

Friday, July 30, 2010

 Television  
**DeGeneres leaving 'Idol'**

"Didn't feel like right fit," she says, 50



By Mike Mittleman/Photo.com

## New Mexico's vibrant tapestry

A fiber-arts trail skirting Santa Fe weaves scenery with ancient traditions and modern artistry

By Laura By USA TODAY

**TODAY:**  
 New Mexico  
 Fiber-Arts  
 Trails

By Laura By USA TODAY



Choices, choices: A visitor browses at Weaving Southwest. Planned in less than 25 years ago, it claims to be the nation's only contemporary pottery gallery and represents weavers from throughout the Southwest.

Ride along with USA TODAY's travel writers as they drive five enticing themed trails around the country, pursuing passions from Texas barbecue to Civil War history to country music — and more.

Follow the series all summer at [travel.usatoday.com](http://travel.usatoday.com)
 • May 20: Texas Barbecue Trail • Aug. 23: American Music Trail  
 • June 18: Pottery and Civil War Trail • Sept. 17: Reader's Choice

**Summer  
 Road Trips**

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## Travel

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Check out On the Go, our online reader photo gallery, at [onthe.go.usatoday.com](http://onthe.go.usatoday.com) and submit your own cellphone images. We'll spotlight the most inspiring and interesting photos in our On the Go blog.

Healthcare and high-tech medicine in Turkey and an iPhone in this photo from reader Katie Brown.

By Katie Brown

### Dispatches

#### Australia down under Italy on this wish list

If money were no object, where would you go on vacation?

Most Americans put Italy at the top of their foreign travel wish lists, at least according to a new online survey by Harris Interactive.

The land of the olive tree knocked the land Down Under out of the No. 1 spot, marking only the second time since 1997 that Australia hasn't topped the annual poll.

Australia ranked second in the survey, followed by Ireland.

Rounding out the top 10: Great Britain, France, Greece and Germany (in a tie for sixth place), Japan, Spain and Mexico (Nos. 14 and 15 last year) dropped off the list of the 15 most coveted destinations. And Iraq appeared for the first time since 2001, at No. 11.

— Joyce Clark

The Screens: This 1895 lithograph is part of the National Museum's Master Prints exhibit at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Copyright: Museum of Modern Art, NY, NY

#### Munch a bunch at National Gallery

Sometimes you just want to scream.

Instead, head for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., to see The Scream, the Kist and other iconic prints from late Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. Edward Munch: Master Prints opens Saturday and runs through Oct. 31.

The exhibit includes 59 Munch prints from the National Gallery's holdings and private collections. It looks at his use of various textures and different expressions of them throughout his life. Passes are not required for the exhibit, and admission is free. For more information, visit [nps.gov](http://nps.gov).

#### See the palace, sip a cappuccino

Buckingham Palace has something more noteworthy to offer than the Changing of the Guard.

The Garden Café, now just year and officially opened Tuesday, offers treats such as pastries and cappuccino with a view across such as elegantly sprinkled on the lawn.

Visitors can't just walk in as if it were their local Starbucks. Admission requires a ticket to the State Rooms at Buckingham Palace, which costs around \$25 for adults. That gets you into a new exhibit about Queen Elizabeth II, including the robes that she wears on official visits to Parliament. The café is open until Oct. 1.

— Kirby Bean/Italy

USA TODAY | tripadvisor

### Reader survey

Results of this week's joint poll with TripAdvisor.com.

Where would you most like to go to beat the summer heat?

Alaska	55%
Chile	18%
Iceland	17%
Antarctica	5%
Sierra	4%

Next week: Who's your favorite travel companion? Vote at [travel.usatoday.com](http://travel.usatoday.com).



Blowing in the wind: Hand-dyed wool yarns from Teco Weaving Southwest gallery dry in the New Mexico sunshine.

## An uncommon thread in N.M.

Continued from 1D

community-based enterprises, museums, galleries and artist studios. And like other New Mexico state-sponsored routes (which include those devoted to pottery and green-chile chowders), they celebrate the creativity and traditions that permeate the Land of Enchantment.

The most accessible, and arguably most rewarding, of the state's fiber-arts trails is the north-central loop, which skirts the capital and major arts center of Santa Fe and wanders from Albuquerque to the Chama Valley about 20 miles south of the Colorado line.

