

TRAVEL ISSUE

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BIG TRIPS *To Small Places*

DREAM HIDEAWAYS
THE WORLD'S TOP
MICROBOUTIQUE HOTELS

PLUS
MOTORCYCLING IN LAOS
OYSTER PARADISE
WILD INDOOR GARDENS



ESCAPES

Head 2 Head

Santa Fe

Rosewood Inn of the Anasazi

Thanks to its near-perfect location a block from the Plaza and its seamless service, the Anasazi is an ideal home base. You can walk to most downtown shops and restaurants, the valets deliver your car swiftly, and it's on the way to the ski area. And whenever you come back, a cheerful employee will likely inquire about your day.

It's a pleasant place to return to, but it doesn't offer the kind of kick-off-your-boots elbow room that encourages hanging out. The 58 rooms are well appointed in a restrained Southwestern fashion, with kiva-style gas fireplaces, *latillas* and *vigas* (wood beams) in the ceilings, and hand-carved four-poster beds so high the hotel provides stools to climb onto their cushy mattresses. But they're snug: My 300-square-foot standard double had one sink, one chair, and limited space for setting things down. The library is also well stocked but small; ditto the bar.

No matter. The personable concierges are well versed in the city's culture, both high (art galleries) and low (green chile cheeseburgers), and quick with reservations.

The main reason to return before bedtime is the excellent Anasazi Restaurant, a significant player in Santa Fe's competitive culinary scene. Chef Oliver Ridgeway had been in town only nine months when I first visited, yet he showed tremendous fluency with native ingredients. Chayote adds depth to a salad of watercress, avocado, and hearts of palm; poblanos cut the richness of a prawn risotto; and the salmon crusted with blue cornmeal and Hatch green chile was one of the best things I ate in a week in New Mexico.



Inn of the Five Graces

This Relais & Châteaux hotel is a destination in its own right. The name refers to the Tibetan celebration of the five senses, but it's sight that is most indulged: The flamboyant East-meets-Old West decor is a visual feast. Occupying a cluster of centuries-old buildings, the 24 big suites (starting at 450 square feet) are filled with Uzbek *suzanis*, Afghan *dhurries*, and Turkish *kilims*, all assembled by owners Ira and Sylvia Seret, importer-designers who have traded along the Silk Road since the '60s and opened the hotel in 1993 as an extension of their local store, Seret & Sons.

Granted, the Oriental fantasia isn't for everyone. But if you're seduced by it, these are rooms to settle into, with wood-burning fireplaces and showstopper bathrooms. Carved panels that once hid Indian harems flank the deep soaking tubs, and exuberant mosaics, tiled by Sylvia, dance across nearly every surface.

The hotel first won accolades as part of the Garrett Hotel Group, but the Serets took over management duties about a year ago. They've upgraded the WiFi and air conditioning, soundproofed the floors, and renovated and added suites and a two-bedroom house. Service was relaxed but attentive under the Garrett umbrella and continues apace.

While not as central as the Anasazi, the Five Graces is still only a five-minute walk from the Plaza and close to the Canyon Road gallery scene. The location also scores high on charm as it's one of the oldest blocks in Santa Fe. The inn has a one-room spa (my massage was excellent), and serves a fine breakfast but doesn't offer lunch or dinner. Tempting as it may be to linger in the fanciful rooms and shaded courtyards, guests will eventually have to exit the cocoon. —ANN ABEL



The Inn of the Anasazi (left) plays it traditional with adobe walls and quiet Southwestern decor; while the Inn of the Five Graces (right) embraces the exotic with Indian embroidered bedspreads and mosaic-tiled bathrooms.

➤ \$389–\$2,500. 888-767-3966, innoftheanasazi.com

➤ Rooms, \$450–\$950; house, \$2,500. 505-992-0957, fivegraces.com