

The wild Southwest

Beloved for its adobe architecture, world-class arts scene and distinctive style, Santa Fe has earned a perennial place in the sun.

AMAZING GRACE

An intricately embellished Premium Junior Suite at The Inn of the Five Graces. Opposite: the central courtyard at Georgia O'Keeffe's Abiquiá home, north of the city.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT DUTILE



NUEVO WAVE

A common room at Rosewood Inn. Clockwise from above: chilli ristra at Five Graces; its Luminaria Villa, with a living room and kitchen; an elegant nook at Geronimo restaurant.



Santa Fe is where tradition meets innovation in the high-desert light. Instantly recognisable for its adobe façades and ornate churches, its chilli-fuelled cuisine and turquoise jewellery, the multifaceted city entices collectors, creators, gourmets and discerning travellers alike. What distinguishes Santa Fe isn't a single look but a synthesis of winning elements: centuries-old buildings, contemporary institutions and the spectacular landscapes – the Rio Grande Valley and the southern Rockies – on its doorstep for nature forays.

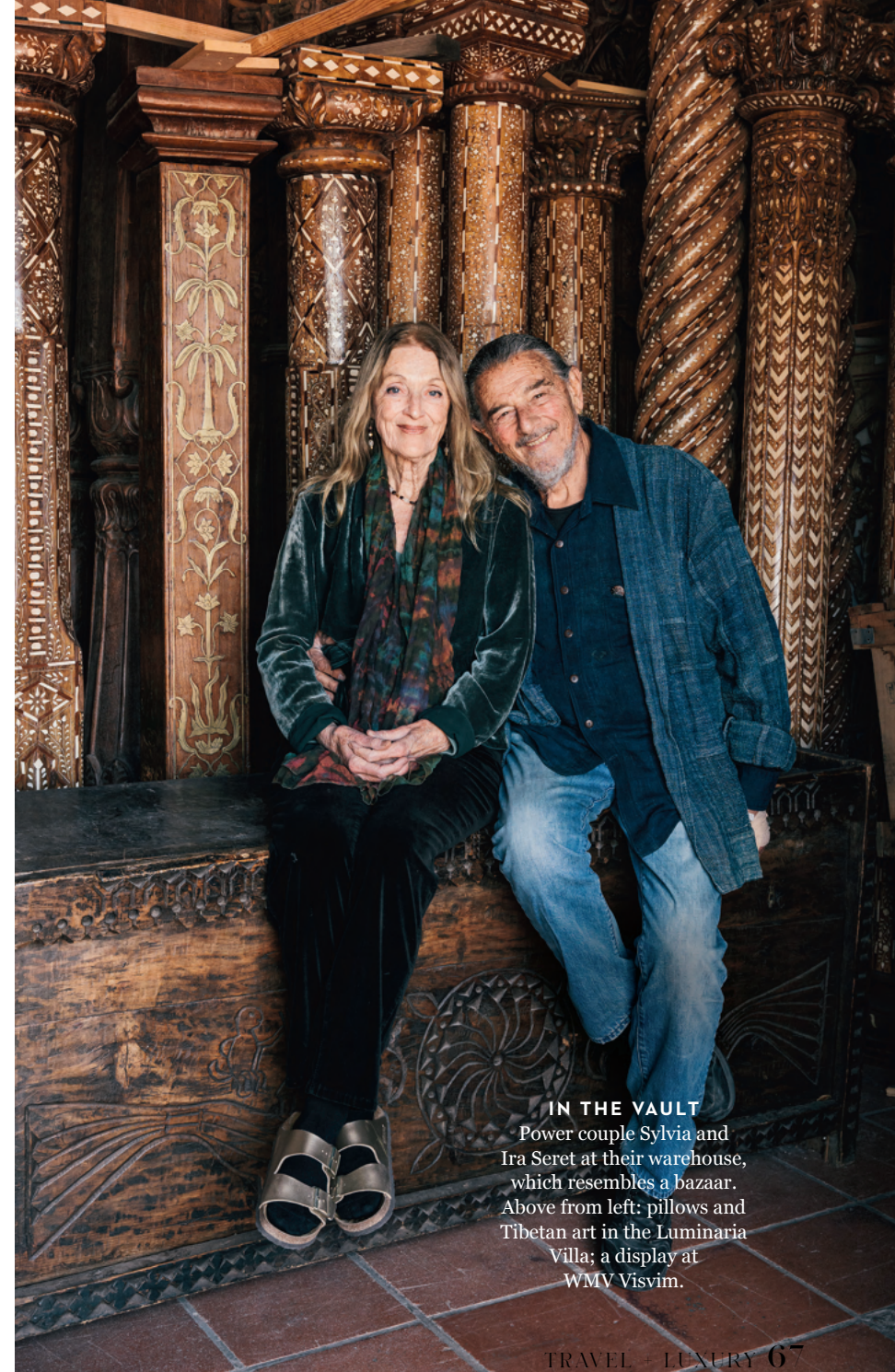
Founded as a Spanish colony in 1610, the capital of New Mexico has blossomed into one of America's most unique cities, a beguiling mixture of Native American, Hispanic and Anglo influences. For a place with only 90,000 residents, it pulsates with the energy of a cultural epicentre. Artists have long gravitated here, perhaps none as revered as Georgia O'Keeffe, who said of her adopted home, "I'd never seen anything like it before, but it fitted to me exactly." These days there are more than 250 art galleries, starry museums and a year-round calendar of shows to see.

