

<December>

**MetroABQ Two-Hour Windfall (pt 2)**

**Filling in the Spaces: "Life Cycle" Mural**



### **The Center of the Universe**

It bears repeating that living in the MetroABQ comes with wonderful perks beyond the city's borders. From our center of the universe, we live within a two-hour drive of some of the most spectacular places, people, things & events in the country. Included here is a small sampling of some of the dopamine-releasing stops along the way.



### Quarai Ruins

The top image, the ruins at Quarai, one of the Salinas Pueblo Missions & a National Monument site, is a great day trip. From the National Park Service [website](#): *Located nine miles north of Mountainair, NM, Quarai is tucked at the base of the Manzano Mountains. A natural spring attracted people to the area for centuries & attracted the ancestral Pueblo people to settle for longer periods of time & introduce agriculture to the area.*





### **Valle de Oro**

The [Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge](#) is one of the most ambitious [urban conservation projects](#) in the nation.

The goal of the 13 year old sanctuary is to re-wild 570 acres of farmland along the Rio Grande in the the MetroABQ's South Valley. Above is a canal on the property that periodically floods the acreage, recreating wetlands for migrating birds & river animals. There are numerous trails zigzagging in & out of the bosque from the site.

### **Road to Mesa del Sol**

Not to scale...The two rattlesnakes that greet you as you enter or leave Mesa del Sol, the new-ish community south of the Sunport, are a treat to see up close. No need to roll down your windows as you pass, as there is a dedicated bike trail that avoids vehicle traffic all the way into the community. Viewing the snakes is worth the 16-mile roundtrip ride, beginning at the UNM main campus (see the [MetroABQ 400-mile bikepath map](#)). Another scene on your way into Mesa del Sol, mostly of Montessa Park, is below the snakes.







### **Sandia Ski Scene**

Heading north out of the Metro by first heading east to the Turquoise Trail is one of the best scenic drives in the state. First stop is the Sandia Mountains Ski Area off-season; above is the north-east view toward the Ortiz & San Pedro mountain chains.

### **Golden Open Space**

Did you know there is an incredible 1180-acre Open Space owned by the city of Albuquerque 35 miles away from the Metro? The Golden Open Space (#5 on the map), features flat-top mesas separated by several red & yellow sandstone arroyos, providing some of the more colorful views in Albuquerque's East Mountains area, two



images below. Who doesn't love maps: [Golden Open Space Map](#) & all [MetroABQ Open Spaces Maps](#).







## Madrid

There's more to the former mining town of Madrid than just quaint souvenir shops; ya just gotta poke around, above.





## Cerrillos Hills

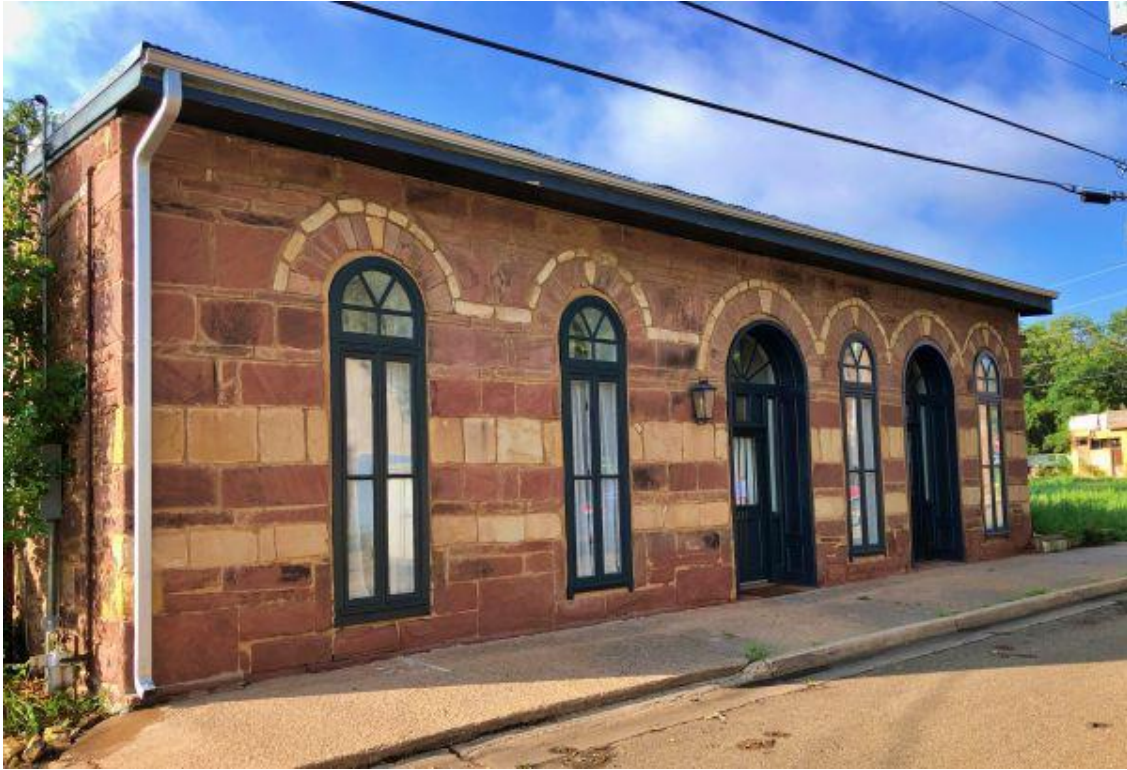
Curious why the Turquoise Trail was named thusly? Heading further north to the Cerrillos Hills State Park will give you answers, image above & below. It also has a cool sundial, "inspired by some very accurate sundials incorporated into structures built by prehistoric civilizations, like the Anasazi of Chaco Canyon." [Read about it here...](#)





