

My Drift

Title: New Mexico

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How many states have no professional teams in the four major sports? The 4 major sports being the NFL (National Football League), MLB (Major League Baseball), NBA (National Basketball Association), and NHL (National Hockey League) - the number of states having no teams in any of these leagues is 24.

For some reason, I was thinking about this over the holidays and the first state that popped into my mind was New Mexico. The complete list includes Hawaii, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kansas, Alabama, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, South Carolina, Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Why I think about things like this is a mystery – even to me.



New Mexico is one of those states that gets very little attention, so I guess it is up to me to enlighten the world about this great state.

New Mexico Governor



Michelle Lujan Grisham

(She is the first Latina to be elected governor in U.S. history)

History

People came to the area that's now New Mexico more than 12,000 years ago. Experts think they migrated from what's now Russia across a land bridge called the Bering Strait during the last Ice Age. (When the Ice Age ended, water levels rose, covering this bridge.) Thousands of years later Native American tribes including the Apache, Zuni, Navajo, and Pueblos lived on the land.

In 1540 Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado came to the area in search of cities made of gold that were rumored to exist in the Americas. He didn't discover treasure, but over the next century the Spanish colonized the land. Then in 1821 Mexico declared its independence from Spain, and the area became part of Mexico. But after the United States won the Mexican-American War in 1848, New Mexico became a U.S. territory. In 1912 it was declared the 47th state.

How did it get its name?

When the Spanish set out to explore the region, they hoped to find land as valuable as what they'd found earlier in Mexico. So, they dubbed the area Nueva Mexico. (Nueva means "new" in Spanish.) As for the word Mexico, some experts think it's a version of a name that the Aztecs (a cultural group from Mexico) had for one of their gods.

The state has beautiful scenery from mountains to forests to deserts. This earned it the nickname “The Land of Enchantment”.



New Mexico State Flag



STATE ANIMAL
black bear



STATE BIRD
roadrunner



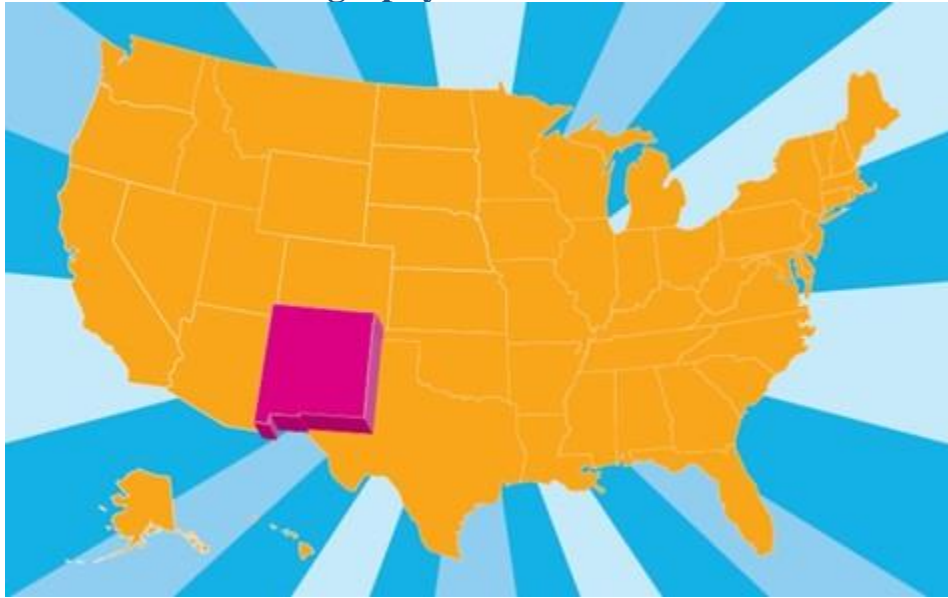
STATE FLOWER
yucca



STATE QUARTER

State Colors: Red and Yellow
State Amphibian: New Mexico spadefoot toad
State Butterfly: Sandia hairstreak
State Fish: Rio Grande cutthroat trout
State Insect: Tarantula wasp
State Reptile: New Mexico Whiptail Lizard

Geography and Landforms



New Mexico is bordered by Colorado in the north, Oklahoma and Texas in the east, Mexico and Texas in the south, and Arizona in the west. Its northwest corner touches Arizona, Utah, and Colorado, creating the only spot where four states meet (called The Four Corners).



Four Corners Monument

The state can be divided into the following three regions:

Region 1 - Sweeping across the east, the Great Plains Region contains a high plateau with deep canyons. The area also features Carlsbad Caverns, which has more than 119 caves to explore.



Carlsbad Caverns National Park

Region 2 - The Rocky Mountain Region is in the northern part of the state, and it has New Mexico's highest point called Wheeler Peak at 13,167 feet.