The city offers visitors an energetic artisanry scene informed by living Indigenous and Hispanic craft traditions – pottery, weaving, silverwork – rather than trends alone. Among the most notable design-minded stays, some layer Southwestern codes with Central Asian flourishes, while others riff on desert minimalism. Its dining options are equally tempting, with spice-driven plates composed with the same finesse you see in Canyon Road's galleries or in the revamped Railyard district. "Santa Fe has a soulfulness and groundedness," says interior designer Heather French. Its aesthetic appeal is boundless.

ULTIMATE CRASH PADS

The Inn of the Five Graces: This maximalist lodging, the brainchild of designers Ira and Sylvia Seret (who also helm an acclaimed design store specialising in goods sourced in Central and South Asia), is akin to an elegant caravanserai. Behind their adobe façades, the 25 rooms reveal an evocative mix of Afghan rugs, Tibetan furnishings and carved wooden doors from India. The Adobe Rose suite, for instance, is decked out with an indigo patchwork sofa, glinting mosaic bathrooms and Peruvian prayer blankets. The Luminaria Villa is a three-bedroom cabin complete with a cathedral ceiling and a glass sculpture by Dale Chihuly. Later this year, the property will unveil four additional suites inside a series of historical former residences. Five Graces is in the Barrio de Analco, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the US. thefivegraces.com

Rosewood Inn of the Anasazi: Set in the heart of downtown Santa Fe, and named after the ancient civilisation that built the region's cliff dwellings, this 58-key retreat is faithful to the Southwestern vernacular. Native American textiles, New Mexican paintings and Pendleton blankets abound. Cosy rooms feature eggshell-white walls, wooden-beam ceilings and kiva fireplaces. But it's the considered touches that really elevate the experience, like the humidifiers



IN THE VAULT

Power couple Sylvia and Ira Seret at their warehouse, which resembles a bazaar. Above from left: pillows and Tibetan art in the Luminaria Villa; a display at WMV Visvim.



PLAYING WITH FIRE
A renovated dining room at The Pink Adobe. Clockwise from left: its fiery dish of Clams Lucifer; interior designers Matt and Heather French at Shiprock; the bar at La Reina; Navajo textiles and rugs at Shiprock.



and bar carts in each one, the stacked stone waterfall in the lobby and impeccable service at every turn. Guests can saddle up to the bar for a signature Silver Coin Margarita, or premium tequila tastings guided by an expert. The stay is centrally located a few steps from Santa Fe Plaza. rosewoodhotels.com

Terrace Inn at La Fonda: Referred to by locals as “Santa Fe’s Living Room”, La Fonda’s history is inextricably tied to that of the city. The hotel sits on the site of Santa Fe’s earliest inn, established by Spaniards in 1607, with its current structure dating from 1922. It’s a hub of handpainted glass, iron fixtures and more than 1,200 artworks, with guided tours available. The real gem is the hotel within the hotel, the Terrace Inn, fashioned two years ago. Its 15 rooms are on the sixth floor with Navajo, Pueblo and Hispanic touches and cinematic terrace views. The Cathedral Basilica of St Francis of Assisi rears up in one direction and the Loretto Chapel in the opposite. The Bell Tower Bar is a popular spot to admire the fiery orange sunsets that suffuse the sky. lafondasantafe.com

