

# Rocking with the aliens in Roswell

By Karen Tina Harrison  
Special to amNewYork

New Mexico is very groovy, with its cultural mix of Wild West, Native American and New Age. But the Roadrunner State is also just plain weird. As in aliens.

The Vatican of the "we are not alone" faith is Roswell in southeastern New Mexico, roughly three hours from Albuquerque, Santa Fe or El Paso. Believers congregate annually at the Roswell UFO Festival, this year from July 5-8.

Roswell's claim to infamy is the July 1947 "Roswell Incident" in which an alien spaceship with several extraterrestrials aboard crashed on a nearby ranch. Skeptical? One spellbinding visit to the Roswell UFO Museum will convince you.

No matter the craft you arrive in, Roswell is a cool small town of 50,000. Main Street flaunts some of the



The Roswell UFO Museum tells the gory story of the 1947 "Roswell incident."

(Adline UFOTO)

country's best vintage neon signs, many for funky motels where you can, um, crash for \$30 a night. Restaurants serve terrific green chili stew and chicken-fried steak. Sights to see include the Gothic campus of New Mexico Military Institute and the porticoed

## My Getaway

mansions in the hundred-year-old historic district.

A must-do is fabled Carlsbad Caverns National Park an hour south, sort of an underground city of rock. Don't miss the bat flight in

early evening, when hundreds of thousands of bats swoop out of the cave en masse.

Bats are spooky business as usual around here. Even Roswellians' names are strange. The rancher who runs a tour of the alien crash site is called Hub Corn.

## If you go

**Roswell UFO Museum**  
www.roswellufomuseum.com  
800-822-3545  
Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors and \$2 for children.

**Roswell UFO Festival**  
The festival is from July 5-8. It's free and open to the public.  
888-ROSREST  
www.roswellufofestival.com

**New Mexico Military Institute**  
101 W. College Blvd.  
Roswell, N.M.  
505-622-6250  
www.nmmi.com

**Carlsbad Caverns**  
877-444-6777  
www.nps.gov/cave  
Admission is \$6 for adults, children 15 and under free.

did. One night a few Septembers ago, my husband Richard and I were driving back to Roswell after an afternoon at Ruidoso Downs racetrack. It was dusk and something strange was going on. Way up in the clouds south of Roswell, a patch of sky pulsed with bright light, glowing orange every seven seconds. Wasn't a plane. Wasn't a weather balloon. Was a Close Encounter of the First Kind (visual contact).

The next day I walked into Roswell's newspaper office, burning with questions. People shrugged. "Lady, this is Roswell," someone drawled. "Things like that just happen here."

If there's any doubt that Roswell is so not normal, the fact remains that the Hilton family patriarch, Conrad Hilton, grew up here. Yep, Paris could be a Roswell alien, too.

Roswell's official historian is named Elvis Fleming, and the town tourism guy, Dusty Huckabee, describes himself as "a Roswell alien born nine months after July 1947."

If you're really lucky, you'll have a UFO sighting. I

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## Venice fed up with tourists

Officials in Venice — as well as the handful of Italians still living in the lagoon city — have declared themselves fed up with a certain category of tourist: The potbellied, bare-chested, food-chomping, trash-spewing hordes that peak between now and autumn.

To combat what they see as a scourge, Venice authorities are distributing leaflets and posting signs with a new set of rules. In St. Mark's Square, it is now forbidden to sit or recline under the porticos and on the steps along the Procuratie Nuove and the Ala Napoleonica, the buildings that ring the iconic square. And don't even think of stopping alongside the Doge's Palace to nibble a panino, a gelato or any other snack. "It is forbidden to stop to eat or drink anywhere other than at tables set out by public restaurants," the leaflet says. "It is forbidden to litter or leave behind wastepaper, cans, bottles and any other type of solid or liquid waste." Even the sale of takeout food, a staple for tourists, is being banned around St. Mark's Square. The trash, pizza crusts and pigeon excrement that coat



Venitians don't want this gaudy tourists littering their beautiful landscape. (iStockphoto)

the square are of particular concern to city officials and others who maintain that the rubbish is ruining the site, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. "I've been saying for some time that drastic measures are required," Augusto Salvadori, a senior tourism official, told the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera. The struggle over rules

reflects the dilemma for popular tourist magnets. Communities crave and rely on tourist dollars, but at some point they feel overrun by the very visitors they've courted. Such is certainly the case in Venice, where at times crowds are so thick that it's difficult to move through the city's winding streets.

(Los Angeles Times)