



Around the Enchanted Circle Scenic Byway

Text by Steve Fuhlendorf

BACKGROUND FOR YOUR TOUR

The Enchanted Circle contains many surprises. Not the least of these, for those unfamiliar with Northern New Mexico, is the diversity of the landscape. This 86-mile trip through the southern Rocky Mountains will dispel any thoughts of New Mexico being strictly a desert state. The circle is anchored by Wheeler Peak, which at 13,161 feet is the highest crest in New Mexico. Taos is the hub of the circle, but you can start your journey from several communities along the way — Questa, Red River, Eagle Nest, Angel Fire — and travel east, west, north or south. For more information on lodging, restaurants and events around the Enchanted Circle log on to www.taoschamber.com.

1. ANGEL FIRE

ON U.S. 64 EAST FROM TAOS

One of the fastest growing towns in New Mexico, the Village of Angel Fire and Angel Fire Resort offer year-round fun for the entire family. The resort offers downhill skiing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing, an 18-hole golf course, hiking, biking, fishing and much more. There is plenty of lodging in the village, plus fine restaurants. (Two hours)

Information: 800-446-8117

or www.angelfirechamber.org

2. VIETNAM VETERANS NATIONAL MEMORIAL STATE PARK

ON U.S. 64 WEST OF ANGEL FIRE

Dr. Victor Westfall and his family built the chapel in 1971 to honor his son David, who lost his life in Vietnam in 1968. A 6,000 square-foot

Visitors Center has been added, along with many artifacts and photos. The

peace and tranquility of the surrounding Moreno Valley add to the power of the messages within the memorial. (Two hours)

Information: 877-613-6900

or www.vietnamveteransnationalmemorial.org

3. EAGLE NEST

ON U.S. 64, NORTH OF ANGEL FIRE

Eagle Nest Lake State Park and the Village of Eagle Nest lie just a few miles beyond the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial. The lake, a favorite fishing spot for many years, was recently acquired by the state of New Mexico and designated as a State Park. Historically private, it is now in the public domain. Shopping or staying in the village is like stepping back into the Old West — with modern conveniences, of course. Friendly folks at the unique shops and lodges stand ready to assist the sportsman and casual visitor alike. (Two hours)

Information: 800-494-9117

or www.eaglenest.org

4. ELIZABETHTOWN

OFF STATE ROAD 38, NORTH OF EAGLE NEST

Traveling through the Moreno Valley from Eagle Nest, the next stop is a visit with the ghosts in Elizabethtown. Established as the first incorporated city in New Mexico in the late 1860's, Eliza-



The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge

bethtown displayed all the lawlessness of the better-known mining towns of the era. With the help of a little imagination and the Elizabethtown Museum, one can still almost visualize those rowdy days in the Wild West. (One hour)

5. RED RIVER

ON STATE ROAD 38, WEST OF ELIZABETHTOWN

Founded in 1892 and once owned by the notorious gambler, Long John Dunn, Red River now consists of Swiss-style chalets, rustic log cabins and a family-friendly ski area. Old West ambiance is everywhere you look at this year-round resort, which offers biking, skiing, snowboarding, hiking, fishing and off-road vehicle trails. (Two hours)

Information: 800-348-6444

or www.redrivernewmex.com

6. QUESTA AND THE WILD RIVERS RECREATION AREA

The Questa area is loaded with plenty of outdoor recreation for the body and art for the soul. Questa's old world charm is evident in its atmosphere and its eateries. It is also the home of an up-and-coming art community, which is represented by Artesanos de Questa. The Wild Rivers Recreation Area, designated as a Scenic Byway, is well known to hikers and mountain bikers alike. For Artesanos de Questa call 505-586-0443 and for Wild Rivers Recreation Area call 505-770-1600. (Two hours)

7. TAOS SKI VALLEY

ON HIGHWAY 150, 15 MILES FROM THE INTERSECTION OF HWY. 64 AND HWY 150

Taos Ski Valley Resort features a ski school rated in the top 10 in the nation, challenging expert skier runs, plus year-round activities for the whole family. (Two hours)

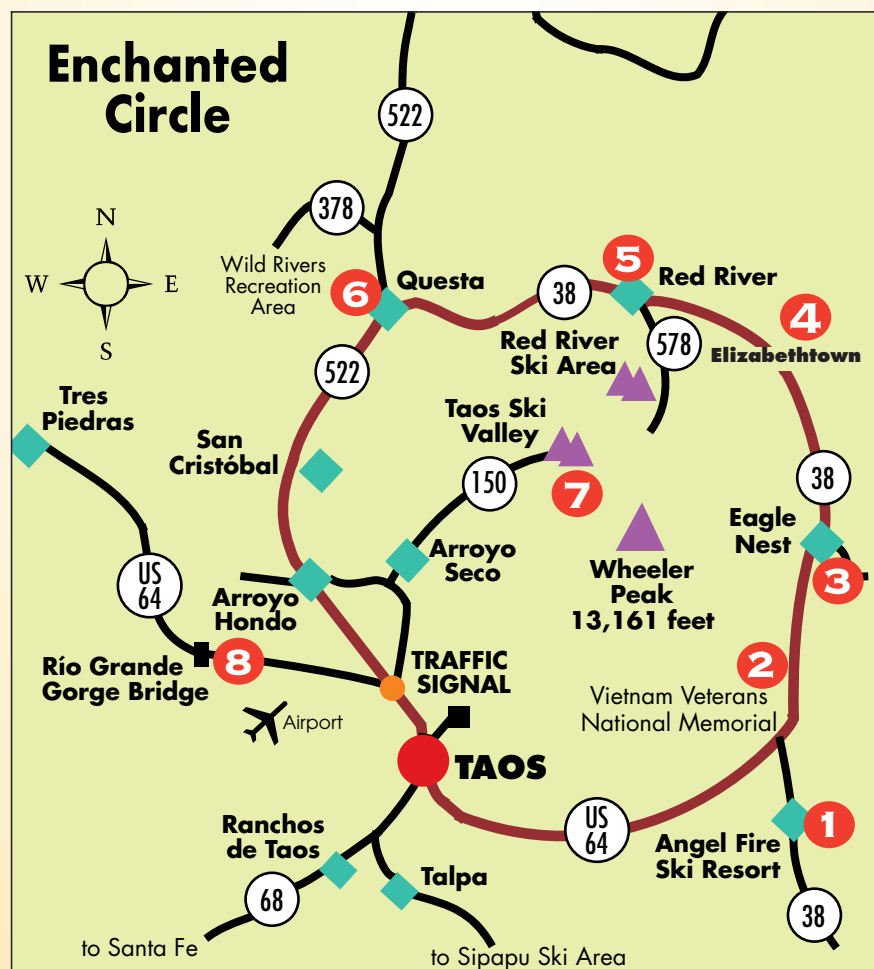
Information: 505-776-2291

or taosskivalley.com.

8. RÍO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE

SEVEN MILES WEST OF THE INTERSECTION OF HIGHWAYS 64 AND 150 ON HIGHWAY 64

The Río Grande Gorge Bridge is the second highest expansion bridge in the U.S. It was dubbed the "Bridge to Nowhere" when it was completed in 1965, because no funds were available to continue the road past the bridge to the west. That has changed, of course. The bridge towers 650 feet above the river and has viewing areas on both sides, plus a well maintained rest stop to the west. It provides an unforgettable sunset photo opportunity. (30 min.)



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