

New Mexico Facts and Trivia

- 1.** Santa Fe is the highest capital city in the United States at 7,000 feet above sea level.
- 2.** The province that was once Spanish New Mexico included all of present day New Mexico, most of Colorado and Arizona, and slices of Utah, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Wyoming. The Original American Territory of New Mexico that congress created in 1850 included all of New Mexico and Arizona plus parts of Colorado, Nevada, and Utah. The boundaries of present day New Mexico were drawn by congress in 1863 but New Mexico didn't become a state until 1912.
- 3.** Each October Albuquerque hosts the world's largest international hot air balloon fiesta.
- 4.** Las Cruces makes the world's largest enchilada the first weekend in October at the "Whole Enchilada Fiesta".
- 5.** Lakes and Rivers make up only .002% of the state's total surface area. The lowest water-to-land ratio of all 50 states. Most of New Mexico's lakes are man-made reservoirs. A dam on the Rio Grande formed the Elephant Butte Reservoir the state's largest lake.
- 6.** The Rio Grande is New Mexico's longest river and runs the entire length of New Mexico.
- 7.** The world's first Atomic Bomb was detonated on July 16, 1945 on the White Sands Testing Range near Alamogordo. North of the impact point a small placard marks the area known as Trinity Site. The bomb was designed and manufactured in Los Alamos.
- 8.** White Sands National Monument is a desert, not of sand, but of gleaming white gypsum crystals.
- 9.** Hatch is known as the "Green Chile capital of the world".
- 10.** New Mexico is home of Philmont Scout Ranch located in Cimarron.
- 11.** Grants was at one time known as the "Carrot capital of the country" until the process of cellophane wrapping began and California took over title. More recently Grants has been known as the "Uranium capital of the world" and produced the bulk of the nation's uranium supply during the post-World War II and Cold War era.
- 12.** New Mexico is one of the four corner states. Bordering at the same point with Colorado, Utah and Arizona.
- 13.** The Palace of Governors in Santa Fe, built in 1610, is one of the oldest public buildings in America.
- 14.** More than 25,000 Anasazi sites have been identified in New Mexico by archeologists. The Anasazi, an amazing civilization who were the ancestors of the

Pueblo, where around for 1300 years. Their great classical period lasted from 1100-1300 AD.

15. The state of New Mexico shares an international border with the country of Mexico.

16. The leaves of the Yucca, New Mexico's state flower, can be used to make rope, baskets and sandals.

17. 1/4 of New Mexico is forested, and the state has 7 National Forests including the Nation's largest, the 3.3 million acre Gila National Forest which includes the Gila Wilderness.

18. The largest fire in the state's history was ignited on May 4, 2000 in the National Park Service's Bandelier National Monument, when a controlled burn meant to clear away dry brush and prevent future wild fires leaped out of control due to high winds. 25,000 people, including all the residents of Los Alamos, were forced to evacuate their homes.

19. In 1950 the little cub that was to become the National Fire Safety symbol Smokey the Bear was found trapped in a tree when his home in Lincoln National Forest was destroyed by fire. In 1963, in Smokey's honor, the New Mexican legislature chose the black bear to be the official state animal.

20. The word "Pueblo" is used to describe a group of people, a town, or an architectural style. There are 19 Pueblo groups that speak 4 distinct languages. The Pueblo people of the southwest have lived in the same location longer than any other culture in the Nation.

21. The Navajo, the Nation's largest Native American Group, have a reservation that covers 14 million Acres.

22. To a certain degree New Mexico's Indian Reservations function as states within a state where tribal law may supersede state law.

23. New Mexico's State Constitution officially states that New Mexico is a bilingual State, and 1 out of 3 families in New Mexico speak Spanish at home.

24. In some isolated villages, such as Truchas, Chimayo', and Coyote in north-central New Mexico, some descendants of Spanish conquistadors still speak a form of 16th century Spanish used no where else in the world today.

