

# Wanderlust: Spa Hopping in New Mexico

by Donna Mantone-Adinolfi

*“To travel is to take a  
journey into yourself.”  
– Danny Kaye*

An arduous journey beginning in the Midwest through the plains of Nebraska led me to enchanting New Mexico for my first spa stop and a long awaited respite at one of my bucket list destinations.

## Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs and Resort

As I passed through the entrance gate to the parking area the scent of the earth welcomed me as I arrived, filled with anticipation at what this storied place would reveal. I was also extremely eager to ‘soak my bones’ in the hot springs.

Shortly after checking in I strolled over to my room in the Plaza Suites, a great location and close to the ancient springs. The Pueblo Suites and Cliffside Suites were nearby while the Historic Hotel Rooms and Cottages were over to the north side of the property. Since it was already midday I chose to tour the grounds next and get familiar with this 145-year-old resort, which is one of the oldest natural health resorts in the country. My plan was to spend the night and the following morning before heading over to Santa Fe, which was just under 70-miles away.

### *Everyday is Earth Day at Ojo Caliente*

Native American tribes from Northern New Mexico regard this area sacred and the stewards of this resort have been committed to sustaining this environmentally healthy oasis.

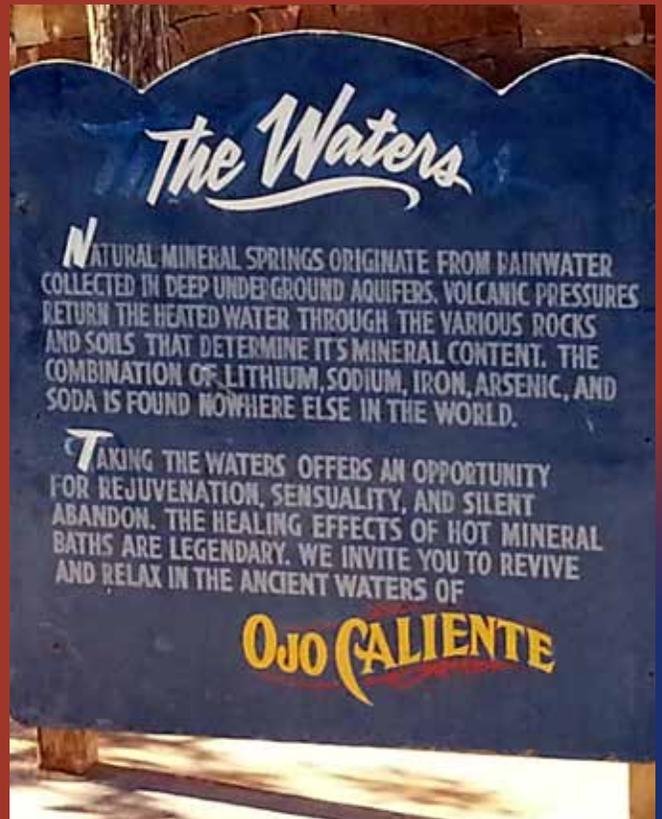
Andy and Jen Scott are the owners and stewards of this 1,100-acre resort. One of their eco-friendly projects in particular is the use of energy from the hot springs to heat and cool buildings thereby reducing energy consumption. Other water projects that Alex Scott initiated have kept the water (hot springs) clean without compromising the natural state of the springs.

## *Heating up at Ojo:*

Back in 1868 when Ojo first opened, it became known as a place of miracle cures because of the healing waters. My hope for this adventure was to leave feeling better than when I arrived and based on the number of people there, including many from the local area, I realized that I wasn’t alone in my quest for rejuvenation.

For thousands of years geothermal mineral waters have flowed from a volcanic aquifer with over 100,000 gallons per day making their way to the surface. Four different sulfur-free mineral waters including Lithia, Iron, Soda and Arsenic are available for soaking with temperatures ranging from 80-110 degrees. In total, there are 11 pools on property with combinations of these waters.

