



On the path of the original residents

Text by Steve Fuhlendorf

BACKGROUND FOR YOUR TOUR

There is evidence of inhabitants of the Taos Valley dating back about 9,000 years. The ancestors of today's Taos Pueblo Indians, known as the Anasazi, established cultures in Chaco Canyon, Salmon Ruins and Canyon de Chelly. There are many examples of American Indian inhabitation as you travel throughout the Taos area. When we think of Taos as an art colony, we should also think of the original artists who established Taos as a trading center long before Europeans set foot in the valley. In some areas you can still find pot shards and arrow heads left behind by the ancestors of today's residents of Taos and Picuris Pueblos. Join us as we visit a few of the sites where the history of the valley's original inhabitants is most evident. For more information, dates of feast days, celebrations and directions to the sites listed below, plus a room devoted to the history of the Taos Pueblo, stop by the Taos Visitor Center at 1139 Paseo del Pueblo Sur.

1. TAOS PUEBLO

TWO MILES EAST OF TAOS PLAZA

There remains a great deal of mystery to many aspects of the native life. Today's Taos Pueblo tribe holds its culture very dear. It is perhaps the most traditional of all the pueblo tribes. Many members of the pueblo community work tirelessly to instill in the younger generation a respect for the language and the traditional ceremonies. When visiting the Taos Pueblo there are matters of etiquette that must be followed. The Taos Pueblo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has been continuously inhabited for more than 1,000 years, making it one of the oldest such villages in the United States. The residents of the Taos Pueblo village live similarly to generation



Los Matachines dance at Taos Pueblo.

Rick Romancito

Today as you stroll through the site of the village you can still see the pot shards, remnants of a civilization that left carrying many secrets. Trail maps are available at the Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs hotel lobby. (Two hours +)
Information: 505-583-2233

3. POT CREEK

9 MILES SOUTH OF TAOS PLAZA ON STATE ROAD 518

In order to better understand today's American Indians it is helpful to experience their past. Pot Creek is an ancient Anasazi village site, in a beautiful setting at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The site, open from late June to early September, features a reconstruction of an early

Anasazi dwelling and remnants of the irrigation system that sustained the tribe's food supply. The area is now lush pine, juniper and cedar, but in the time of inhabitation this it was largely grassland. The elaborate irrigation system supported corn, squash and beans. The interpretive walking trail allows you a glimpse of a culture of centuries past. (One hour +)

Information: 505-587-2255

4. PICURIS PUEBLO

24 MILES SOUTHEAST OF TAOS VIA HIGHWAY 518 TO HIGHWAY 75

Picuris Pueblo is the smallest of the modern day pueblos, but is not small on charm or history. The church, San Lorenzo de Picuris, is more than 200 years old and is lovingly maintained by tribal members, having taken some 20 years to restore. Camera permits and tours of excavated historic sites are available. The tribe's buffalo herd is a source of great pride and future economic development. Picuris Pueblo recently won a long battle to maintain their access to the clay with which they create their sparkling mica-flecked pottery. (One hour +)

Information: 505-587-2519

upon generation of their ancestors. They use the Rio Pueblo, the stream which runs through the village plaza area, for their water supply and residents of the central buildings have no electricity. Many of the families that reside in the village choose to do so to honor their past and their traditions. It is important to remember the residents of the village should be treated with respect and the privacy of their homes should be also be respected. At various times of the year the Taos Pueblo closes in observance of traditional quiet times or for funerals. These closings are not always known in advance. For the most up-to-date information on tours call the Taos Pueblo Tourism Office at 505-758-1028 or go to www.taospueblo.com. (Two hours +)

2. OJO CALIENTE

HIGHWAY 64 WEST TO TRES PIEDRAS, THEN SOUTH ON HIGHWAY 285

Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs is one of the oldest spas in North America. It was used by ancient American Indians for its healing powers long before Europeans explored the area. A short hike from the springs is the site of an ancient village called the Posi Dwelling. These ancient inhabitants considered the mineral waters to be sacred and at one time many villages surrounded the springs.

FOR SUMMER/FALL EVENTS GO TO www.taoschamber.com

