

Editor's Note

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ew Mexico, the state we showcase in this issue, can seem to be a strange and exotic place to people, like me, who were born and raised in northern parts of the United States. (After all, New Mexico is known as “The Land of Enchantment.”) When I think of New Mexico, having never been there, I picture rugged mountains, windblown desert strewn with cactus plants, dusty Pueblo cliff dwellings, and sunbaked adobe houses. In other words, I imagine an unusual and picturesque landscape.

The famous American landscape photographer Ansel Adams described New Mexico thus: “It is all very beautiful and magical here—a quality which cannot be described. You have to live it and breathe it, let the sun bake into you.” Adams created some now-famous photographs of New Mexico, including shots of the Taos Pueblo in northern New Mexico and stunning images of the stalactites and stalagmites in the caves of Carlsbad Caverns National Park in the southeastern part of the state.

Over the years, the natural beauty and archaeological riches of New Mexico have attracted many photographers. And one annual festival—the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta—is said to be one of the most photographed events in the world. The Fiesta, which is the largest ballooning event in the world, attracts hundreds of hot air and gas balloonists from all over the United States and many other countries. During the nine-day festival, mass ascensions of balloons create colorful patterns that might tempt any of the thousands of spectators to pick up a camera. (The photo on page 44 will give you some idea of the number of balloons floating over Albuquerque during the festival.)

The balloon festival is just one of the many attractions of New Mexico. You can read about other fascinating aspects of this state in the feature article, and you can learn in the lesson plan, “Greetings from Sunny New Mexico,” how New Mexico’s abundance of sunshine gives the state great potential for solar energy. Whatever your interest in the state, taking a closer look at New Mexico can be an enchanting experience.

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