



Pilgrimage to the mission churches

BACKGROUND FOR YOUR TOUR

The establishment of settlements by explorers and colonists from Europe via Mexico is inextricably tied to the conversion of the Native Americans to the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, the settlers themselves were in need of ministry, so priests were naturally a part of the first parties to explore the regions of Northern New Mexico. The early struggles of the church to convert the indigenous peoples sometimes lead to conflict and even outright revolt, such as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Many examples of these early missions are still apparent as you travel around the countryside. The churches listed below do not necessarily keep regular hours, although most of the main churches can be toured. Consider taking this tour in conjunction with the High Road to Taos Tour. For more information on tours, feast days and special events go to www.taoschamber.com.

1. SAN GERONIMO CHURCH, TAOS PUEBLO

TWO MILES FROM TAOS PLAZA

The history of turmoil between the Roman Catholic Church and the Native American people can be chronicled through the history of the San Geronimo Church on Taos Pueblo. The original San Geronimo Church was built around 1619 by Spanish Priests with Indian labor. In 1680 the Pueblo Indians rose up against the oppressive rule of the Spanish and the church and joined forces together to resist. The original church was destroyed during this uprising. It was rebuilt in 1706, but destroyed again in retaliation for the death of New Mexico's first territorial

governor, Charles Bent. The site of the original church is now a cemetery, in honor of those

who were killed inside the church during its destruction. The current church was built in 1850 on a separate site within the Pueblo walls. There are many ceremonies at the Taos Pueblo with roots in the Catholic Church. For more information about tours, feast days and other occasions, call 505-758-1028 or go to www.taospueblo.com. (Two hours)

2. OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CHURCH

ONE BLOCK WEST OF TAOS PLAZA

The original church has been replaced, but this is still a must see for the beautiful



art contained within the church. The Taos plaza has been the gathering place for Taosños for centuries. The church, as with most traditional plazas, is not far removed from the center of activity. Call 505-758-9208 to arrange a tour. (30 minutes)

3. SAN FRANCISCO DE ASÍS CHURCH, RANCHOS DE TAOS

FOUR MILES FROM THE TAOS PLAZA

The village of Ranchos de Taos, settled in 1716, has one of the most familiar sights to admirers of southwest art, the San Francisco de Asís Church. The church, which was completed in 1815, has been interpreted by some of the most famous painters and photographers to trek the southwest, including Ansel Adams and Georgia O'Keefe. The church provides an imposing anchor in the middle of the plaza. It appears like a fortress with thick walls and buttresses that continue to peak the interest of artists today. The village itself is not a carnival type setting, but rather an opportunity to feel what life looked like in centuries past. The buildings are essentially the same and the pace is much like it may have been in



Rick Romancito

The San Francisco de Asís Church in Ranchos de Taos is one of the most photographed and painted churches in the world.

the approximately two hundred years since the famous church was built. Call 505-758-2754 for more information.

4. SAN LORENZO DE PICURIS, PICURIS PUEBLO

From Ranchos de Taos, take 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 over two hundred years old and is lovingly maintained by tribal members. The church underwent more than eight years of restoration, preserving an important part of the Pueblo's history. The San Lorenzo Feast Day, celebrated in August, features dances, pole climbing and footraces. The excavated historical sites near the church can be viewed on a self-guided tour. For more information call 505-587-2519 (One hour)

5. SAN JOSE DE GRACIA, LAS TRAMPAS

ON HIGHWAY 76, THE HIGH ROAD TO TAOS

As you travel through many of the villages along the high road you will feel as though time forgot this land. Las Trampas is no exception. The beautiful Spanish Colonial era San Jose de Gracia Church, which was completed in 1780, is a magnet for artists and photographers. The church is very well preserved and is still an active parish church, which was restored in the 1970's. The town of Las Trampas itself was founded in 1751. (30 minutes)

6. SANTUARIO DE CHIMAYÓ

IN CHIMAYÓ ON THE HIGH ROAD TO TAOS

The town of Chimayó is famous for its weavers and the adobe Plaza del Cerro, which is the Southwest's only surviving fortified plaza. The main attraction is actually a short distance away at the Santuario de Chimayó, which was built between 1814 and 1816. The Santuario has become known by many names including the "Our Lady of the Southwest." About 300,000 people visit yearly. Many stories are regularly told of miraculous cures attributed to the dirt from the floor of the Santuario. The story of how the Santuario came to be built on the spot it now stands is an inspirational tale that has been passed down from generation to generation. The beautiful grounds and the feeling of peace and serenity that is ever-present make the Santuario de Chimayó a place to spend time in quiet reflection. For information on hours and tours call 505-351-4889 (Two hours)

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