



# On the trail of sustainable living in Taos

Text by Steve Fuhlendorf

## BACKGROUND FOR YOUR TOUR

Taos was known as the “Solar Capital of the World” long before New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson officially gave it the designation in 1997. The combination of an average of nearly 300 days of sunshine per year and the high desert altitude of over 7,000 feet make this the perfect place to practice sustainable living. Almost everywhere you look in Taos you see examples of the use of materials that can be reclaimed by the earth. The best and most prevalent examples are in the adobe architecture that abounds in Northern New Mexico. The materials used in adobe bricks, if left to the elements, will eventually return to their original form — dirt and straw.

For more information on events highlighting sustainability in Taos go to [www.taoschamber.com](http://www.taoschamber.com) and click on the Calendar page.

### 1. TAOS VISITOR CENTER

THREE MILES SOUTH OF THE TAOS PLAZA ON STATE ROAD 68

Begin your sustainable living tour at the Taos Visitor Center. Just outside the south entrance of the center you will notice a unique sculpture that resembles a metal tree. This is one of the famous solar trees designed, constructed and donated by Dharma Living Systems. There is also information inside the center on people who are making a difference in the way we live and use our resources. The visitor center employees can also give you directions to all of the other sites on your tour. (30 min.)

Information: 1-800-732-8267

### 2. EL MONTE SAGRADO RESORT

317 KIT CARSON ROAD, ONE MILE SOUTHEAST OF TAOS PLAZA

El Monte Sagrado Resort is a luxurious by whatever standards you define the term, but it is luxury with a conscience. The resort’s waste water is

filtered through a Living Machine made up of a virtual jungle of tropical plants. The Living Machine is designed by Dharma Living Systems, a Taos consulting company

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that designs and plans sustainable dwellings. The goal of the resort is to become completely sustainable or “off the grid.” Daily tours are conducted of the Living Machine, the “Biolarium” and the palatial grounds surrounding the resort. (One hour)

Information: 505-758-3502

### 3. TAOS PUEBLO

TWO MILES EAST OF TAOS PLAZA

The Taos Pueblo Indians were way ahead of their time as sustainable builders. The Taos Pueblo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has been continuously inhabited for more than 1,000

years. In that time the village itself has changed somewhat, but the construction and the materials used have remained constant. The walls of the five story structure called the North House are made of adobe bricks, which are covered with a combination of mud and straw about once per year. The materials used keep the inside of the living areas cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Of course, over the many hundreds of years the walls have become very thick, consequently with each proceeding generation the “R” factor gets higher. Tours are given throughout the day. (One hour)

Information: 505-758-1028

### 4. KTAO FM 101.9

RIGHT AT THE INTERSECTION OF HWY 64 AND 150 TOWARD TAOS SKI VALLEY

Broadcasting for more than 20 years, KTAO is the world’s most powerful solar powered radio station. This community station broadcasts at 50,000 watts throughout the Taos Valley and beyond. Stop by for one of the most beautiful views of Taos Mountain to be had anywhere in the valley. (30 min.)

Information: 505-758-5826

### 5. EARTHSHIP BIOSPHERE

16 MILES WEST OF THE TAOS PLAZA, ONE MILE PAST THE RÍO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE

Earthships are “completely independent, globally oriented dwellings.” In other words, they are completely self-sustaining or “off the grid.” The structures are built from recycled materials (mainly tires and bottles) and utilize solar and wind power. They also maintain catchment systems to provide water for all needs. Mike Reynolds has become world famous as the designer and chief proponent of earthship living. His son Jonah has recently started producing Earthship Biodiesel, which is a product of vegetable oil. Biodiesel powers the Chile Line public transportation system in Taos. Self-guided tours of a model earthship are available. (30 min.)

Information: 505-751-0462



Find luxury with a conscience at El Monte Sagrado and its eco-friendly facilities.