

# Taos off the plaza

## STRIKE OUT FROM THE TOWN CENTER IN ANY CARDINAL DIRECTION

by Jordan Eddy

**T**aos sits at the foot of the tallest stretch of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The town of fewer than 6,000 souls might seem diminutive on approach, but don't be fooled.

This rich, cultural hub holds more than 1,000 years of history, and is the starting point for myriad adventures.

Explore the bustling Taos Historic Plaza, the heart of town, and then use it as a crossroads for other explorations. No matter which way you point your compass, you're sure to discover great boutiques, restaurants, galleries, and museums.

### NORTH

About three-quarters of mile north of the Plaza be sure to stop and meander through Act I Gallery's sculpture garden and then go inside to see one of their constantly changing exhibits and learn about art and the collection of it, from one of the best gallery owners in Taos.

Three miles north of Taos is the Taos Pueblo, which was founded circa 1350, and is the seasonal home to nearly 2,000 people. That makes it the oldest living community in the United States, and a great place to start your trip. Guided walking tours of the Pueblo begin every 20 minutes from 9am to 4pm year round.

Continue north on Paseo del Pueblo Norte for a stop at the Red Arrow Emporium, where you'll find fine furniture, lighting, and unique accessories and art from

around the world.

If you're visiting in the winter, drive about 30 minutes northwest of town for snow activities of all sorts at the Taos Ski Valley.

Back in town, walk just north of the Plaza to explore Bent Street, a colorful pedestrian mall with galleries and shops to explore. The street is named for Charles Bent, the first U.S. Governor of New Mexico, who was murdered in the short-lived Taos Revolt of 1847. Bent's home now houses the Governor Bent House and Museum, which is open daily year round. Nearby is Ortenstone Dellatre Fine Art, run by local artists Nancy Ortenstone and Pierre Delattre.

For breakfast or lunch, stop by the Bent Street Cafe & Deli, and pick up dessert at Chocolate + Cashmere, a confectionery and clothing store.

### EAST

Head east down Kit Carson Road to discover a vibrant gallery district. Visit the Kit Carson Home and Museum, where you'll get a window into Taos' Civil War era.

Legendary Western explorer and dime novel hero Kit Carson came to Taos in 1826 and lived here for 21 years. During the Civil War, he defended the American Flag in the Taos Plaza from Confederate sympathizers. The flag flies year round in tribute to Carson's efforts, no matter the weather.



*Clockwise from upper left: NORTH: The courtyard in front of Act I Gallery;  
EAST: Virginia Couse's restored garden at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site on Kit Carson Road.  
SOUTH: The Harwood Museum (as seen in this historic photo) can be found at the end of Ledoux Street.  
WEST: The amazing Rio Grande Gorge as photographed by Geraint Smith.*

Around the corner on Paseo del Pueblo Norte is the Historic Taos Inn. The hotel is the former home of Thomas "Doc" Martin, who hosted the 1915 inaugural meeting of the Taos Society of Artists. Try a margarita and the blue corn enchiladas at Doc Martin's restaurant.

Back on Kit Carson Road, visit David Anthony Fine Art to see stunning fine art, photography, and paintings. The gallery's colorful furniture was crafted by owner David Mapes. At Living Light Gallery, browse the portrait and nature photography of Lenny Foster. Be sure to stop at The Ranch at Taos and Wilder Nightingale Fine Art to see their latest artistic offerings.

Then make a stop at the Couse-Sharp Historic Site. It was the home of E.I. Couse, one of the founders of the Taos Society of Artists. The site also includes two studios of Joseph Henry Sharp, Couse's colleague in the Taos Society of Artists. The garden created by Couse's wife Virginia has also been restored.

Be sure to visit El Monte Sagrado for a drink, a meal, or an overnight stay. The beautiful resort and spa has a gallery with works by local and international artists, not to mention their famed Autograph Collection.

Turn left on Morada Lane off Kit Carson Road to reach the Mabel Dodge Luhan House, former home of the wealthy art patron who attracted Georgia O'Keeffe and other influential artists to the area. Parts of her mansion, now a retreat center, are open to the public.

## SOUTH

Take a short stroll southwest to Ledoux Street, named for 1800s French trapper and Taos resident Antonio Ledoux. Along the road you'll find yet another row of phenomenal galleries.

Inger Jirby Gallery features colorful, contemporary oil and watercolor landscapes of the Southwest. Nearby, 203 Fine Art specializes in the early Taos modernists and the contemporary artists they inspire.

Farther down the street, learn more about the town's art legacy at the E.L. Blumenschein Home and Museum. Blumenschein was one of the original Taos Six, who founded the Taos Society of Artists and helped establish Northern New Mexico's reputation as

an art destination.

Keep walking on Ledoux to find the Harwood Museum of Art, featuring work by the Taos Six, Agnes Martin, Ad Reinhardt, and much more.

Take Paseo del Pueblo Sur further south for a visit to Taos Lifestyle, a complete home furnishing center that specializes in mattresses and bedding.