Wheeler Peak

Region 3 - In the central-southwest is the Basin and Range Region. A river called the Rio Grande runs through the center of this area, which is known for its mountainous ridges, flat deserts, and White Sands National Monument. New Mexico has the world's largest field of sand dunes made of the mineral gypsum.



Wave like Dunes of Gypsum Sand covers 275 square miles of desert, creating the world's largest gypsum dune field.



The Rio Grande flows out of the snowcapped Rocky Mountains in Colorado and journeys 1,900 miles to the Gulf of Mexico. It passes through the 800-foot chasms of the Rio Grande Gorge, a wild and remote area of northern New Mexico.

Wildlife

New Mexico is home to black bears, bighorn sheep, cougars, coyotes, and what may be North America's rarest mammal—the black-footed ferret. Black vultures, red-shouldered hawks, bright scarlet tanagers, and streak-backed orioles fly overhead, while amphibians such as the colorful western green toad, the barred tiger salamander, and the New Mexico whiptail lizard scurry underfoot. While you are watching all that wildlife, watch out for the many roadrunners zipping around.



Bighorn Sheep



Black-Footed Ferret



Red-Shouldered Hawk



New Mexico Whiptail Lizard

Trees and Wildflowers

New Mexico olive, piñon pine, Rio Grande cottonwood, and desert willow are a few of the trees that grow throughout the region. A number of the local wildflowers were named for the state, including the New Mexico thistle and New Mexico evening primrose. Cacti and succulents are also plentiful.



New Mexico Olive Tree



Rio Grande Cottonwood Tree



New Mexico Thistle



New Mexico Evening Primrose

Natural Resources

New Mexico is the country's top producer of perlite, a type of glass used in insulation and gardening. The state also mines about three quarters of the United States' potash, a potassium compound used in fertilizer.

New Mexico is known for its turquoise. Today most mines have very little left, which is why a piece of turquoise can be worth thousands of dollars.

About half of the state's income from natural resources comes from oil and natural gas.



Perlite



Turquoise



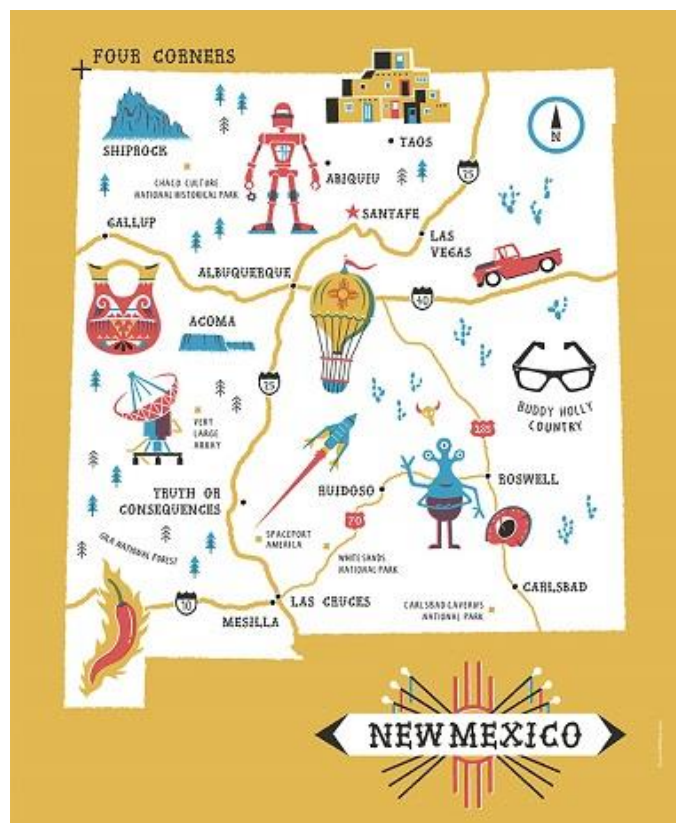
Oil Well

State and Cities Information

New Mexico is the fifth largest (121,590 square miles) of the fifty states, but with just over 2.1 million residents, ranks 36th in population and 46th in population density. Its climate and geography are highly varied, ranging from forested mountains to sparse deserts; the northern and eastern regions exhibit a colder alpine climate, while the west and south are warmer and more arid; the Rio Grande and its fertile valley runs from north-to-south, creating a riparian climate and large areas of vegetation adjacent to the water through the center of the state.

Five Largest Cities in New Mexico

- ❖ Albuquerque (563,000)
- ❖ Las Cruces (105,000)
- ❖ Rio Rancho (102,000)
- ❖ Santa Fe (86,000)
- ❖ Roswell (48,000)





Albuquerque - University of New Mexico – The Pit

Albuquerque is the home to the University of New Mexico and the only city in New Mexico that I have been to. While attending the University of Utah, we played basketball there at their famous arena called “The Pit”.



