

Let's Go! IAPS by *Brittani Faulkes*

Three things convinced me to attend the 2007 IAPS convention in Albuquerque this May: How could I not go to something everyone raves about when it is so close to home? It would be great to meet some of the Canadian PAC members from east of BC and I've always wanted an excuse to go to New Mexico!

I headed off to IAPS '07 wondering what to expect. I had signed up for 2 Doug Dawson workshops and intended to attend the meet and greet banquet. Meet and greet it was, as I arrived a bit late and not knowing what the Canadian contingent looked like, I began circulating the room at one end, asking at each table if they were or knew where the Canadians were. I was invited to sit and get to know folks from all over North America and by the time I got to the last table in the convention rooms, I found the Canadians - just as they were getting ready to leave! I had stellar intentions to reconnect with them over the next few days, but too many distractions got in the way.

If any of you who have never been to an IAPS convention are contemplating reasons to go or not to go, let me try to convince you to go! Reasons? You will be surrounded by hundreds of people who are brimming with enthusiasm for the pastel medium and the combined synergy will leave the air humming with possibilities. You will have the opportunity to participate in workshops, plein air events and open-to-all demonstrations, given by some of the best of the best in the pastel world. You will have an opportunity to view and touch and try out pastels and pastel products from a large and diverse group of retailers, most offering special convention pricing. And you will be able to recharge those worn down pastellists' batteries.

IAPS 2009 will return to Albuquerque. You can definitely count me in!

What does Albuquerque hold in store for you if you go?

Whenever I travel, I take in all the art I can. New Mexico is a perfect destination for artists and art lovers. Travelling with a friend, Albuquerque was the hub of our travels.

One hour north is Sante Fe's famous Canyon Road, with its old adobe homes converted into galleries and restaurants.

We covered most of the 85 galleries and artisan shops and gnoshed at two of the six restaurants. We also visited the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, the Andrew Smith Photography Gallery and the historic downtown Plaza. Plaza area must-sees include the Museum of Fine Arts and nearby San Miguel Mission.

A short distance north of Sante Fe is the famous Santuario de Chimayo, with its old church, shrines, and huge cottonwoods. The Chimayo area contains many shops with the native pottery and weaving for sale. This is a nice 2 hour excursion out of Sante Fe, which also takes you through the low-rider capital of the U.S., Espanola.

In Albuquerque we took the Sandia Peak Tramway on one of its first morning runs - a spectacular start to a day. The 4.5 km tramway boasts the longest stretch of cable in the world and

offers breathtaking views of craggy pink rock formations. Sandia Peak is said to be a

great way to view the annual October Mass Ascension of the hot air balloons. Another Albuquerque destination was Old Town - the historic Plaza of Route 66 with its interesting shops, galleries and restaurants.

One afternoon's outing took us to the famous nearby Acoma Pueblo. As you head toward Acoma, spectacularly huge rock formations seem to sprout like mushrooms from the sands. One is capped by the historic "Sky City" of Acoma, which has been continually inhabited since the 1500s. Choosing to maintain the old way of life, its inhabitants continue to live without electricity or running water and many adobe homes have horno ovens outside their doors for baking breads. A bus takes a tour group to the top of the mesa and a guide takes you through the old village. We were there in the late afternoon from 4 to 6 p.m., arriving during a slate grey sky lighting storm and leaving with incredible shafts of sunlight breaking through the clouds and side lighting the adobe buildings and rock up-croppings. We enjoyed a docent guided tour of the museum and stopped for a meal at the Yaaka Café in the Cultural Center. The fry bread and sopapilla are perfect accompaniments for the hot chili dishes. (If in doubt, ask for the chili sauces to be on the side, not on, your meal!)

Routes to Taos include the I-25, a quick two hour trip, otherwise there is a circle trip with the "High Road" going through scenic mountain country and the eastern loop along Routes 64 and 84 which takes you through Georgia O'Keeffe's old stomping grounds of Abiquiu and Ghost Ranch. We took the high road to Taos and returned via a secondary route in order to view the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge.

In Taos we stopped at the El Taoseno roadhouse, an interesting stop. We arrived at noon on Mother's Day and the restaurant was full of families with grandmothers and screaming babies. It also hosted Harley riders wearing full colours, early arrivals for the area's Memorial Day rides. Most memorable for me was the salsa and chips...the perfect blend of pleasure and pain in one little bowl.

We had two must-see places on our list, the Ranchos de Taos Church and the Taos Pueblo. When we arrived at Ranchos the parking lot was jammed. A kindly shop owner invited us to come back at 5 p.m. to climb the ladder to the roof of his adobe store in order to have unobstructed views of the back of the church, a view for which Georgia O'Keeffe is well known.

The Taos Pueblo has multi level adobe structures and many shops line the inner perimeter. Even though it was early May we both suffered degrees of dehydration from walking around the pueblo in the hot sun. A word of advice to anyone planning a New Mexico trip...plan to drink plenty of fluids and apply sunscreen!

There were many sites time prohibited us from visiting. Among them were the Turquoise Trail, White Sands, Tent Rocks, O'Keeffe country and numerous pueblos. Next time...! I returned home bursting with ideas, ready to start painting at the easel again.

What's stopping you? See you in 2009!