One Day Taos Historic Tour for Families

- **AM: Discover Taos Plaza!**
The origins of this Plaza date back to the late 1500s with the first occupation of the Spanish in this valley. Today it is the jumping-off point for a visit to Taos, with its many colorful shops, galleries and restaurants. And around the Plaza, you’ll find even more unique shopping – from fine art, to wearable art to kitchen specialties to home furnishings with that unforgettable Taos style. Pick up a copy of the *Historic District Walking Tour* at the Taos Visitor Center and enjoy a self-guided tour of the Taos Plaza. Then take a break at *Twirl Play and Discovery Place* situated just off the plaza in a 150-year old Adobe building, filled with architectural gems. Let the kids explore the free outdoor and indoor play areas filled with multiple installations while you take a breather. With free activities daily, and a one of a kind toy store to browse around, you’ll find parents love it just as much as the children.

See www.twirlhouse.com or call 575-751-1402.

- **Lunch:**
Try these kid-friendly plaza lunch spots, all with outdoor patios or play areas in addition to kids’ menus: *Café Renato* (patios front and back), *Doc Martin’s* at the Historic Taos Inn (back patio area with access to gardens and koi pond is a best-kept secret), *Eske’s Brew Pub* (garden and sand pit), or *Stella’s Italian Restaurant*. *Michael’s Kitchen* is another popular family dining spot in town.

- **PM – Head over to the Harwood Museum.**
Families are always welcome and admission is free to children under 12. The Museum provides Family Explorer Packs that can be checked out at the Admissions Desk. These activity kits contain museum and family-friendly projects for children of all ages to aid in your visit to the Museum Galleries and Special Exhibitions. If you’re there on a Saturday, join their Saturday Arts for Families program, 10–11.30 am. Contact them at www.harwoodmuseum.org or call 575-758-9826.

- **Option B: Visit La Hacienda de Los Martinez**
This fortress-like trade center constructed in 1804, that many believe to be the end of El Camino Real (The Royal Road) from Mexico. Today the Hacienda’s 21 rooms, surrounding two courtyards, provide the visitor with a rare glimpse of the rugged frontier life of the early 1800’s. Kids will enjoy the Back in the Saddle exhibit featuring Floyd Morrow’s saddle making equipment, Buck Dunton’s personal cowboy gear and saddles, and the Museums’ collection of Western and military saddles. For more information call 575-758-0505 or www.taosmuseums.org.

- **Option C: Kit Carson House & Museum**
Take a guided tour of the adobe house that Indian Scout and mountain man, Kit Carson, gave to his wife Josefa Jaramillo as a wedding present in 1843. Now lovingly restored and filled with information and artifacts of his life, it’s a great way for kids and families to see what life was like in the Wild West days. Contact: (575) 758-4945 or www.kitcarsonhome.com.

When you leave, walk to the Historic Kit Carson Cemetery along Dragoon Lane where Kit Carson, his family members and other persons of historic interest including Mabel Dodge Luhan, are buried and let the kids enjoy some time in Kit Carson Park.

- **Option D: Visit Taos Pueblo**
This is the only living Native American community designated both a World Heritage Site by UNESCO and a National Historic Landmark. The multi-storied adobe buildings have been continuously inhabited for over 1000 years yet the Puebloan culture and way of life is as vibrant as ever. While visiting their sacred home, please be abide by the rules. For information on feast days and closures, please contact tourism@taospueblo.com or call Ilona Spruce at 575-758-1028.
• Dinner and after:  
All the restaurants around the Plaza have kids' menus and the earlier you go, the more welcoming of families they are! Most nights of the week, Taos offers family-friendly music options. The Historic Taos Inn's Adobe Bar has free live music daily; Taos Plaza is home to great live music every Thursday throughout the summer; Taos Mesa Brewing has regular shows every evening with a great outdoor space to run around in.

Too difficult to choose? Two or more days in Taos will let your family experience it all!

These family tour options were brought to you by Twirl Play and Discovery Place, 225 Camino de la Placita Taos. www.twirlhouse.com, 575-751-1402.

The Family Outdoors Plan

Tour One
Pack a picnic (pick up your favorite organic items at Cid's Food Market and hit the road, 5 miles north out of town, until you reach the 4-way stoplight, at which point turn left on U.S. 64.