## Pueblo Ruins

Are you are fascinated by archeology. Then you can't beat an on-site afternoon lecture about the San Cristobal Pueblo ruins, somewhere near the [town of Galisteo](#). Always interesting to see who came before...The image above is from the site.



**Las Vegas**--the one in New Mexico--is an amazingly quaint town plucked out-of-time. It has nine historic districts--over 700 structures--on the National Register of Historic Places, & skews strongly toward exquisite 19th century Victorian homes. The town lives *en el pasado* so much so that it's divided into two main sections (#9 & 10 on the map): the Old Town, with structures built *before* 1889, seen directly below, & the 'recent additions' in New Town, the buildings built *after* 1889, seen two images below. Noticing the architecture while walking the main route between the two sections might remind one of wild Western film scenes, & indeed many movies/scenes were filmed there, like *No Country for Old Men*, *Easy Rider* & *Red Dawn*, three favorites.

Las Vegas, NM, is an awesome place to explore, with interesting sights around most corners, like the [Dwan Light Sanctuary](#) on the United World College campus, & the [Stone Houses of Las Vegas](#). Two images below is a map of the town etched on steel.









**Next stop Taos.** There are so many stunning photo opportunities in Taos, including Arroyo Hondo/Arroyo Seco & areas around the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, that these seven are merely tasters. You'll just have to see for yourself...

Above is a scene heading north from Taos (#11), with the foothills of Wheeler Peak, the tallest NM mountain, in the background. Below is the façade of the Taos Mesa Brewery, which is on the way to the Taos Gorge Bridge, below that, & the unique [Earthship Community](#).







### Arroyo Hondo Mesa

Maybe you'll want to stay in a Brutalist-style Airbnb tiny home (above) perched near the Arroyo Hondo confluence to the Rio Grande (the two images below). A road leads down to the Rio Grande from atop the mesa, so whitewater rafting or hiking along the river never seemed so accessible. Ahhh, New Mexico...









Above, **the Rio Grande** is fabulous in winter & any time of the year. And it's important--notice that almost half of the activities revolve around the grande river, with much more than half of the population of the state living in direct proximity to it.



Above is a scene from **Abiquiu Lake** (#14 on the map), made famous by our Native Daughter Georgia O'Keeffe (Of course, she was not native to NM; however, the term "gains deeper meaning in literature to signify someone deeply connected to their environment." She certainly was connected to her environment.

Below are two images from the **Jemez Springs area** (#15), known for the vibrant red rocks, & public & private hot springs.







### Continental Divide Trail

Rainwater that falls just west of Grants will conceivably find its way to the Pacific Ocean, & water landing or flowing east of Grants will work its way toward the Gulf of Mexico & the Atlantic body of water. That's the cool concept behind the Continental Divide, & we have the trail to prove it.

### Zuni-Acoma Trail

Meanwhile, used for over 1,000 years by Ancestral Puebloans for trade, ceremony, & travel across the volcanic Malpais landscape, the Zuni-Acoma Trail cuts through the sharp badlands rock formations connecting the two pueblos. Both of these historic paths share a stretch of trail south of Grants, seen above & below. The scenery is sublime, & the walk very peaceful. If you find yourself at the trail marker sign below, you're only a mile from the west entrance parking area.



