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BOUTIQUE HOTEL DESIGN IN SANTA FE
Native Chic to Global Fusion



Hotel Chic

Global fusion, indigenous glam, and monastic simplicity

On a late-March morning earlier this year, Santa Fe awoke to a thick, wet coating of spring snow. A few blocks south of the Plaza, at the Inn of the Five Graces, hotelier David Garrett—gray-haired and affable—greeted stunned guests in his rubber boots, a wool sweater, and an easy smile. (He's from Vermont; the man is used to long winters.) Vibrant *suzanis* (Uzbekistan embroidery) hung from the polished plaster walls, and eggs over easy brightened the mood in the breakfast room; a sweet piñon fire crackled in the beehive *horno*. Outside the flakes kept falling. It would take considerable willpower not to hole up all day in this luxe Relais & Chateaux retreat—the smallest and most intimate of Santa Fe's new design hotels.

Ever since entrepreneur Ian Schrager dreamed up the first high-profile “concept” hotel in New York in 1984, one-off boutique properties have been popping up in chic locales around the world—from Andre Balazs's mod, much-hyped Standard, on the High Line in lower Manhattan's Meatpacking District, to Philippe Starck's stylish new SLS in L.A. It was only a matter of time before smaller markets, including New Mexico, joined the fray.

El Monte Sagrado set the standard when it opened in Taos, in 2003. The holistic green hideout spoils guests with a seriously decadent indigenous spa (try the Spiritual Cleansing, performed by a Native American healer) and 84 ornate guest rooms. And that babbling brook that runs right through the lobby? It doubles as a water-recycling system. Then, last summer, the style gurus at Auberge breathed new life into the old Encantado, turning the Tesuque landmark into a posh wellness resort, with one of the most raved-about new restaurants in Santa Fe. And the trend's not limited to Northern New Mexico: In Truth or Consequences, Blackstone Hot Springs—a newly spiffed-up 1930s motor court—offers seven retro-cool rooms, each inspired by an old-school Hollywood TV show (check out the *I Love Lucy* room). And when the art-deco Hotel Artesia opens later this spring, it will reinvent the modern business hotel, with flat-screen TVs and ergonomic office chairs in each of the 52 guest suites.

But the most impressive new arrivals are closer to home, the product of some of Santa Fe's leading designers. Named for the Buddhist tradition of experiencing life through the five senses, the Inn of the Five Graces is steeped in old-world decadence. Considering the property's storied pedigree, the concept isn't a stretch. Parts of the compound—a mix of pueblo-style adobes, two-story Territorials, and a stone casita (the Harvey Girls stayed here in the 1920s and '30s), all tucked into a narrow lane near the capitol building, or the Round House—are thought to date back 400 years. Local importers Ira and Sylvia Seret began buying up pieces of the property in 1996, opening guest rooms as living showrooms for their impressive collection of Central Asian textiles, furniture, and antiques, amassed during decades of travel and on display at Seret & Sons, a few blocks away.

In 2002, Garrett bought the inn (the Serets still own the buildings), and spent the next five years—and, according to Garrett's estimations, about \$1 million per room—renovating it to exacting standards, without sacrificing the hotel's natural warmth and grace. “Santa Fe has a wonderful meshing of cultures, and we liked a lot of what the Serets had done with their antiques,” says Garrett, an investment banker turned hotelier who owns four luxury inns, including The Point, an ultra-swank Adirondack lodge in upstate New York. The Serets



INN OF THE FIVE GRACES Opposite: Piled with coverlets and pillows, an inviting canopied bed creates a romantic setting. Above top: Geometric tile sidewalls and carved *jalis* (screens) add to bathrooms' opulence. Above: Afghan carpets in jewel tones lead into luxuriously appointed bathrooms with sumptuous soaking tubs.