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## ALBUQUERQUE BALLOON FIESTA & MORE

*Also Includes: Cumbres & Toltec Railroad, Santa Fe, & The Sandia Peak Tram*

OCTOBER 2 - 9, 2021

**It's the time of year we have all been waiting for ... Up! Up! And Away! October is the most beautiful time of year in New Mexico! The Mass Ascension at the Balloon Fiesta in Albuquerque when more than 500 vibrantly colored balloons fill the skies! Along with this spectacular event, we will enjoy the SANDIA PEAK TRAM, the CUMBRES & TOLTEC RAILROAD, and plenty of FREE TIME in and around the SANTA FE HISTORIC PLAZA. Along with HOT AIR BALLOONS and TRAINS, this tour is filled with all types of NEW MEXICO CULTURE.**

### **Day #1 ... October 2, 2021:**

This morning, we set off across the northern plains of Texas to **WICHITA FALLS** for a brief stop for lunch. Along with our stretch break, we should arrive in **AMARILLO** around 5:00 PM in time to freshen up a bit before dinner. Dinner tonight will be *On Your Own* at one of several restaurants near our hotel.

**MEALS INCLUDED ... Lunch**

### **Day #2 ... October 3, 2021:**

We will travel more of our great Texas Panhandle, into New Mexico and Colorado, with a stop in Trinidad, CO. for lunch. Our journey will continue to **THE GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK**. These dunes are over 12,000 years old and were formed by the Rio Grande River! You will be amazed at the color and shapes of the dunes.

**MEALS INCLUDED ... Breakfast & Lunch**

### **Day #3 ... October 4, 2021:**

This morning, we will board the **CUMBRES & TOLTEC SCENIC RAILWAY**. The scenic journey unfolds as soon as the train, pulled by its powerful locomotive, leaves the **CHAMA, NM** station. In just moments, the steep 4% climb into the mountains begins. First, is a remnant of the historic Lobato sheep ranch, an area of rolling meadows with a high trestle that spans the rushing Wolf Creek below. Thin, white aspen trees with shimmering leaves line the grassy hills and deer, elk, and bears are plentiful. As the train climbs ever higher, the view backward reveals the entire **CHAMA VALLEY**. Soon, the climb gets steeper—the locomotive is working its hardest to pull the train to **CUMBRES PASS**. The train hugs a sheer rock face as it reaches the summit, where there are alpine meadows sprinkled with wildflowers. The aspens have given way to tall, dark green conifers that frame the spectacular vistas. Here it is noticeably cooler and there can be snow flurries even in summer. One of the things that makes the **CUMBRES & TOLTEC SCENIC RAILROAD** unique is that many of its original buildings remain along the route. At the top of **CUMBRES PASS** is the **HISTORIC CUMBRES SECTION HOUSE**. Soon after **CUMBRES** comes **TANGLEFOOT CURVE**, a loop so tight that it almost seems the locomotive will meet the caboose. Trees are sparse and there are vast mountain views crisscrossed by streams teeming with fish. After crossing **CASCADE CREEK TRESTLE**, the highest on the line, the train pulls into **OSIER, COLORADO**, a rustic townsite that is the midway point and lunch stop. This magnificent experience will end in time for us to make our way into SANTA FE. Our lodging in SANTA FE has been chosen for **THREE REASONS ... LOCATION, LOCATION, and LOCATION!!** Step into the past and experience the splendor of the American

Southwest at **LA FONDA ON THE PLAZA**, the only hotel situated on the **HISTORIC SANTA FE PLAZA**. Start your vacation in Santa Fe and experience the allure of old-world charm at one of the best Santa Fe hotels, where tasteful, modern conveniences blend with the warmth of authentic New Mexican style. You will have ample time this evening and the following morning to explore the plaza. You will want to visit <https://www.santafe.org/visiting-santa-fe/neighborhoods/plaza-and-downtown/> to learn about the plaza in general, places to eat, places to shop, as well as the local Santa Fe Free Shuttle Service.