Continuing south, pay a visit to Graystone Furniture & The Sofa Gallery, where you can find "furniture as dramatic as your surroundings."

If you're hungry, head north back up the road past the Plaza and eat at Chef Frederick Muller's El Meze Restaurant, where he prepares fresh, regionally inspired rustic comfort food that is uniquely American. He calls it, "La Comida de las Sierras," the food of the mountains: fresh trout, jamon, corn and chiles, wild mushrooms from Taos mountain forests, local organic produce from regional farms.

## WEST

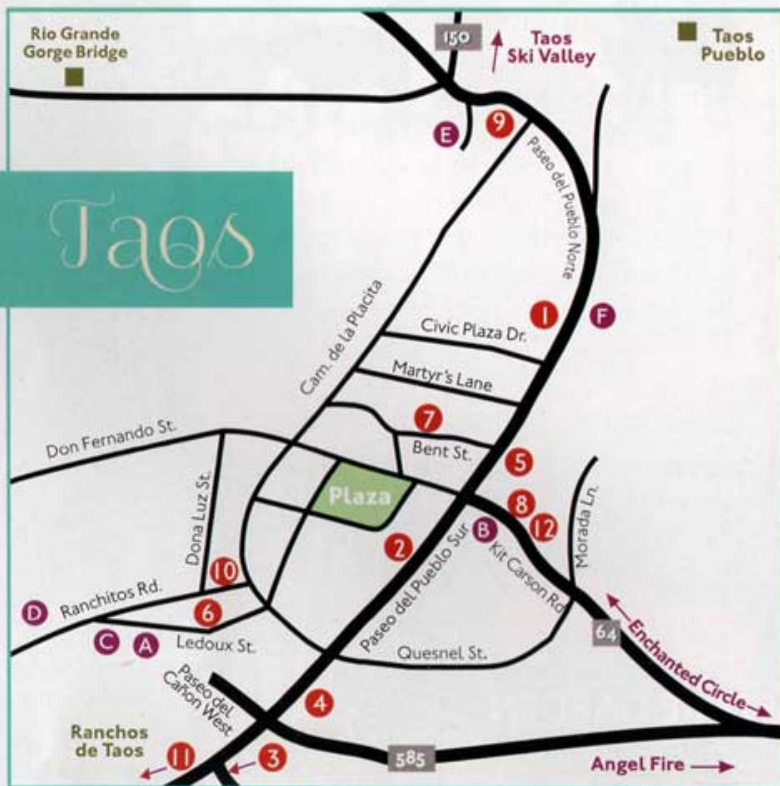
West of the Plaza on Dona Luz Street you'll find El Gamal Restaurant, which serves up award-winning Middle Eastern food and delicious vegetarian options.

Several unique bed and breakfasts are tucked in the neighborhoods nearby. La Posada de Taos is pet friendly and equipped with kiva fireplaces for a winter stay. Dreamcatcher B&B is a cozy hideaway down La Lomita Road, with an endless supply of cookies and coffee on hand.

The true westward adventures begin not far from town at the Rio Grande Gorge, a 50-mile-long rift valley that's 800 feet deep. Drive northwest on U.S. 64 to reach spectacular, dizzying views at the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge.

For adrenaline junkies, try your hand at navigating the river with a local rafting company. The Rio Grande's rapids offer challenges to explorers at various experience levels.

And with that it's time to say good-bye, but **before** you leave, take the opportunity to book your **next** stay in Taos! ■



1. Act I Gallery 285, 299
  2. Aspen Gallery 287
  3. Chimayo Trading Del Norte 19, 283
  4. Graystone Furniture & The Sofa Gallery 164-165
  5. The Historic Taos Inn 290
  6. Inger Jirby 292
  7. Ortenstone Delattre Fine Art 289
  8. The Ranch at Taos Gallery 282
  9. Red Arrow Emporium 167
  10. Substance 237
  11. Taos Lifestyle 166
  12. Wilder Nightingale Fine Art 282
- 
- A E.L. Blumenschein Home & Museum
  - B The Couse-Sharp Historic Site 291
  - C The Harwood Museum of Art
  - D La Hacienda de Los Martinez
  - E Millicent Rogers Museum
  - F Taos Art Museum and Fechin House



J.H. Sharp, E.I. Couse.

*They came to Taos to paint. They left a legacy.*

Visit studios of the two founding members of the Taos Society of Artists.

Explore the Couse home. Enter the artists' lives, just as they were.

Stand at the easel. See the model's stage and props.

Follow the painting process, from concept to finished canvas.

To schedule a tour: 575-751-0369 For events calendar: [couse-sharp.org](http://couse-sharp.org).



THE  
**COUSE-SHARP**  
HISTORIC SITE

*Two painters. One place.*

146 Kit Carson Road  
P.O. Box 1436, Taos, NM 87571  
575-751-0369, [couse-sharp.org](http://couse-sharp.org)



*Affiliate Site of the*  
**National Trust for  
Historic Preservation**