DINING AND DRINKING

Geronimo: Elegant, consistent and frequently awarded, this is an essential restaurant. The intimate dining space unfolds in an 18th-century residence enlivened with studded leather chairs, antler chandeliers and kiva fireplaces. Executive chef Sllin Cruz expertly folds together elements from New Mexico, East Asia and the Mediterranean, calling his approach “global eclectic”. That could mean ahi tuna tartare with buttermilk pancakes, teriyaki-marinated salmon and exquisitely prepared crab dumplings. geronimorestaurant.com

The Pink Adobe: This eatery has delighted tastebuds with Cajun and New Mexican cuisine since 1944. In 2022, the Serets acquired the rose-hued restaurant and revitalised it with fresh dining spaces, speakeasy Bar Analco and a retrooled Dragon Room, an adjoining zone once frequented by Robert Redford and Georgia O’Keeffe. Chef Mario Espinosa Torres is interested in striking up a dialogue between Mexican and New Mexican flavours. “I want to honour the menu favourites, but bring modern elements and balance to each dish,” he says. Be sure to sample the aptly named Clams Lucifer, a devilish chowder. thepinkadobe.com

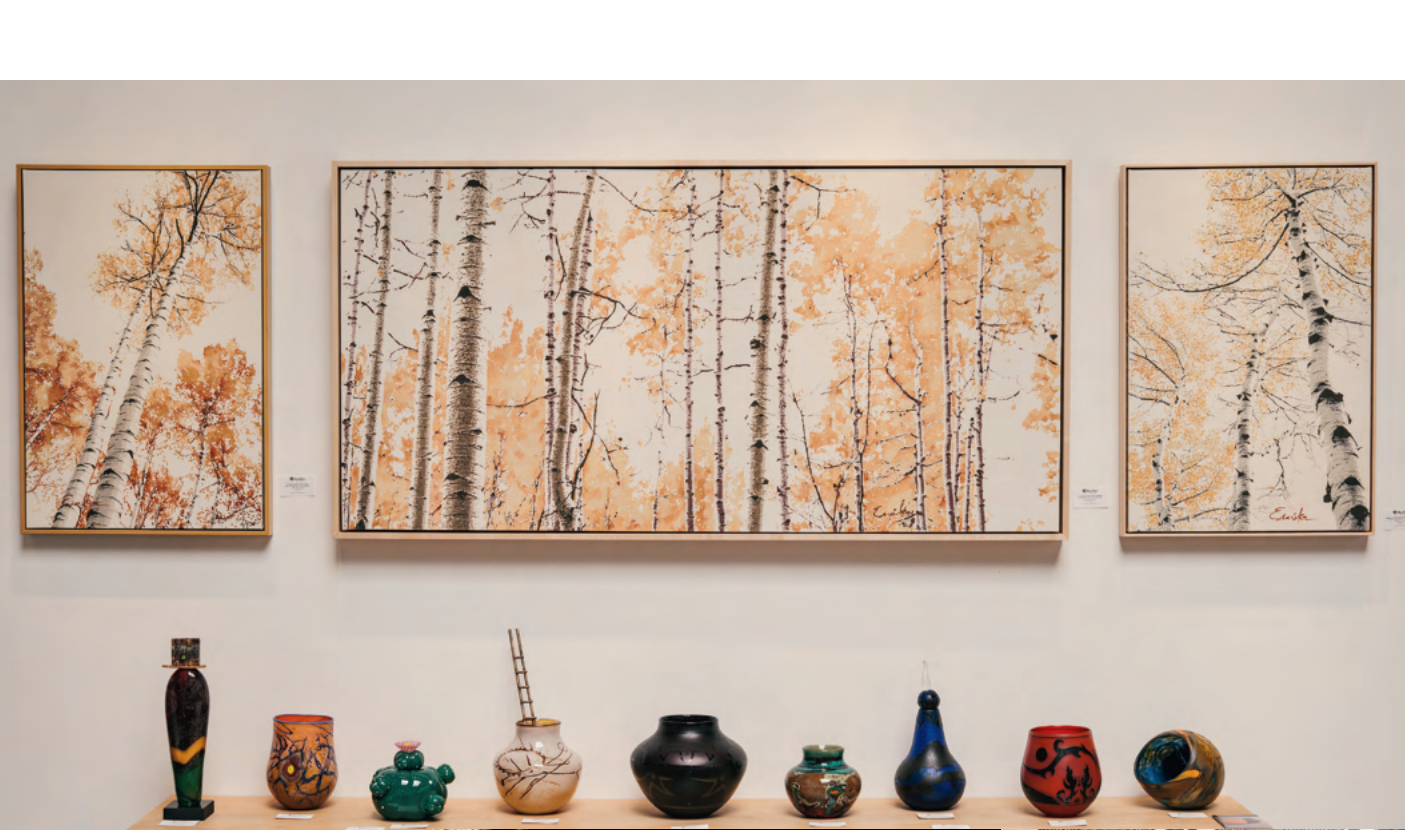
Leo’s: An homage to Leo CdeBaca, who operated a gas station in the space for more than six decades, Leo’s is a collaboration between designer Jonathan Boyd and chef Zak Pelaccio. Every inch has been deftly crafted by Boyd, whose woodwork shines in each door, oak tabletop and walnut bar stool. Pelaccio, with executive chef Stella Achenbach, turns out remarkably good Thai- and Malay-inspired cuisine. The five-course tasting menu includes fried chicken with jiao chilli sauce, papaya and mango salad, and rice noodles flecked with pork belly. leosantafe.com