Las Cruces

Las Cruces is the home of the other major university called New Mexico State University. From the pictures I viewed, Las Cruces is a very scenic city.



Rio Rancho - Part of the expansive Albuquerque metropolitan area



Santa Fe

Santa Fe is the capital of New Mexico.

(That is the capital building in the above picture)



Roswell

The Roswell UFO Incident - America's most famous flying saucer incident What Really Happened at Roswell?

Okay, here is the Roswell UFO story:

Sometime between mid-June and early July 1947, rancher W.W. “Mac” Brazel found a wreckage on his sizable property in Lincoln County, New Mexico, approximately 75 miles north of Roswell. Several “flying saucer” sightings in the area and stories about it had already appeared in the national press that summer, leading Brazel to believe the wreckage was a flying saucer.



Multiple UFO Sightings

He brought some of the wreckage material to Sheriff George Wilcox of Roswell, who in turn brought it to the attention of Colonel William Blanchard, the commanding officer of the Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF).

The next day, the RAAF visited the wreckage site and released a statement, writing that, “The many rumors regarding the flying saucer became a reality yesterday when the intelligence office of the 509th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force, Roswell Army Air Field, was fortunate enough to gain possession of a flying saucer through the cooperation of one of the local ranchers and the sheriff’s office of Chaves County.”

According to that statement, Major Jesse Marcel, an intelligence officer, oversaw the RAAF’s investigation of the crash site and the recovered materials and remains.



An illustration depicting the UFO crash site with aliens being carried away

There were several eyewitnesses that claimed there were alien bodies taken from the site



Alien Remains



But then government officials from Washington D.C. arrived on the scene and quickly secured the area and changed the story about the Roswell ‘saucer’. They said it was a “Top Secret” weather balloon kicking off a conspiracy theory that persists decades later to this day. The event has spawned numerous documentaries, articles, and books, as well as two television shows – one titled Roswell, the other Roswell, New Mexico.



Today, much of the conspiracy theory lingers as kitsch (excessive garishness) around the city. McDonald's in Roswell is in the shape of a flying saucer. Many storefronts have at least one alien or flying saucer visible from the road.



Roswell McDonald's



Roswell Store Front

But beneath the showy facade, locals know the crash is an integral part of their city. “It’s part of our history, it’s not just a gimmick,” says Roswell’s mayor. Most Roswellians believe their town hosted an extraordinary event over seven decades ago. Among the believers is Dennis Balthaser, who has been researching UFOs for over 30 years. “I think most people know the bottom line is something happened here in 1947,” he said. “We know that. And as far as we know, it’s still being covered up.”

Balthaser, 79, is a retired civil engineer from Texas. In the 1980s, he became interested in the night sky, wondering what was going on up there. Balthaser said he had retired in 1996 and moved to Roswell so he could dedicate more time to researching UFOs. He has been following the news on the Pentagon UFO report but said he didn’t expect any valuable information to come from it. Balthaser said government officials could not afford to admit anything about the Roswell incident now. “What politician is going to say: ‘We’ve lied to you for the last 70 years?’” he said. “It’s not going to happen.”

Through his research, Balthaser has met eyewitnesses to the Roswell incident, pored over countless pieces of evidence and met with self-proclaimed alien abductees including Betty and Barney Hill. But when asked for a single story that makes him confident we aren’t alone, he shared an anecdote from one of his friends, the editor of the old Roswell Morning Dispatch newspaper. That editor, Art McQuiddy, was friends with Air Force COL William Blanchard, who penned the initial press release purporting that the crash was a flying saucer. The pair were having a drink shortly after the crash when McQuiddy

asked, “What happened here a couple weeks ago?” The colonel said he couldn’t talk about it. A couple of drinks later, according to Balthaser’s recounting, McQuiddy asked again. **The colonel replied: “I saw something here in Roswell I had never seen before, and I never want to see again.”**

The Roswell incident surfaced again recently when retired lieutenant colonel Jesse Marcel, who was part of the RAAF military team that first examined the UFO crash site, told ufologist Stanton Friedman, that he believed the debris his team retrieved was extraterrestrial. Ufologists claimed that one or more alien spacecraft had crash-landed and that the extraterrestrial occupants had been recovered by the military, which then engaged in a massive cover-up.

In 1994, the United States Air Force published a report identifying the crashed object as a nuclear test surveillance balloon from Project Mogul. A second Air Force report, published in 1997, concluded that stories of "alien bodies" probably stemmed from “Test Dummies” being dropped from high altitude.

Conspiracy theories about the event nevertheless persist, and the Roswell incident continues to be of interest in popular media. The incident has been described as "the world's most famous, most exhaustively investigated, and most thoroughly debunked UFO claim".

