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# Amazing Graces

IN A SANTA FE INN, POWDER DAYS MEET ARABIAN NIGHTS



BY MEGAN MILLER

WITH ITS ADOBE BUILDINGS, CHILE-SPIKED CUISINE, AND resident coyotes, Santa Fe, New Mexico, doesn't much seem like a ski town. But this is no scorching desert outpost: Unbeknownst to all but an adventurous few, Santa Fe boasts one of the best winters in North America, with ample snowfall, frosty temperatures, and the intoxicating scent of piñon smoke wafting from kiva fireplaces. Nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains at an elevation of 7,000 feet, the nation's oldest (and highest) capital city serves up the perfect combination of crisp air, sunny skies, and proximity to world-class slopes. And tucked within its storied streets is the Inn of the Five Graces\* — a feast of exuberant décor from the far reaches of Asia and hands-down the best place to enjoy the bounties of the Southwest winter.

This boutique hotel is the labor of love of Ira Seret,\* founding owner of the design firm Seret and Sons, whose vast, Alhambra-like store is a local institution. Seret is the genius behind the elegant yet bohemian "Santa Fe-sian" trend, in which Spanish and Native American handi-crafts are combined with textiles and furnishings from Central and South Asia. It is a marriage made in design heaven: Indian woodwork, dhurry and kilim rugs, suzanis from Uzbekistan, and other exotic

accoutrements all work beautifully with the adobe walls and wood floors that are standard issue in Santa Fe.

You might come across Ira during your visit to the Five Graces, but it's more likely you'll meet his son, Sharif, who has lived his life enveloped in the Seret design aesthetic and now runs the hotel's day-to-day operations. Ask nicely, and Sharif or one of the gracious staffers might give you a tour, pointing out fascinating details around every corner: a chunk of carved wood from an ancient mosque here, a 16th-century marble remnant from India there, and all around, textiles in layers of color and texture.

The service at the hotel is as remarkable as the surroundings. Guests are treated to a bountiful breakfast, wine-and-cheese receptions and an on-call concierge who can arrange everything from hard-to-get dinner reservations to ski tours of the backcountry. Spa treatments take place in front of a crackling fire in an 18th-century house in the Five Graces compound or in the guest rooms.

But the most remarkable thing about Five Graces might be its location. Beyond the many charms of downtown lies the terrific and underrated Santa Fe Ski Basin — where a new chairlift now takes skiers to 12,075 feet, some of the highest terrain you'll find outside Colorado — and the challenging steeps of Taos are just an hour away.

From tackling virgin powder to relaxing amid the splendor of Asia, Five Graces is an Arabian palace set in a winter wonderland, the stuff jet-setter dreams are made of. ●

The Luminaria House suite welcomes visitors with details fit for a sheik: intricate tile mosaics, richly patterned textiles, and antique hand-carved furnishings.