Tia Sophia’s: A legend with both locals and tourists, this classic eatery is home to heart-warming service – and even warmer chillies as its menu warns. This is the spot to savour New Mexico’s famously hot “Christmas” sauce. Picture a perfect red-green line atop its breakfast burrito, a signature dish for brunch or lunch; the venue is not open for dinner service. The casual diner also serves



MIXED MEDIA
The living room of the Adobe Rose suite at Five Graces. Clockwise from below: the art-filled lobby of the Rosewood Inn; its Anasazi Bar; a Deluxe King room at the hotel; the bar at La Reina.





CLAY TUNED
Acoma ceramics at Andrea Fisher. Clockwise from left: a “Mother Earth” turtle necklace by Kenneth Johnson; his gem-studded link bracelet; the jeweller outside his studio; San Miguel Chapel; paintings by Eunika Rogers at Blue Rain Gallery; view from a room at the Terrace Inn.

excellent enchiladas, cheese-stuffed chillies and addictive deep-fried pastries known as sopapillas. [facebook.com/tiasophias](https://www.facebook.com/tiasophias)

La Reina: Attached to the El Rey Court Hotel south of the Railyard district, this ultra-hip watering hole is known for its convivial vibe and its polished menu of agave-based cocktails. Settle in with a Margarita made with sotol (the spirit is distilled from dasylirion plants) at the lounge that features live music every Wednesday and Sunday, or opt for mezcal flights guided by the knowledgeable bartenders at the countertop. [elreycourt.com](https://www.elreycourt.com)

SHOPPING AND COLLECTING

Shiprock: This is Santa Fe’s leading repository of antique rugs and blankets, turquoise rings and polychromatic Pueblo ceramics. These are museum-worthy pieces that require investment. Stacks of pre-1950 Navajo textiles range from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands. I picked up a treasured 1940s Navajo weave, now resting prettily under my living room coffee table. Eagle-eyed curator Jed Foutz also hosts painting, photography and sculpture exhibitions by living artists. [shiprockSantaFe.com](https://www.shiprockSantaFe.com)

Seret & Sons: The warehouse and workshop of Ira and Sylvia Seret is a glorious temple of textiles, furnishings and decorative elements that evoke the Silk Road in its heyday. Among the colourful wares are Tibetan cabinets, Afghan dhurries and the most splendid silk suzanis from Uzbekistan. The visionary couple opened their first showroom in 1981, settling on their present location eight years later. From their studio they create upholstered sofas, headboards, chaises and benches, with shipping available worldwide. [seretandsons.com](https://www.seretandsons.com)

Andrea Fisher Fine Pottery: Trading since 1993, this is the definitive place to shop for Native American ceramics from living artists. Works from the Acoma Pueblo, a Native American settlement, are particularly striking: their thin walls are sculpted from slate-like clay and their exteriors are daubed with arresting patterns and mystical figures. I snagged a whimsical handpainted seed pot by artist Carolyn Lewis-Concho. [andreaFisherPottery.com](https://www.andreaFisherPottery.com)

Living Threads: Teresa Robinson and her husband, Eric Mindling, whose photography of Oaxacan Indigenous communities lines the walls, source standout wares from around the globe: goat-leather baskets from Argentina, Norlha yak scarves from Tibet and handmade pottery from Mexico. The store’s quilted indigo coats from Japan are another highlight. [livingthreads.org](https://www.livingthreads.org)