25. The Palace of Governors in Santa Fe is the oldest Government Building in the United States.

26. At Lake Valley, miners discovered silver in veins so pure that the metal could be sawn off in blocks, instead of having to be dug out by traditional methods.

27. The father of modern rocketry Massachusetts scientist Robert Goddard whom some called a crackpot, came to New Mexico in 1930 to test rocket-ship models. From those humble beginnings the aerospace industry became one of New Mexico's leading industries.

28. To test the latest rockets White Sands Missile Range was created on the same land where the first atom bomb had been exploded.

- 29.** After WWII Los Alamos and Albuquerque had many new laboratories. Hundreds of highly educated Scientists and Engineers moved in the state. New Mexico soon had a higher percentage of people with Ph.D.s than any other state.
- 30.** 1 out of 4 workers in New Mexico work directly for the Federal Government. State and local governments are also major employers.
- 31.** Public education was almost non-existent in New Mexico until the end of the 19th century. As late as 1888 there was not a single public college or high school in the entire territory.
- 32.** Two important aspects of New Mexico's economy are scientific research such as the nuclear energy research carried out at Sandia National Laboratories and mining of natural resources such as oil, natural gas, uranium, potash, copper, coal, zinc, gold and silver.
- 33.** New Mexico has far more sheep and cattle than people. There are only about 12 people per square mile.
- 34.** Since New Mexico's climate is so dry 3/4 of the roads are left unpaved. The roads don't wash away.
- 35.** During the height of the so-called lawless era of the late 1800' when Lew Wallace served as territorial Governor, he wrote the popular historical novel Ben-Hur. First published in 1880, it was made into a movie in 1959 starring Charlton Heston.
- 36.** Saint Paul's United Methodist church in Las Cruces has 7 bell choirs.
- 37.** The world famous Santa Fe Opera has an open-air (outdoor) theater situated dramatically outside of the capital city in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.
- 38.** The town of Deming is known for its annual duck races.
- 39.** Cimarron was once known as the "Cowboy capital of the world". Some of the old west's most famous names, such as Kit Carson and "Buffalo Bill" Cody lived there. A quote from the Las Vegas Gazette illustrates how lawless Cimarron was. "Everything is quiet in Cimarron. Nobody has been killed in 3 days."
- 40.** Roswell the states 4th largest city was founded in 1869 when a professional gambler established a lone store on the cattle trail.
- 41.** Moon Rocks can be found at the International Space hall of fame that is located in Alamogordo.
- 42.** Tens of thousands of bats live in the Carlsbad Caverns. The largest chamber of Carlsbad Caverns is more than 10 football fields long and about 22 stories high.
- 43.** Taos Pueblo is located 2 miles north of the city of Taos. It is one of the oldest continuously occupied communities in the United States. People still live in some of its 900 year old buildings.
- 44.** New Mexico's largest city Albuquerque was founded in 1706 as a Spanish farming community. It was named after a province in Spain.
- 45.** New Mexico's capital city Santa Fe is the ending point of the 800 mile Santa Fe Trail.

46. The City of Truth or Consequences was once called Hot Springs. In 1950 the town changed its name to the title of a popular radio quiz program.

47. The town of Gallup calls itself the "Indian Capital of the World" and serves as a trading center for more than 20 different Indian groups. Every August it is the site of the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial

48. New Mexico was named by 16th century Spanish explorers who hoped to find gold and wealth equal to Mexico's Aztec treasures.

49. Native Americans have been living in New Mexico for some twenty thousand years. The Pueblo, Apache, Comanche, Navajo, and Ute peoples were in the New Mexico region when Spanish settlers arrived in the 1600s.

50. On the same desert grounds where today's space age missiles are tested, ten-thousand-year-old arrowheads have been found. New Mexican history has ranged from arrows to atoms and has embraced Indian, Spanish and Anglo cultures. Few states can claim such a distinctive past