About 50% of Americans now think some UFOs that people have spotted have been alien spacecraft visiting Earth from other planets or galaxies. This is up from a third saying so just five years ago.

What do you think? I believe in UFOs and have seen a couple.

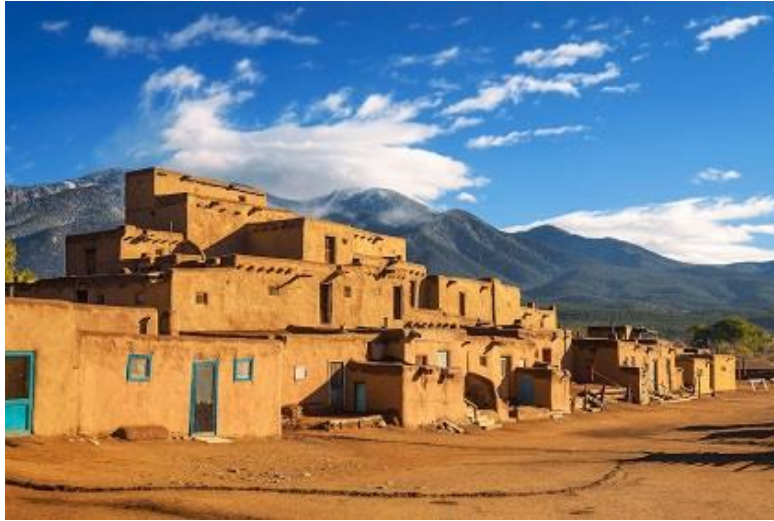


The International UFO Museum and Research Center in Roswell

Let's end this article with a few FUN FACTS

#1 New Mexico is wine country. These days, nearly 50 wineries dot the landscape, and many of the wines produced here are award-winning and well worth your time trying them.

#2 Taos Pueblo has been inhabited for over a thousand years. For at least 1,000 years, the people of Taos Pueblo have lived in their surreal, multi-story-apartment-like town in New Mexico.



#3 Santa Fe is the nation's highest state capital. Denver might be the Mile High City, but it ain't got nothing on Santa Fe. At 7,199 feet above sea level, it is the highest capital in the nation.



#4 You can see five different states from the top of Capulin Volcano. Capulin Volcano National Monument towers over the edge of the Great Plains in the northeastern corner of the state. An extinct cinder cone volcano, the formation

once served as a landscape marker on the Santa Fe Trail. Today you can drive to the top of the 8,000 feet cone for one seriously stunning view that takes in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Colorado, in addition to New Mexico.

#5 Doc Holliday was once a dentist in Las Vegas, NM — and shot a guy. The Atlanta native came west in 1879 on doctor's recommendation. The soon-to-be gunslinger was dying of tuberculosis and was told that the high, dry air of New Mexico would help his condition. Dentistry morphed into a saloon owner and the hard-drinking, smartly dressed womanizer quickly found himself at odds with a former army scout by the name of Michael Gordon. After an altercation over a dancer at the saloon, Gordon stepped outside, pulled his gun, and proceeded to shoot up Holliday's saloon. Doc dropped him with a single bullet. The next year, Holliday sold the saloon and moved to Arizona to be with his friend Wyatt Earp.

#6 Smokey Bear is from New Mexico. During World War II Smokey was invented to help educate the American public about the dangers of wilderness blazes. The living symbol of Smokey was actually a black bear cub found by firefighters from Taos Pueblo in southeastern New Mexico during the massive Capitan Gap fire of 1950. Smokey lived at the National Zoo in Washington, DC until his death in 1976. Oh. And it's Smokey Bear. Not Smokey the Bear.



#7 The first atomic bomb was exploded in New Mexico. On July 16, 1945, the very first atomic bomb was detonated in the desert sands of the Jornada del Muerto in south-central New Mexico. Known by its code name, Trinity, it was of the same design as the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, a few weeks later. The Trinity Site is located on the White Sands Missile Range and is now a National Historic Site.

#8 New Mexico has more cows than people. With under 20 people per square mile and around 13,500 ranches covering over 60% of the state, there's way more livestock in New Mexico than people.

#9 A third of the residents speak Spanish. The state is predominated by the Hispanic community. Most of the residents speak in Spanish when they are at home and use English for formal communications.



#10 New Mexico is the hot air ballooning capital of the world. It's also home to the largest hot air balloon festival in the world. Every October, over 500 hot air balloons — and tens of thousands of balloon aficionados — gather for the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, which began in 1972 and has grown every year since. One reason pilots love to fly Albuquerque is because of the Box — a set of predictable wind patterns that set in as autumn creeps towards winter over the Rio Grande. The Box allows balloons to fly north at low elevations and then cruise back south at higher elevations. It's quite a sight.

New Mexico is definitely “The Land of Enchantment”

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