Santa Fe Vintage: This appointment-only showroom is the holy grail for vintage Levi’s, French workwear and enough cowboy boots to fill a honky-tonk in Nashville. Owner Teo Griscom has amassed American clothing and art for more than 30 years. “The vintage hunting bug struck me hard,” she told me. Her store is a hive of collecting activity. [santaFeVintage.com](https://www.santaFeVintage.com)



GO SPIRAL
The “Miraculous Staircase” of the Loretto Chapel. Clockwise from left: its Gothic Revival façade; memorabilia at Santa Fe Vintage; indigo-dyed boro coat at Living Threads.





ON THE TILES
Mosaic bathroom of the Adobe Rose suite at Five Graces. Clockwise from below: bedside numbers at O’Keeffe’s Abiquiú home; dramatic formations of the Colorado Plateau; cattle skulls at Bosshard Gallery; antique Navajo silver wares at Shiprock.



WMV Visvim: Japanese designer Hiroki Nakamura’s first North American outpost features his conceptual women’s line, artfully arranged alongside screen art and indigo Navajo blankets – a partnership with Native weavers. Visitors can also browse wool and linen blend Academia jackets, hand-sewn Goodyear welt boots, and an abundance of denim outerwear. visvim.tv

Kenneth Johnson Studio: Native American jeweller Kenneth Johnson has crafted shimmering wares for everyone from Supreme Court judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg to British baroness Emma Nicholson. Made from precious metals, gemstones, bronze and carved stone, Johnson’s adornments are replete with symbology. A turtle represents Mother Earth, while a canoe paddle “transits the world above and below the water”, he says. Showstopping pieces include a stone-studded link bracelet fit for a soigné regent. kennethjohnson.com

Blue Rain Gallery: A series of paintings by Eunika Rogers – created by applying wet clay onto unprimed canvas – caught my eye at this smart curation of Native American artists. Equally dazzling are ceramics by Tammy Garcia and expressive glass works by Preston Singletary, whose delicate explorations of Tlingit culture can also be found in collections as esteemed as the British Museum in London. blueraingallery.com

SIGHTS TO SEE

Historic District: Downtown revolves around the adobe-lined Santa Fe Plaza. On the north side is the Palace of the Governors built in 1610. Under its portico, artists from the 23 federally recognised tribes of New Mexico sell high-quality souvenirs. South of the plaza is Loretto Chapel, home of the so-called “Miraculous Staircase”, assembled only with wooden pegs in 1878. A block south is the San Miguel Chapel, whose original structure dates back to 1610.

Georgia O’Keeffe Museum: The oft-described mother of American Modernism drew major inspiration from the dramatic landscapes of northern New Mexico, particularly those around her homes in Abiquiú and Ghost Ranch. This museum in town houses a collection of 140 of her arresting, mostly abstract paintings, as well as nearly 700 drawings. okeeffemuseum.org

Museum of International Folk Art: Located on Museum Hill, this institution holds the largest collection of international folk art in the world, with over 130,000 pieces from more than 100 countries. The soaring line-up is thanks to a gift from prolific collectors Alexander and Susan Girard. The quirky dioramas, assembled by Girard himself, are on permanent display in the exhibition Multiple Visions: A Common Bond. moifa.org

