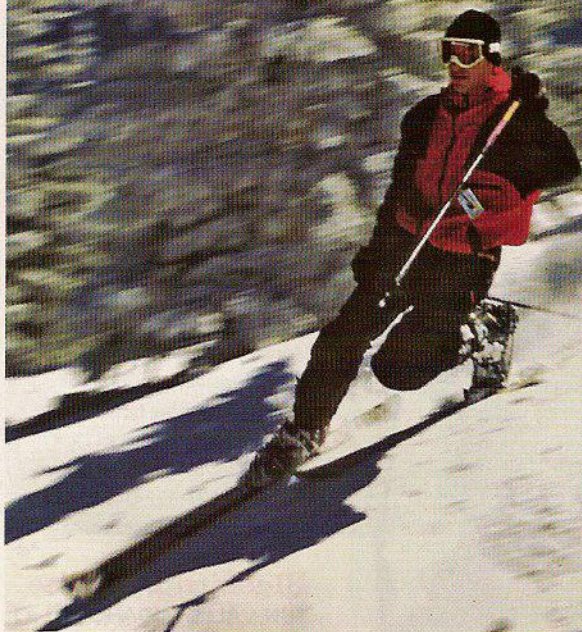


# REGIONAL + SOUTHWEST HIGHLIGHTS

## New Mexi-snow

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO



HIGH CULTURE: Learn to tele and soak up sushine just minutes from green chili.

Ski Santa Fe is like your favorite college indie band; it's refreshingly deep, quirky, not everyone's heard of it (thank God) and you want to experience it over and over again.

Thanks to the overwhelming popularity of bigger mountains up north, Santa Fe stays under most skiers' radars, but you'll be hard-pressed to find a more accessible mountain (it's only minutes from downtown) with more local culture and diverse terrain. The peak tops out at 12,053 feet, a stark alpine contrast to the surrounding desert. Despite the occasional dry year, the mountain averages 225 inches of snowfall. Take a hike past the resort boundary into the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and you'll find a respectable network of cross-country trails and backcountry bowls. A reputable ski school, along with a recreational racing program, day care and disabled skier programs round out the amenities. Unlike Taos, snowboarders are welcome here—though at 1,725 feet, the vertical drop isn't as spicy. *If you go:* 505-982-4429; [www.skisantafe.com](http://www.skisantafe.com).

### Pure Powder

ALTA/SNOWBIRD, UTAH

Legendary skier and deep ecologist Dolores La Chapelle, who taught at Alta in the 1950s and 1960s (and pioneered first descents down some of the area's gnarliest lines), claims that Alta is the only place in the world where you can truly ski "powder snow." A yearly total of 500 inches of Utah's finest, driest fluff supports that claim. Alta is decidedly core: The bomb-shelter base buildings were built to survive Little Cottonwood Canyon's unrelenting avalanches. You'll see septuagenarians sporting long, straight sticks ripping it up alongside fat-board new-schoolers. And true ski bums show up at 3 p.m., when you can ride the Sunnyside lift for free. You won't, however, see snowboarders, who aren't allowed here. We suggest you pony up \$69 for the Alta-Snowbird Combined Ticket, which allows you to ski over the ridge and into Snowbird Resort, where snowboarders are welcome (800-232-9542; [www.snowbird.com](http://www.snowbird.com)), and rack up a grand total of 4,700 acres of, oh well, we have to say it, "The Greatest Snow on Earth." 801-359-1078; [www.alta.com](http://www.alta.com).

### High and Dry

SNOWBOWL, ARIZONA

A desert oasis, the San Francisco Peaks jut skyward from the flat landscape. And at the heart of them is Snowbowl, serving up 2,300 feet of vertical and enough beginner and intermediate terrain to keep most families busy for a weekend. Advanced skiers can easily cross the resort boundary into the Kachina Peaks Wilderness for some sick backcountry (Peaks Ranger Station, 928-526-0866). Some winters are better than others (last year the area boasted an impressive 460 inches of snow), but even when the powder doesn't add up, Snowbowl's terrain park will keep you busy with boxes, rails and jumps. 928-779-1951; [www.arizonasnowbowl.com](http://www.arizonasnowbowl.com).

—GINA DeMILLO

## AROUND THE CLOCK: SANTA FE

### 8 a.m.

Warm up downtown at Guadalupe Café (505-982-9762), with northern New Mexican-style breakfast tostadas. Try them Christmas-style, half red chili topping and half green.

### 9 a.m.

If there's fresh powder, make a beeline to North Burn and South Burn via the Sierra Lift and the Tesuque Peak Triple. The Gay Way, also accessed here, is ideal for advanced beginners.

### 12:30 p.m.

Slide into Totemoff Bar & Grill, located mid-mountain, for a hot lunch and a seat by the fireplace.

### 4:30 p.m.

Duck into Maria's New Mexican Kitchen (505-983-7929) and choose from 100 homemade, authentic margaritas, voted best in the area.

### 7 p.m.

For dinner, Gabriel's (505-455-7000) is worth the drive 15 minutes north of town. Guacamole is made to order at your table, and the sopapillas are dangerously tasty.