
www.
3500 Central SE
505-255-8781
Italian just like in Italy and the owner knows his wine.

El Pinto
10500 4th Street, NW
505-898-1771
www.elpinto.com
Since 1962 this family-owned affair has not only sold some of the best food in town, but there's a salsa factory too.

Where to Stay:

Embassy Suites
1000 Woodward Place
505-245-7100
www.albuquerque.embassysuites.com

Take the time for a spa treatment here too, choose from a variety of options

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