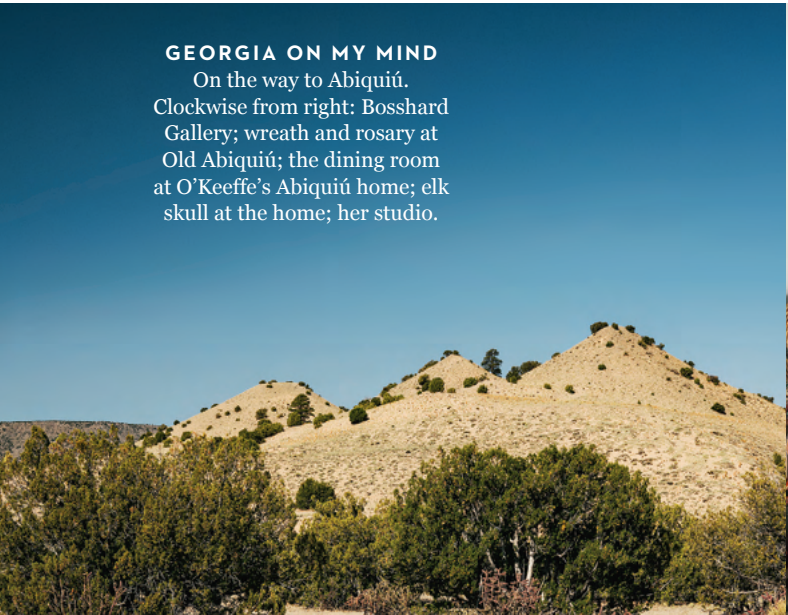
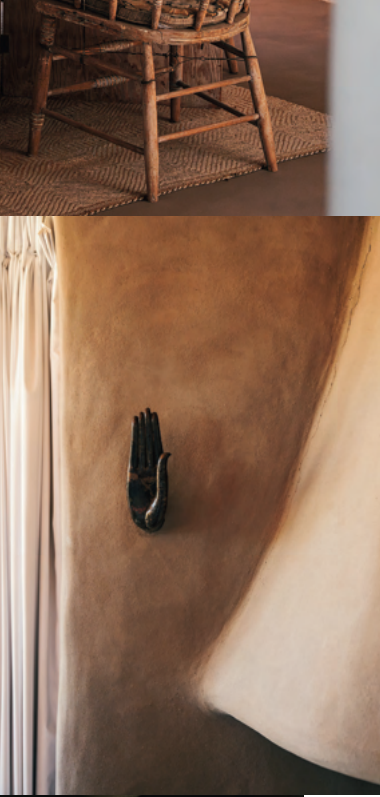
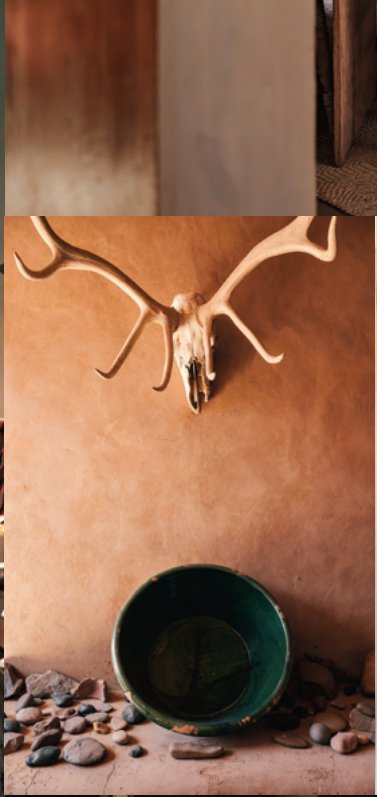
ESSENTIAL EXCURSIONS

Georgia O’Keeffe’s home and studio: If the best way to know someone is to step inside their home, then a visit to the legendary artist’s Abiquiú abode is a revelation. An hour north of Santa Fe, the residence is preserved much as O’Keeffe left it in 1984, when she relocated to the city for health reasons. She died two years later. The space is shockingly and intriguingly minimal, decorated with other artists’ sparse pieces, including a Noguchi Akari light and a plywood table, as well as rocks, bones and simple furniture. Early reservations are vital. okeeffemuseum.org

Ghost Ranch: The majestic setting at O’Keeffe’s summer residence – with geological formations over 200 million years old – triggered many of her most famous works. Today, there are two small museums open to visitors, as well as hiking, horse riding and palaeontology tours. ghostranch.org

Bosshard Gallery: Near O’Keeffe’s home, John Bosshard has assembled a cavernous collection of antiques from around Southeast Asia, Africa and the Southwest in a 19th-century general merchandise building. Look for Hopi Kachina figures, Navajo blankets and Pueblo pottery in one section, and Buddhist statues, cabinetry and furniture in another. bosshardgallery

Plaza Blanca: The “White Place” is known for its pale and poetic sandstone formations that straddle the divide between the Rio Grande Rift and the red-hued Colorado Plateau. Travellers must register for a code to access the site’s parking lot, and take care to stay on the paths to avoid damaging the fragile structures. Heritage Inspirations leads guided day trips from the Five Graces to the geological wonder, along with hikes through Ghost Ranch and visits to O’Keeffe’s home. daralislam.org; heritageinspirations.com 🏠



GEORGIA ON MY MIND

On the way to Abiquiú. Clockwise from right: Bosshard Gallery; wreath and rosary at Old Abiquiú; the dining room at O’Keeffe’s Abiquiú home; elk skull at the home; her studio.