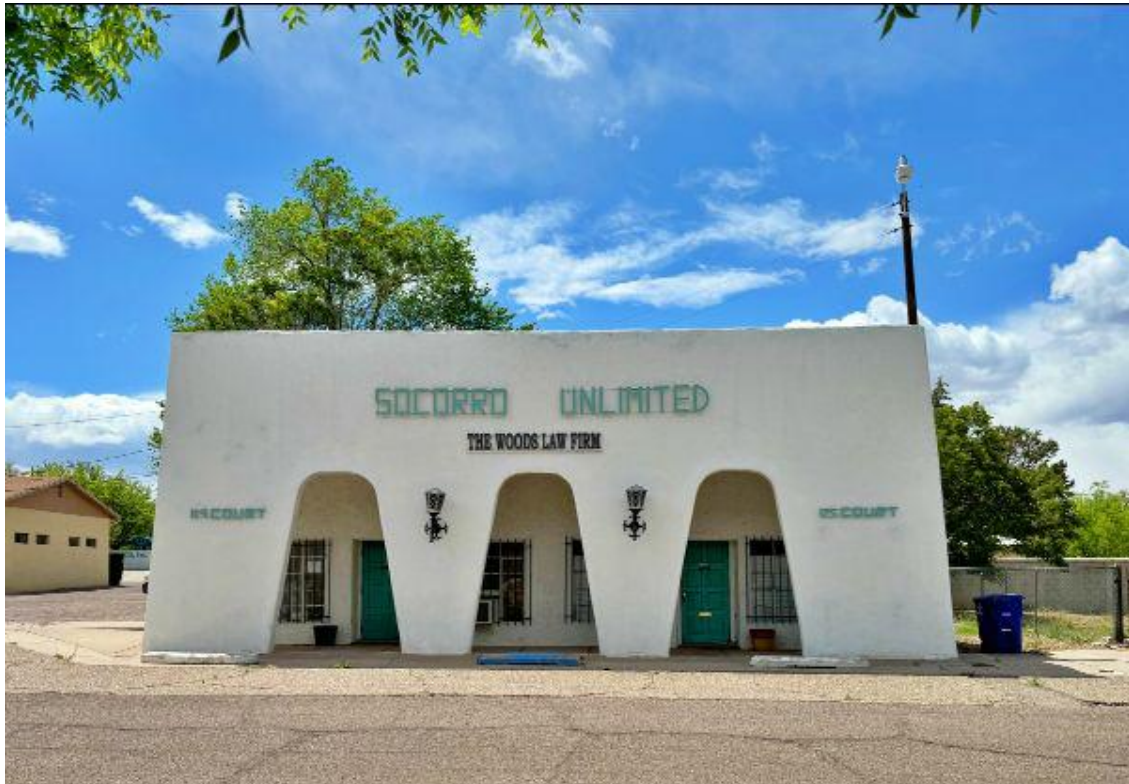


Above is a blurry bobcat crossing the road at the **Sevilleta National Wildlife Preserve**, just north of Socorro. The refuge is one of the largest wildlife preserves in the lower 48 states.

From the website: *A biome is a regional ecosystem with distinct types of vegetation, animals & microbes that have developed under specific soil & climatic conditions. The result: an area with a remarkable array of plant & animal life.*

*At Sevilleta, four different kinds of biomes intersect, creating a huge variety of*

creatures. In addition, the Rio Grande flows through the center of the refuge, creating an oasis along the river that plays a vital role within these mixed ecosystems. Because the environments are so diverse, they attract & support a wide diversity of native species, including 251 species of birds, 80 species of mammals, 58 species of reptiles, 15 species of amphibians, and more than 1,200 species of plants. The more commonly seen wildlife on the refuge includes mule deer, coyotes, pronghorns, snakes, lizards, & many different types of birds.



**Socorro is a cool small town.** You'd never know that gassing up there while passing through. You may notice some unique & historic architecture if you're at the plaza charging your car. And the [Socorro Historic Walking Tour brochure](#) might fill you in somewhat. Socorro doesn't reveal its treasures easily--you need walk around to get to know the place.

