

PLACES WE LOVE TO SKI

SKI



SANTA FE

ARTICLE BY KERI BRIDGWATER | PHOTOGRAPHY
COURTESY OF TOURISM SANTA FE AND SKI SANTA FE

“FLAMENCO
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As Ponderosa pine gives way to aspen and Highway 475 turns into Hyde Park Road, at just over 10,000 feet, Ski Santa Fe appears in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Family-owned and operated since 1949, it remains one of New Mexico's most beloved resorts: close enough for a spontaneous powder morning, yet serious enough to reward a full ski day. And after the last chair, historic Santa Fe Plaza is just 30 minutes back down the hill. Quietly rivaling far larger resorts and with a peak elevation of 12,750 feet, early winter storms often stack snow before the holidays—over 23 inches fell before Christmas this season—and snow-making helps ensure terrain access across its 660 acres and 88 trails.

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SNOW, SEASONALITY & WHAT'S NEW

February, however, is widely considered the sweet spot. There's a strong season pass holder contingent, but Ski Santa Fe Director of Marketing, Eric Thompson, says total visitation is an almost fifty-fifty split between locals and visitors. “We have an incredible mix of terrain here from great groomers and glades to steepes if you're looking for those double black diamonds.” Skiable acres aside, a sense of community runs deep. “Working for an independently owned mom-and-pop type ski area is increasingly rare these days, but seeing the owner and family out skiing, saying hi, and talking with people, and everyone knows who they are. It goes a long way into building what we have.”

Recent infrastructure upgrades have tightened the experience, but growth is intentional. Ski Santa Fe's first new chairlift since 2005 (the \$6 million Leitner-Poma Santa Fe Express High-Speed Quad) debuted last season, cutting ride time to the top of the lower mountain to under five minutes. Upgraded and installed last summer, the Easy Street Chair now eases congestion on beginner terrain. Novices stick to learning zones with the Snow

Sports School and Chipmunk Corner Children's Center, and sunny afternoons favor corduroy blue cruisers, but fresh snow lures advanced skiers into the trees and steepes off Sunset Trail. “With the new chairlift, I like to lap the lower mountain early, so you'll find me on Thunderbird most powder mornings,” Thompson says. “Sunset Glade is another favorite, and Roadrunner delivers the best moguls,” he adds. Three terrain parks round out the mix, and one of the country's most liberal uphill policies welcomes back-country skiers and splitboarders. Events run throughout the season, and in February, ski mountaineering (Skimo) races feature demanding climbs and technical descents.

ON-MOUNTAIN APRÈS & BACK IN SANTA FE

At mid-mountain *après* favorite Totemoff's, the Ski Patrol Special (a red chile pork tamale in green chile stew) is a standout, local craft brews flow at the Tram Car Bar, and live music draws a crowd on weekends. Back down at the base, Baz Coffee Bar serves a welcome selection of warm drinks, and inside La Casa Lodge, its namesake café has ramen and sushi on the menu and hosts a barbecue pop-up

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on the deck. The lodge also doubles as a hub for lift tickets, ski and snowboard rentals, and skier services, including an adaptive ski program. Tickets can be purchased online and printed at kiosks with prices ranging from \$84 for a weekday afternoon half-day to \$96 on weekends.

When the lifts stop, Ski Santa Fe's greatest luxury reveals itself: downtown Santa Fe and an après scene unlike anywhere else in the West. The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum (whose reimagined space opens in 2027), Canyon Road galleries, and the Railyard Arts District delight art lovers. Along the self-guided Chocolate Trail, Kakawa Chocolate House pours historic sipping chocolates rooted in Mesoamerican traditions. Margarita Day on February 22 adds extra reason to explore the Margarita Trail, including a stop at Santa Fe icon The Pink Adobe. Flamenco fans should consider Teatro Paraguas' Winter Tablao, while the Jean Cocteau Cinema (owned by *Game of Thrones* creator George R. R. Martin) pairs indie films with themed cocktails. For a memorable meal, the elk tenderloin consistently garners rave reviews at Geronimo (located in one of the city's oldest adobe homes), and Chef Fernando Olea elegantly elevates regional Mexican flavors at Sazón. With high-elevation terrain and bluebird days effortlessly segueing into superlative art and dining, Ski Santa Fe proves the best ski towns aren't always slopeside, and the best powder days don't always end at base lodge.

Find out more at skisantafe.com.



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