

Southwest weekend

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New Mexico day trip

Arroyo Seco

Why go now: Fall's golds and reds are at their height in this tiny, eclectic village 9 miles north of Taos. **Who lives here:** Artists, environmentalists, and REI-wearing outdoors lovers. **Location, location, location:** Arroyo Seco is right at the foot of towering Taos Mountain. **The vibe:** Country meets bohemian. **A gully runs through it:** Arroyo Seco is Spanish for "dry stream," but water does still run in the creek behind the south side storefronts. **Photo op:** Calendars across New Mexico focus on the 1950 Chevy pickup parked by the mercantile. **Local legend:** America's favorite boho sweetheart, Julia Roberts, lives on a secluded ranch nearby. **Ahead of its time:** "Seco" was into hemp and hormone-free long before they were buzzwords. **Clay fever:** Scott Carlson Pottery (481 State 150; 575/770-7695) was the town's first ceramics shop: We like Carlson's brightly colored, small clay buffalo. **Handmade finds:** The boutique and sewing cooperative Pearl Button (590 Hondo Seco Rd.; 575/776-1225) has one-off clothes made by locals and a sewing circle for all ages.

Explore more on page 26 »

1. Hoof it

To catch autumn's big show from a different perspective, saddle up with **Taos Ski Valley Wilderness Adventures**. Through October, "Big Al" Johnson leads horseback rides on the private Cañoncito Trail. His three-hour adventure crisscrosses streams and climbs through tunnels of golden aspens and rocky cliffs. \$65; reservations required; bigaltsv.com or 575/751-6051.

BY HEIDI ERNST
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEN JUDGE

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2. Eat like a local

Abe Garcia has run the no-frills **Abe's Cantina y Cocina** for 65 years, which is how long ranchers and other locals have been coming for his hearty breakfast burrito of eggs, potatoes, sausage, and green chiles. At lunch, get the chicken flour taco (pictured) or enchiladas. \$; closed Sun; 489 State 150; 575/776-8516.



Take it home

Lift your spirits with a custom-blended loose tea of lavender and lemon balm (about \$10 for 8 oz.) at the **Seco Pearl** teahouse cooperative. Many of the herbs are grown in the co-op's garden and dried by members. 590 Hondo Seco Rd.; 575/776-1225.



3. Novelty shop

Opened in 1895 as a general store, **Arroyo Seco Mercantile** is classic northern New Mexico, with *bultos* (wood carvings of saints) by local artists displayed near pawned Indian turquoise jewelry—and tarot card readings in the back room on Saturdays. There's also a great collection of Americana, from vintage textiles to antique cedar chests and wagon wheels. 488 State 150; 575/776-8806.



4. The sweet ending

The 18-year-old ice cream shop **Taos Cow** put the "eco" in Seco: People pilgrimage here for the rich, homemade, hormone-free good stuff. Of the Cow's 40 flavors, a dozen pop up on the menu any given day (count yourself lucky if the Chocolate Rio Grande with pine nuts and chocolate chunks makes the cut). Bring a sweater and sit by the stream out back under golden willows and cottonwoods. \$; lunch served; 485 State 150; 575/776-5640.



Getting to Arroyo Seco

From Taos, take U.S. 64 north for 4 miles. Turn right at State 150, then drive 5 miles. **INFO** visitseco.com

More insider picks for a cozy fall weekend

A HOTEL WITH HISTORY The **Mabel Dodge Luhan House** in Taos, where the arts patron hosted Ansel Adams and Willa Cather in the early 1900s (it was also Dennis Hopper's home in the '70s), is now an inn with fireplaces and four-poster beds. From \$98, including breakfast; mabeldodgeluhan.com

BEGINNER HIKE, BIG PAYOFF Known as one of the easier treks in the area, the **Williams Lake Trail** in Carson National Forest, 7 miles north of Arroyo Seco, is a 4-mile round-trip from Kachina Village with stunning views of surrounding peaks. 575/586-0520.

THROWBACK BOOKSTORE Curl up in one of the deep, cushy armchairs in **Moby Dickens Bookshop**, and you'll feel like you're in your own personal library. Works by local authors, mysteries, and Southwest and Native American literature are among its specialties. 124 Bent St., Taos; 575/758-3050.

ONE GOOD MARGARITA Like any Southwest watering hole worth its salt, the Taos Inn's **Adobe Bar**, in a century-old building, is great for a margarita. From 7 to 10 nightly, musicians play bluegrass, Latin, and jazz. \$; 125 Paseo del Pueblo Norte, Taos; 575/758-2233.



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