Visit Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. Enjoy breathtaking views of the Rio Grande Gorge from a bridge that crosses 650 feet above the river. Get there early enough and you might see the ballooners dipping down into the river below. Observation platforms and picnic area, 11 miles northwest of Taos on U.S. 64

Park at the picnic area just west of the bridge and hike along the West Rim for more spectacular views. The path is just about jogging-stroller friendly and biking is also an option. For rentals of road, mountain, hybrid and children's bikes, as well as the best advice from local riders, check out any of these bike shops: Gearing Up, www.gearingupbikes.com or 575-751-0365; Taos Cyclery, www.taoscyclery.com or 575-758-5562; Cottam's Ski and Outdoor, 575-758-2822, 800-322-8267 or www.cottamsoutdoor.com.

From here, make the short journey to the Greater World Earthship Visitor Center and learn some fascinating facts about living off the grid. An Earthship is a radically sustainable home made of recycled materials. They create electricity from the sun and wind, collect water from rain and snow melt (and use it four times!), manage sewage in botanical planter treatment sites, generate cooling from the sun and the earth and even grow food for their owners both inside and outside. Earthships can be built in any climate, anywhere in the world and allow their owners to live in harmony with the environment, complete with security and modern amenities. Contact: Tanya Parks, 575-751-0462 or biotecture@earthship.com. If you're up for further adventure, the newly paved West Rim Road will take you part way to Pilar, but then the road turns into gravel with numerous switchbacks, so it's not for the faint-hearted, although kids seem to love it! Enjoy a picnic lunch along the river, with fishing and swimming, before heading back to town through Taos Canyon.

• Option 1:  
Head back the way you came, and stop off at any of these great kids’ play areas for some fun before dinner. Kit Carson Park, Fred Baca Park and Wetlands Walk, Taos Youth & Family Center and Twirl Playspace all offer a multitude of play options for kids.

• Dinner:  
Try one of these locally-owned, informal dining options: Guadalajara Grill, Five Star Burger, Taos Diner North or South, Hunan's or Songs for an easy and casual dinner after a busy day out.

These family tour options were brought to you by Twirl Toystore & Playspace, 225 Camino de la Placita Taos. www.twirlhouse.com, 575-751-1402.
The Family Outdoor Plan

Tour Two
Pack a picnic (pick up your favorite organic items at Cid's Food Market and hit the road, 5 miles north out of town until you reach the 4-way stoplight, at which point turn left on U.S. 64.

Visit Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. Enjoy breathtaking views of the Rio Grande Gorge from a bridge that crosses 650 feet above the river. Get there early and you might catch the ballooners dipping down into the river below. There are observation platforms and picnic area, 11 miles northwest of Taos on U.S. 64.

Head back to 4-way stoplight, turn north on NM 522 and, just before you descend the hill into San Cristobal, turn left on Hwy 515 and make a stop at the Red River Fish Hatchery to feed the fish. Just north of Questa, turn west onto NM 378 and head for the Wild Rivers Recreation Area. It’s the point where the Red River flows into the Rio Grande. View the canyons from the rim or hike down but be forewarned, the hike back up can be strenuous, so you might have to give piggybacks to smaller kids – and be sure to take lots of energy snacks and water!

Then, head back towards Arroyo Hondo, turning left onto the Hondo-Seco road towards Arroyo Seco, making sure you cross over State Road 230 at the crossroads. Check out the local artisan shops including the eclectic Taos Mercantile. Treat the family to some homemade ice-cream at the Taos Cow and play along the shady river bank.

Stop in at the Quail Ridge Tennis Resort or the Northside Spa for a swim, hot tub and shower before dinner! Family guest passes available.

• Dinner
Enjoy pizza at Pizanosit has an outside space with great views. Super kid-friendly.

The Family Outdoor Plan

Tour Three
• AM
Pick a trail along the ski valley road — local favorites include Yerba, Italianos, and Manzanitas — take it at the pace of your smallest group member and turn around whenever you’re ready, although it’s nice to make it to the Aspen Groves. Remember, you are at altitude so take plenty of water and sunscreen, and lots of rests too!

• OR:
Head straight up to the ski valley for a choice of hikes of varying difficulty. Bull of the Woods is the easiest, and particularly pretty when the meadows are filled with summertime flowers. If you’re up for a challenge, you can venture further, to Gold Hill or Wheeler Peak. Many people like to drive up to the Bavarian, past the ski valley, and hike up to Williams Lake. Bighorn sheep are often spotted on this hike.

