

Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta

10 Days / 9 Nights

Departure Date: Sept. 27-Oct. 6

Tour Code: ABQ191

DAY ONE

Join fellow travelers as we make our way to the arid southwest and host to the most photographed event in the world. The annual Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta is a phenomenal sight to behold. Hundreds of hot air balloons ascending into the heavens is a magical and colorful experience. Our first overnight will be in Des Moines, IA at the Drury Inn.

DAY TWO — CB, L

Our travels today recount early pioneer footsteps as we learn of the hardships and struggles of early pioneers at the Great Platte River Road Arch Monument near Kearney, NE. Spanning I-80 the Archway pays tribute to the enduring spirit of our predecessors. During their trek across America, they encountered Native American tribes; trappers and traders making their way to annual rendezvous; stagecoach drivers and their passengers; pony express riders; and the telegraph. We overnight at the far western edge of Nebraska at the Lonesome Dove Lodge.

DAY THREE — CB, D

Entering the mountainous west, we'll explore the wonders of the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO. Enjoy a 14-minute movie highlighting the academy experience in the 250-seat theater and displays on cadet history and everyday life in the academy with specially designed exhibits to explain the four "pillars of excellence." We'll remain here in Colorado Springs for our overnight at the Drury Inn.

DAY FOUR — CB

As we journey through the beautiful Colorado Rockies we'll pause at one of Mother Nature's most exquisite handiworks. Imagine dramatic views, 300 foot towering sandstone rock formations against a backdrop of snow-capped Pikes Peak and brilliant blue skies. This is what you will witness with our drive-through of the Garden of the Gods. We then continue to the town of Taos, New Mexico. This American treasure is filled with 1100 years of history, culture, ancient society, art, magic and the true spirit of the southwest. Walk around town, it's very easy going. Tonight we will rest our heads in the mountain town of Santa Fe at the Hilton with plenty of shopping and dining experiences awaiting your discovery.

DAY FIVE — B, D

Awake in the artist community of Santa Fe. Nestled in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains at the foothills of the Rockies, Santa Fe is immersed in stunning natural beauty, with an average of 325 days of sunshine and clear blue skies. Our local guide will take us on a journey to see its most awesome sights including a nearby Indian Pueblo. Santa Fe's world-famous art galleries and museums are filled with traditional and contemporary art, including works by Georgia O'Keeffe and the shops are filled with one-of-a-kind works by local artisans. Later today finds us in the home of the balloon fiesta – Albuquerque, for the next three nights at the Drury Inn.

DAY SIX — CB

As dawn approaches we head to the festival grounds to watch the breathtaking spectacle of hundreds of ascending balloons heading skyward. For more than three decades, the first week in October brings the beautiful and magical moving picture show of hot air balloons sailing silently through the crisp fall air. Return to the hotel for a quick breakfast before returning to the coach with our local guide to see more of Albuquerque. One of the oldest cities in the U.S., it boasts a unique multicultural heritage and history where Native American, Hispanic, Anglo and other cultural influences are a part of everyday life. Lunch and shopping is on your own in the delightful Old Town section, filled with authentic restaurants, cafes and shops. Return to the hotel and the festival grounds later this evening if you choose.

DAY SEVEN — CB, L

Once again we rise early to see the mass ascension of balloons in the Albuquerque sky. For those of you who would like to experience a flight of your own this morning, there will be the optional opportunity to do so. More information is available. After our visit and breakfast, we journey to the top of nearby Sandia Peak on board the world's longest aerial tramway. See some of nature's more dramatic beauty unfold from your vantage point on the observation deck atop the 10,378 foot peak which affords an 11,000 square-mile panoramic view of the Rio Grande Valley. Later, immerse yourself in Pueblo culture and learn first-hand about the first peoples of New Mexico at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. The National Museum of Nuclear Science & History is an intriguing place to learn the story of the Atomic Age, from early research of nuclear development through today's peaceful uses of nuclear technology. We return to our hotel then experience the evening Balloon Glow back at the festival grounds. Walk among the tethered balloons of every color, shape and size as the propane burners inflate the balloons against a dark sky.

DAY EIGHT — CB, L

Our exciting visit to Albuquerque has ended as we make our way eastward bound towards home. Overnight in Oklahoma City, OK this evening at the Hyatt Place Bricktown.

DAY NINE — CB, L

We're getting closer to home with our final overnight just east of St. Louis in Collinsville, IL at the Drury Inn.

DAY TEN — CB

Fond memories of a great experience in the beautiful southwest envelope us as we say goodbye to new friends and return home later this evening.

PER PERSON PRICING:

\$2,494 Double | \$2,258 Triple | \$2,195 Quad | \$2,823 Single

Deposit: \$200 per person within 7 days of making reservation. Final payment due 60 days prior to departure. Luggage handling included for one suitcase.