*MEALS INCLUDED ... Breakfast & Lunch*

#### **Day #4 ... October 5, 2021:**

This morning is more **FREE TIME** for you to enjoy the **HISTORIC SANTA FE PLAZA**. We will depart SANTA FE shortly after lunch making our way to **ALBUQUERQUE**. We arrive at our hotel in Albuquerque by early evening to settle in for a three-night stay. You might want to make it “early to bed” tonight because it will be “early to rise” tomorrow morning!

*MEALS INCLUDED ... Breakfast & Lunch*

#### **Day #5 ... October 6, 2021:**

Clear skies, calm winds, and mild temps are hoped for as we arrive at the early morning **MASS ASCENSION** at the **49<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL ALBUQUERQUE BALLOON FIESTA!** You’ll be awe-struck as a myriad of colorful balloons soar up into the clear blue morning sky. In October, Albuquerque is the place to be! People from all over the world come to celebrate ballooning. It all started in 1972 when 13 balloons were launched from a shopping mall parking lot. Today, over 500 balloons are launched from the 305-acre park. Join in on the festive mood as you wander among the hot air balloons as they lift off and rise gently above us “creating a colorfully painted sky”. We got up EARLY this morning. So, by mid-morning, we are heading back to our hotel from some needed rest time. We head back out in time for lunch before we enjoy the **SANDIA PEAK TRAM**. Rising from the hustle and bustle of Albuquerque, you ascend one of America’s most stunning urban peaks. Reaching the 10,375 ft. crest of the Sandia Mountains, an 11,000 square mile panoramic view awaits you. It’s an elevation of the body, mind, and soul in a mere 15 minutes.

*MEALS ... Breakfast & Dinner*

#### **Day #6 ... October 7, 2021:**

You were up super early yesterday morning ... so today is a lazy morning. Nothing planned too early this morning. Mid-morning, we arrive at the **HISTORIC OLD TOWN**. (<https://www.albuquerqueoldtown.com/>) Stroll the Plaza, enjoy lunch at one of the many restaurants, visit the museums, or shop at over 150 stores and galleries for unique gifts from the Southwest and around the world. Quiet hidden patios, winding brick paths, gardens and balconies are waiting to be discovered. And do not worry as there are park benches everywhere for you to catch your breath. After lunch, we’ll rest our legs on the bus during a **CITY BUS TOUR**. Learn about the vibrant city of **ALBUQUERQUE** with a local step-on guide. Centuries of history have shaped this unique city into diverse cultures, authentic art, and dynamic traditions. People have lived here as far back as 2000 BC. Today, it is a leading high-tech research center. You’ll have time to check out **SAN FELIPE de NERI CHURCH**, the oldest building in the city or by visiting the former settler’s homes that have been converted into shops and galleries. It looks very much as it did when it was built in 1706, 70 years before the American Revolution. Returning to our hotel, there will be time to freshen up and rest a bit before returning to the **BALLOON FIESTA** where our evening meal is included. The evening **BALLOON GLOW** event is a spectacular site when the balloons fire up the burners creating a magnificent twinkling glow all around the FIESTA PARK. The breathtaking **FIREWORKS GRAND FINALE** to a fantastic day.

*MEALS ... Breakfast & Dinner*

**Day #7 ... October 8, 2021:**

We bid farewell to **ALBUQUERQUE** this morning as we take in our last glimpses of **HOT AIR BALLOONS** of this the distance as we head east. We'll enjoy sights along the way during this travel day with time to relax. This evening, we arrive in Amarillo in time to freshen up a bit before joining the famous **BIG TEXAN STEAKHOUSE** for a big Texas meal!

*MEALS INCLUDED ... Breakfast & Dinner*

**Day #8 ... October 9, 2021:**

Well, it's time to head home. However, as we make our way back to East Texas, you will certainly enjoy visiting with all of our new friends as we end **HOT AIR BALLOON & RAILROADS!**

*MEALS INCLUDED ... Breakfast & Lunch*

**SPECIAL NOTE ...** This trip requires average physical activity. You should be in good health, able to climb stairs and walk reasonable distances, possibly over uneven grounds. For the trip to make, we will be looking for a total of 24 passengers to sign up. If trip is cancelled by American Tours due to low number of passengers, all moneys are fully refunded.