



MAPS BY BURELL BRENNEMAN, ©WEBB DESIGN STUDIO, TAOS. THIS MAP MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED IN ANY MANNER WITHOUT WRITTEN CONSENT FROM WEBB DESIGN, 575.758.3447

■ GREAT PLAINS/MOUNTAINS TOUR



GREAT PLAINS/MOUNTAINS TOUR

Distance: 250 miles/405 KM (half interstate/half state highway)

Time: 7-8 hours minimum

Route: From Taos Plaza, Hwy. 64 east to Cimarron; Hwy. 21 southeast to Springer; Hwy. 56 east to Chico Springs; Hwy. 25 south to Wagon Mound and Watrous; Hwy. 121 north to Fort Union; Hwy. 25 south to Las Vegas; Hwy. 518 north to Taos.

Take a trip to the other side of the mountains for a history lesson of what happens when two empires meet. The older north-south Spanish Empire ended in Santa Fe and the younger, brasher east-west American Empire reached no further than Independence, Missouri. A grand 600-mile prairie lay in between, with mountains to pass and rivers to ford. Wagon after wagon would follow the Santa Fe Trail, leaving a legacy of tracks that can still be seen today.

Drive through **Taos Canyon** to the majestic **Moreno Valley** and continue past the dramatic granite walls of **Cimarron Canyon** to **Cimarron**, a stop on the Santa Fe Trail and the home of Lucien Maxwell, at one time the largest single landowner in the western hemisphere. Take a self-guided tour of Cimarron's 18 historic sites, including the **St. James Hotel** with its famous resident ghost and bullet-riddled bar ceiling and the **Old Mill Museum**, which exhibits memorabilia from the wild west.

South of Cimarron, visit **Philmont Scout Ranch**, the world's largest camping facility. Three museums on the ranch are open to the public. Continue up the beautiful valley to the south. See if you can locate the Santa Fe wagon ruts just south of mile marker 15 on Hwy. 21. In **Springer**, visit the **Santa Fe Trail Museum**, located in the historic **Old County Court House**, and the **Livery Stable**, which houses a large collection of antiques of the Southwest.

Continue south to **Wagon Mound**, now a quiet town with straight streets that parallel the Santa Fe Railroad. Take time to walk through Wagon Mound and admire the numerous examples of classic northern New Mexico territorial style adobe buildings. Travellers on the Santa Fe Trail called both the town and the hills 'Wagon Mound' and thus it has been named ever since.

From Wagon Mound south to the roadside hamlet of **Watrous**, some of the finest Santa Fe Trail ruts are visible from the access road northeast of exit 366. Continue to **Fort Union National Monument** for a superb history lesson. At one time Fort Union was the largest fort west of the Mississippi.

Now drive to **Las Vegas**. Once the principal town on the Santa Fe Trail and the largest city in New Mexico during the heyday of the Santa Fe Railroad, Las Vegas reflects its history with 900 buildings on the National Registry - more than any other city in the U.S. The **Rough Riders Museum** is filled with mementos and relics of the Spanish American war.

Wind through small mountain valleys and villages to **La Cueva Mill**, a restored mill and home to a burgeoning raspberry industry. Between August and October, buy fresh berries at the farm store or cool off with a raspberry sundae. Admire the tiny village of **Mora**, which stands at the northern entrance to the beautiful 15-mile-long Mora valley. Stop at the **Cleveland Roller Mill**, the last flour mill to be built in New Mexico, the last to cease operations and the only roller mill in New Mexico with its original milling works. The mill was converted into a museum with exhibits on Mora County history and culture.

You'll have the chance to visit family-owned **Sipapu Resort and Ski Area** for a charming and old-fashioned mountain experience. Drive through scenic Carson National Forest to complete your journey back to Taos.