During my stay I soaked in all but the Lithia Spring.



With the majestic cliff as my backdrop, I soaked in the 104° Iron Spring first. I understood that Iron could be beneficial to the blood and immune system and prevent fatigue and promote a healthy skin tone and I was eager to attract all the benefits from this magical space. Hopping over to the 102° shimmering Soda Spring was next. Rock walls enclosed this spring and it was the most relaxing and appealing due to the steam coming off the water and it felt warmer than the more heated Iron Spring. The water from this spring was said to relieve symptoms of arthritis and digestive problems. This soak certainly relieved my aches and I was ready for the Arsenic Spring by this time. I had some trepidation about the 106° Arsenic water (yes, thinking about Arsenic and Old Lace), however it was believed to be beneficial for arthritis and since the long drive left me achy it was time to enjoy another soak and ironically this was the spring that I soaked in the longest. There was a sacredness about soaking in these springs and while they relaxed my body they also uplifted my spirit.

Oh, and in case you're wondering about the benefits of the Lithia Spring, it is said that the waters could produce positive effects in mental balance and relieve depression. I see a return visit in my future.





## *The Spa*

After my soak it was time to head over to the spa and experience the 50-minute Ancient Echoes Therapy, a fairly new service based in the Ayurvedic healing tradition. Doug was my therapist and since this service mentioned 'de-stressing and calming the over-active mind and provides relief from aches and pains,' I expected it to contribute to my transformation and it did. Doug, like everyone else I met up to that point, had a genuine respect and affection for this property. After spending just a few hours at Ojo Caliente I too could feel the energy of this sacred place.

After my massage it was time for another soak, only this time it would be in one of the secluded and private outdoor pools for my reserved 50-minutes. It started to cool down by the time I arrived for my 'natural' experience, which created an even deeper level of relaxation. For a future stay I would consider an evening soak under the stars.



# Dining

With an almost full day behind me it was time to dine at the Artesian Restaurant & Wine Bar, located in the Historic Hotel toward the north side of the resort. Healthy spa-like dinner options were available as well as New Mexican fare. After my Artesian Salad I enjoyed the Green Chile Crusted Salmon with Poblano Chile Sauce. When in New Mexico, you go for chile – red or green. Trout, duck and vegetarian options also filled the menu. And after a sneak peak at breakfast items I knew there would be Blue Corn & Piñon Nut Pancakes in my future.

It was somewhat crowded the night I was there, however I engaged in conversation with other patrons and the bartender. I was intrigued by the history on the walls and learned that the framed comics dated back to 1927 and they were found in the walls during restoration and renovation projects. Their wine menu also included selections from New Mexico wineries, including Black Mesa Winery in nearby Velarde, NM (about 40-minutes away if you want to add winery visits).

Ojo Caliente gave me more than I expected and while it was a short stay I left Ojo feeling reconnected and ready to continue my personal adventure. A charming and relaxing resort connected to thousands of acres of national forest where you can hike the trail to the ancient Posi Pueblo site, go mountain biking or practice yoga in their Yurt with a stop at the Intention Garden before your class.

If you go:

Ojo Caliente is located at 50 Los Banos Drive, Ojo Caliente, NM 87549  
800-222-9162 | [www.ojospa.com](http://www.ojospa.com)



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*“We wander for distraction, but we travel for fulfillment.”  
– Hilaire Belloc*

# THE SPA at Loretto



For The Bath  
Don Hennessey  
1980

*“I see my path, but I don’t know where it leads.  
Not knowing where I’m going is what inspires me to travel it.”*

*- Rosalia de Castro*

# *Inn at Loretto*

My next stop on this New Mexico Spa Hopping Journey included the Inn at Loretto in Santa Fe, NM. One of the most stunning resorts in the heart of Santa Fe reminiscent of the famed Taos Pueblo and close to popular Canyon Road galleries and the Plaza's galleries, shops and museums. The artistic vibe of this resort was appealing and it created an authentic-Santa Fe experience. My recently renovated room exuded a thoroughly modern look with vibrant colors – reds and blacks – and was appointed with colorful artwork and sculptures. Located at the end of the Old Santa Fe Trail and next door to the Inn is the Loretto Chapel, a historical landmark dating back to the late 1800's and also known for its miraculous staircase.