The image above & two below are examples of the unique architecture to be found there. The image directly below has a few different styles mixed into one building, creating a Vernacular-style found nowhere else. The building image two below was built in 1886, so kudos to the adobe structure with a flat earthen roof for surviving almost 140 years...





In New Mexico, even our highway **Rest-Stops** are interesting. The Walking Sands rest-stop, north of Socorro, is made up of many small, enclosed cabin-like shade structures. Rest up while enjoying the serene view, below.







### **Camino de Suenos**

Found alongside the road south of Socorro...Reading the Artist's Statement for the sculpture that can be seen from miles around, tells you a lot about the artist. He says that the sculpture, [Camino de Suenos](#), was "removed from the air conditioned comfort of ones vehicle." The sculpture was purposely installed about a quarter of a mile east from an Interstate 25 rest-stop. The catch is: there is no quick way to drive from the rest-stop to the artwork; the roads do not connect at the rest area. His wish was that you get out of your car & walk the easy path to it. It's worth the trek.



### Elephant Butte

Back to the Rio...The Elephant Butte Dam, above, is part of the Elephant Butte Lake Reservoir, the largest reservoir in the state. An extensive state park surrounds the lake on the south & west side, creating an unending list of outdoor activities.





### Ladder Ranch

Maybe you want to take a wilderness safari without killing anything, New Mexico-style...You've just found the perfect place. Thirty miles west of Elephant Butte sits a lush property about the size of the largest national parks.

[From the site:](#) *Ted Turner's Ladder Ranch is a 156,439-acre property in south central New Mexico with a wide array of wildlife diversity. The property is a breathtaking mix of ecosystems, ranging from desert grasslands to pine forests in the foothills of the Black Range (Gila Mountains). The Animas, Seco, Palomas, & Cuchillo streams bisect the ranch, & their restored riparian zones provide a rich habitat for many amphibians, fish & wildlife. The Ladder is home to bison that represent a unique historic gene pool. The ranch also has archaeological significance, with numerous remnants of the Mimbres culture.*

The image above was taken on the ranch near the Animas River that runs through it; & close to the acre-sized Mexican Grey Wolf Recovery pens.



### Truth or Consequences

The final, southern stop on the MetroABQ Two-Hour Windfall tour is to the unique, almost Vortex-like town of Truth or Consequences. Just about two hours drive from the MetroABQ, the humble desert town boasts hot mineral springs (often found on top ten lists of worldwide healthy mineral baths), the Rio Grande, Turtleback Mountain, & an abundance of eclectic townsfolk; each visit is definitely a memorable adventure. It's rare to find so much water in such a desert-like climate: rainwater falls from the sky, water flows past the town in the Rio Grande, another source comes out of the tap, plus private hot springs can be found flowing from property wells



throughout The District, which is an area attached to the quaint Downtown.

Astrid, trotting in the shallow river, below, appreciates all four sources of water in T or C, but prefers her Rio Grande excursions best...

The image two above is the architecturally interesting Windstream Internet building in The District. The sign currently reads: Garcia's Solar Dreams, which is a remnant from a recent movie filmed there called [Eddington](#).

Other movies or documentaries include: [Truth or Consequences](#), which is a speculative documentary about time & how we weave the past into the present & our possible future. Another movie from 1997 was [Truth or Consequences, NM](#). In all three movies, T or C was clearly a prominent character.



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& they will be added to the [MetroABQ mailing list](#).



**Meanwhile, back in the Metro...**

**"Life Cycle" Addition.** Filling in the spaces is what makes a city vibrant. What used to be an un(der)-used parking lot on Yale Blvd is now 21 one-bedroom apartments, perfect for its UNM-area location. The new Parador infill project, seen below, completed last spring, enhancing an area that needed it.

The city is further enlivening the project--& others like it--with the [Murals of Possibility](#) project. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency (MRA) offers up to \$750 per mural to help fund new public-facing art that celebrates local culture, history, & identity, in redevelopment areas of the city.

Enter renowned Artist [Larry Bob Phillips](#)...Commissioned to add his creative touch to



The Parador, he painted *Life Cycle*, a whimsical land & air montage scene, above. His work can be seen all over, especially in Nob Hill & places Downtown. Now he's represented in the UNM area, adjacent to the new Noodle District...With the new murals planned along Central Ave for the upcoming Route 66 Centennial celebrations, *Life Cycle* is a great addition. Notice it the next time you are getting your chai fix at the [Annapurna World Vegetarian Café](#), across the street.



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Thank you for making it this far...



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