



Corrales Road Scenic Byway

Laurie Frantz

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Be sure to drive the Corrales Road Scenic Byway with your windows rolled down, or better yet, walk. Listen to the sounds of birds in the bosque and water in the acequia. Breathe in the earthy smells of livestock and tilled earth, and roasting green chile in the fall. Revel in the lush greenness of the best remaining example of the middle Rio Grande cottonwood forest. Experience an oasis of rural life in the middle of the busy metropolitan Albuquerque area.

The beginning of the byway looks like a busy intersection in any large city, complete with heavy traffic and shopping centers on every corner. But as you drive north, things begin to change. A sign prohibits trucks over five tons on Corrales Road, and another sign suggests "Drive slow, see our village. Drive fast, see our judge". A truck pulling a huge load of hay sits by the road. Goats, geese, cattle, horses, and ostriches wander around property enclosed by split rail fences.

The old Corrales acequia, excavated in the early 18th century, parallels the road on the west side, and the Rio Grande parallels the road on the east. This surfeit of water makes the area greener and more lush than is usual in New Mexico. The Rio Grande feeds the Corrales Bosque, which was annexed by the Village of Corrales in the 1970s and later declared a nature preserve. The Bosque's 400 acres along ten miles of the river provide habitat for over 180 species of migrating and nesting birds. Trails through the Bosque provide places for walkers, joggers, bicyclists, and horseback riders to exercise. Bird watching and fishing are also favorite activities.

Tiwa Indians inhabited and farmed this area long before it became known as Los Corrales de Alameda. They practiced irrigated agriculture as long as 1300 years ago. Corrales was established on part of the 106, 274 acre Alameda Land Grant, given to Corporal Francisco Montes y Vigil in 1710 for his role in the reconquest of New Mexico. Spanish law required that Vigil live on the grant, and since he was unable to, he sold it to Captain Juan Jose Gonzales Bas in 1712. The extensive corrals that Captain Gonzales built here gave the settlement its name.

You may notice vineyards along the byway. In the 1860s, Italian and French farming families began to settle in Corrales. By the 1880s, a French family was successfully growing several varieties of grapes. By 1900, Corrales was known for its vineyards. You may also notice that the land has been divided into long, narrow plots. By Spanish tradition, and necessitated by the arid climate, all heirs received land with access to the irrigation ditch. Through subsequent generations, the plots became more and more narrow.

San Ysidro, the patron saint of farmers, is also the patron saint of Corrales. The San Ysidro Church (804 Old Church Road; call 505-897-1513 or 505-897-0502 for public hours) was built after the Iglesia Jesus, Maria y Jose was destroyed by a flood in 1868. A second San Ysidro Church was built in 1961, and the old one was desanctified. It began a slow decline, helped along by a fire and the use of the building as a theater. The Corrales Historical Society rescued it in 1974 and began its restoration in 1987. It is again a meeting place for the community, used for public events and concerts, and represents a classic example of a nineteenth century Hispanic New Mexican village church.

Casa San Ysidro, part of the Albuquerque Museum, is just across the road from the old church (793 Old Church Road; public tours, \$4.00, Wednesday through Saturday, 9:30 and 1:30; Sunday, 2:00; 505-898-3915). The Gutierrez family, early settlers in the area, built a hacienda here around 1875 which was no longer standing when Alan and Shirley Minge

purchased the property in 1953. The Minges decided to build a reproduction of a Spanish colonial hacienda on the still-existing foundation. The house contains architectural details and construction techniques dating from the early 1600s through the Territorial period in the 1800s and houses a collection of rare Hispanic New Mexican artifacts.

Savor a slower pace of life on the Corrales Road Scenic Byway. Be charmed by the flavor that the vestiges of Spanish colonial life give the village. Come away refreshed by the respite from city traffic and bustle. Enjoy.