



Socorro Historical District Scenic Byway

Click to view Area attractions and map in new window.

Socorro's Wheel of History, a bronze sculpture north of the town plaza, neatly summarizes the area's development, and the byway's major features. The route may only stretch 3 miles, but winds through many centuries. From the original Piro Indian Pueblos, to Spanish Colonial settlement, to mining boomtown, and finally to an important center of science and technology, Socorro has boomed, busted, and boomed once again. Nearby are nature preserves, the site of a major fort, and one of the world's premier facilities for astronomy. In Socorro San Miguel Mission A mission church was built by two Franciscan priests in the Don Juan de Oñate expedition of 1598, at the site of the Piro-speaking Teypana Pueblo. That was replaced between 1615 and 1621 by the present structure, the oldest in Socorro. After the Pueblo Revolt in 1680, it stood abandoned, but the massive adobe walls and vigas and supporting corbel arches saved it from collapse. When the area was resettled in 1815, the old walls and beams became the framework for the church that still exists today, a few blocks from the town plaza. www.socorronm.gov/attractions

Historic Walking Tour

Fertile land and a good water supply made Socorro a desirable place to settle, and by the late 1850s, about 600 people lived here. With the discovery, though, of silver and lead in the nearby Magdalena Mountains and subsequent arrival of the railroad, Socorro became a wild boomtown. The walking tour of homes and commercial buildings near the Socorro plaza features architectural styles from the Spanish Colonial and Territorial past. The Garcia Opera House, the Hilton Block, and two homes on the National Register of Historic Places (the Bursum and Chambon houses) are among the many structures to be seen. Pick up the map at the Socorro Heritage and Visitors Center, 217 Fisher Avenue. www.socorronm.gov/socorro_rec/sites_museums.asp

Hammel Museum

Begun as a beer garden and then brewery by the Hammel family from Bavaria, this remarkable stone and adobe structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Hammel Brewery produced Illinois Beer, since the company first started in that state. It expanded with the 1880's area mining boom. After Prohibition, it continued to operate as an icehouse and soft drink bottling plant until the 1950s. Now headquarters for the Socorro County Historical Society, the organization celebrates Oktoberfest her annually. The Hammel Museum retains much of the machinery and equipment of the brewery and the ice plant. It also houses a collection of exhibits and artifacts related to ranching, mining, railroading, and social history. Open the first Saturday of each month and by request. 600 Sixth Street at Neal Avenue www.socorrohistory.org

New Mexico Tech

New Mexico Tech is an undergraduate and graduate university specializing in science and engineering education and research. Tech divisions and departments include world-class research programs in hydrology, geophysics, astrophysics, atmospheric physics, explosives research, anti-terrorism technology, information technology, and security. 801 Leroy Place www.nmt.edu

New Mexico Tech Mineral Museum

Established in 1889, the collection of 15,000 mineral specimens was assembled to assist with the education of engineers and geologists and grew to be one of the finest in the world.

Among the glittering displays is Coronado's Treasure Chest, a exhibition of the gold, silver, and precious gems that were the objects of the Conquistador's travels and travails. Open daily. On the NM Tech campus Workman Addition www.geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/

Nearby Socorro:

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

Each season, the Bosque del Apache offers unique bird and wildlife viewing opportunities. Peak visitation occurs in winter when bald eagles and thousand of sandhill cranes and snow geese flock to the fields and marshes. 9 miles south of Socorro www.friendsofthebosque.org

Sevillita National Wildlife Refuge

In the Chihuahuan Desert, the land was once part of a Spanish Land Grant and used extensively for ranching. Today, it's managed primarily as a research area, and is closed to most recreational uses. Limited waterfowl and dove hunting is available, though, and special tours may be arranged. It contains nesting areas for the rare Southwest Willow Flycatcher. Exit 169 off I-25, 20 miles north of Socorro

www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/newmex/sevilleta

The Very Large Array

The Very Large Array (VLA) comprises 27 radio telescopes in a "Y" pattern spread across the plains of San Agustin 50 miles west of Socorro. Each telescope has an 82-foot dish and weighs 230 tons. The VLA has been used by more astronomers and has been mentioned in more scientific papers than any other radio telescope in the world. Self-guided tours daily. Occasional star parties and guided tours as well. A facility of the National Science Foundation. 50 miles west of Socorro off NM Hwy. 60 www.nrao.edu

Fort Craig National Historic Site

Fort Craig was built in 1854 at the north end of the treacherous stretch of the Camino Real known as the Jornada del Muerto. It was 1 of 8 forts situated along the Rio Grande Valley to protect trade and later settlement. Fort Craig played a crucial role in Indian campaigns and the Civil War. Military excursions from Fort Craig pursued such notable Apache leaders as Geronimo and Victorio. The Fort was home to Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th Cavalry and 38th and 125th Infantry, the predominantly Hispanic New Mexico Volunteers and New Mexico Militia, and household names like Kit Carson, Rafael Chacón and Captain Jack Crawford. The site is open daily from dawn to dusk. 32 miles south of Socorro off I-25 at exit 124 or 115 www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/recreation/socorro/fort_craig.html