After strolling through the property and taking in the art and relaxing atmosphere, I arrived at Luminaria for dinner. The resort states that food is an art form stimulating all of the senses and that was certainly the case at Luminaria. Their award-winning Tortilla Soup came first followed by my main course of Blackened Shetland Salmon with green onion risotto, crispy leeks and lemon beurre blanc. Impeccable service and outdoor dining while listening to the bells of Loretto Chapel made this stop a favorite on the journey.

The following morning included a much anticipated spa service and for this visit and because of being in Santa Fe, it seemed fitting to choose a service from their Intuitive Living menu so I chose to experience the Chakra Balancing service with Amelia. I've done chakra work before and when I reviewed the description about removing blockages to enable the body, mind and spirit to function optimally, I knew it was the best choice. The intimate spa at the Inn at Loretto offered a full menu of services in a peaceful setting, however it was just about time to leave Santa Fe and continue south.

If you go:  
211 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, NM  
505-988-5531 | [www.innatloretto.com](http://www.innatloretto.com)



**A**fter leaving the Inn I had one more spa stop before heading south to Truth or Consequences, the spa city. BODY of Santa Fe is a local and unique Spa and Wellness Center on the outskirts of Santa Fe and they offer a full schedule of yoga classes, as well as a boutique (sustainable and organic clothing), café and spa services. It turned out to be a great stop before getting back on the road, especially after an energizing Therapeutic Massage.

If you go:

BODY of Santa Fe - 333 W Cordova Rd,  
Santa Fe, NM  
505-986-0362 | [www.bodyofsantafe.com](http://www.bodyofsantafe.com)

## *Sierra Grande Lodge and Spa*

My New Mexico journey was coming to an end as I traveled south on I-25 with the Caballo Mountains in the near distance to an unexpected stop in Truth or Consequences, a spa city, in Sierra County. Up until 1950, it was called Hot Springs, however the name was changed to Truth or Consequences (T or C) in 1950 because of a publicity idea to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the popular game show.

I didn't anticipate having any lodging challenges for T or C, however the area became more popular over the last several years and I found myself getting the last room at the 17-room Sierra Grande Lodge and Spa. Not knowing what to expect as I drove through the relatively funky and colorful town of T or C, I arrived at Sierra

Grande and loved it. A charming lodge built on an ancient underground volcanic lake. Healing waters, with about 35-minerals, rise to 107° and provide untreated geothermal water to the private pools honoring Native American healing traditions.

With three indoor pools and one outdoor pool it was suggested to confirm a soaking time as soon as possible. A nightly stay included a 30-minute private soak and mine was set for early the next morning in the secluded white-tiled outdoor pool surrounded by Desert Willows and Mediterranean Cypress Trees. I couldn't have anticipated a more memorable experience. If you're not staying at the lodge, you can reserve a private bath for only \$25 for the first person and then \$5 for each additional. Sierra Grande also has a spa with a full menu of treatments at reasonable rates. For example, the Aromatherapy massage and wrap is \$95 for a one-hour treatment.

On the same property and just beyond the lodge I came upon a high wooden gate and discovered La Casita, a cottage with a private indoor and outdoor hot spring tub. The cottage offers a lovely option large enough for four guests and the perfect setting for a healing getaway.

## *Sierra County Area Attractions:*

Healing Waters Trail in Truth or Consequences  
Elephant Butte Lake State Park

If you go to:

501 McAdoo Street Truth or Consequences, NM  
575-894-6976 | [www.sierragrandelodge.com](http://www.sierragrandelodge.com)