• Enjoy lunch, European-style on the deck at the Bavarian, or head back into the resort for some local specialties at Tim's Stray Dog Cantina or the Edelweiss Hotel.

• PM
Ride the summer chair lifts for beautiful views of the ski valley in full glory, or try your hand at Frisbee golf. Check in at Taos Ski & Boot for tickets.

Stop in at the Quail Ridge Tennis Resort or the Northside Spa for a swim, hot-tub and shower before dinner! Family guest passes available.

• Dinner
Head to Pizanos, Orlando's or Outback Pizza — all have outside space and are super kid-friendly. For more formal dining that is still family-friendly, try a local’s favorite, The Love Apple (reservations are highly recommended).
The Family Action/Adventure Plan

• AM – Balloon Ride over Gorge
If you think Taos is breathtaking from the ground, you should see it from above. Take a balloon flight over Taos and enjoy the company of some well-informed and highly entertaining guides, not to mention a champagne breakfast to celebrate your flight. Not cheap, but worth every penny. 
*Eske’s Paradise Balloons* -575-751-6098 or www.taosballooning.com; *Pueblo Balloon Company* -575-751-9677 or www.puebloballoon.com; *Taos Balloon Rides* - 575-224-6022 or www.taosballoonrides.com; Ages 6 and over, but younger children can ride in the chase vehicle. Alternatively, non-flying members of your group can head out to the Gorge Bridge and watch the ballooners dip down into the river below, then meet up with the rest of the party for breakfast.

• Option Two – White-water rafting
Taos is home to the Rio Grande Gorge, with scenic rapids ranging from class I through V. Choose from the Taos Box, Race Course or Orilla Verde to fit your comfort level. Call *Los Rios River Runners* – 575-776-8854 or 800-544-1181 or contact through www.losriosriverrunners.com; *Far Flung Adventures* -575-7582628, 800-359-2627 or contact through www.farflung.com; *Big River Raft Trips* -575-758-9711 or 800-748-3760 or contact through www.bigriverrafts.com; *Native Sons Adventures-Rafting* 575-758-9342 or 800-753-7559 or contact through www.newmex.com/nsa; *Rio Grande Rapid Transit-Rafting* -800-222-7238; or *Cottam’s Rio Grande River Trips* – 575-758-2822, 800-322-8267 or contact through www.cottamsoutdoor.com. Ages 12+. If you have some younger family members, or ones not quite ready to take the plunge, you can drive down through the Gorge on Hwy. 68 and pull over at various spots to check out the braver members of the family in action. Then head down to the pull out to meet them for lunch.

• Lunch
Still feeling adventurous? Then your lunch should include some local chile — green, red or both (use the term “Christmas” for extra kudos) at any of these New Mexican and Mexican restaurants – *Guadalajara Grill* (north and south sides), *Ricky’s*, *Taos Diner*, *Orlando’s*, *El Taoseno*, *La Cocina, and Tequila’s* are just some of the haunts local families love to frequent.

• PM – Mountain Climbing
Taos is home to world-class rock climbing, from bolted sport climbing routes on steep basalt to long classic routes in the mountains. *Mountain Skills Rock Climbing* offers guided trips to the best rock climbing destinations in Taos and Santa Fe. Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned veteran, you will be led by their professional, friendly, and experienced guides through an enjoyable experience. Contact www.climbingschoolusa.com or call 575-776-2222. Family groups welcome. Equipment provided.

• Option Two – Biking
Taos has a multitude of great bike trails. Flatter rides along the Rio Grande Gorge are always popular, not least for the great scenery. Alpine riding can be steep and technical, so plan your route carefully or take a tour. For rentals of road, mountain, hybrid and children’s bikes, as well as the best advice from local riders, check out any of the below bike shops. *Gearing Up Bicycle Shop*, www.gearingupbikes.com or call 575-751-0365. Taos Cyclery www.taoscyclery.com or call 575-758-5562. *Cottam’s Ski and Outdoor*, 575-758-2822 or 800-322-8267 or contact them through www.cottamsoutdoor.com. For younger kids, both the town’s parks have paved biking paths, and the *Taos Youth & Family Center* offers other two-wheeled riding options in the form of a BMX course, skating rink and skateboard park.

• Dinner
Pizza, Taos-style. Some great options include *Mondo Italiano, Pizanos, Pizza Outback, Chalupp’s,* and *Stella’s Italian Restaurant.*