For visitors who don't know a warp from a weft (the former is a set of lengthwise yarns through which the latter is woven back and forth on a loom), the route incorporates such well-known scenic byways as the Turquoise Trail between Albuquerque and Santa Fe and the 90-mile-long "High Road" from Santa Fe to Taos. Its dramatic, high-desert landscapes have inspired such legendary artists as Georgia O'Keefe, who worked and lived in Taos and Abiquiu.

But for travelers down to the southeast, visitors to a domain of handspun wool or the hypnotic clatter of feet pedaling on an upright loom — or even those

#### A left blending of cultures

While Pueblo Indians were weaving cotton here long before the Spaniards' arrival from Mexico, the conquistadors introduced charrá, a hardy breed with thick, glossy fleece that proved ideal for spinning. The nomadic Navajos, who'd learned weaving techniques from the Pueblos, adapted wool to the charrá. But it was here, in the Rio Grande Valley, that Hispanic families interlarded and traded utilitarian blenders and garments in what came to be known as the Rio Grande style: wide bands and narrow stripes of natural white, gray and brown charrá wool, combined with natural-dyed yarns.

The railroad's arrival in the early 1880s brought both manufactured cloth and tourists who wanted portable souvenirs. Around the turn of the century, Chama-based weaving enterprises started turning out such items as table runners, vests and small bags, and a more commercial style evolved.

The style is still being peddled at places like Otero's Weaving Shop in Chama, where about half the sales come from Japanese customers in search of Southwestern chic. But here, at elsewhere along New Mexico's fiber-arts trails, a thriving economy in an already poor state has taken a toll.

"Just looking" browsers can discourage buyers, who gravitate more to \$5 woven drink coasters than to \$300 coats, and about 10% of the shops spotlighted on the original trails have closed, curtailed their operations or moved else.

#### Warm and fuzzy

Mexico's Victoria Ranch, the largest alpaca ranch in the southwest, offers daily tours and a gift shop selling yarns and accessories to more than 250 furry residents.



New Mexico Fiber Arts Trail



By Matt Collins, USA TODAY

In the tiny Chama Valley enclave of Los Alamos, tourists are few and far between on a weekday summer afternoon. At Thunderclouds line up like freight trains above the nearby Jemez Mountains, staffer Lucy Valdez gives an ad hoc tour of Tierra Wool, a weaving and dyeing workshop and retail outlet that's housed in a converted 125-year-old adobe mercantile building.

A few years ago, the light-colored back room gave up on civil conversation and the rhythmic beating of looms, most of which were used by local women every day. "We'd come in, and find other people's projects," recalls Valdez. Now, she says, much of the paid-in-advance piecemeal has given way to congruence, and though classes are still held here, many weavers work from home.

Yet in Pelonzo, a stop along the High Road to Taos, Art for the Heart gallery owner Joan Nichols proudly shows off a line of "upcycled" boleros, including 120 children's dresses made from pillow cases. The community-based project, which former hippie Nichols defines as "cutting-edge clothing with a conscience," is bringing new life — and new jobs for local seamstresses — from discarded clothes and other wastes.

A tough economy may have cramped sales of the contemporary, high-end textiles at

Art for the Heart: Artist Joan Nichols shows off some of her fiber creations at her gallery in Pelonzo, on the High Road to Taos.

Teco Weavings Southwest, but not of its lushly hued, hand-dyed, naturally dyed yarns. "When things go bad, more people turn to knitting and weaving — it's a comfort thing," says owner Theresa Lockman, 27, whose 84-year-old grandmother, Rachel Brown, started

her outdoor dye studio in nearby Arroyo Seco. Visitors are welcome to watch as Lockman, looking like a radiant Lucy Ricardo in that famous TV grape-wrecking episode, swishes baskets of wool in wood-fired pots and drapes them to dry in the hot New Mexico sun.

#### The search for beauty and meaning

Just a few weeks ago, recalls Abiquiu weaver Ann Lamight — whose studio directions include "turn left over cattle guard and down a long dirt road" — a customer told her that in an era of cookie-cutter, overseas manufacturing, she'd made a vow to buy less but set her sights on "something that's meaningful and beautifully made."

In the achingly scenic region spotlighted in Robert Redford's film *The Milagro* (see page 14), a weathered wood sign points travelers to another place where "meaningful" and "beautifully made" remain operative phrases. In a historic farmhouse turned gallery called Tejedorías de Las Trampas ("weavers of Las Trampas"), Las Trampas native Julia Torres, 70, remembers her mother cutting up worn-out clothes that her uncle would weave into sturdy rag rugs, and her grandmother spinning wool from the Chama sheep the family kept in a nearby corral.

Though she moved away to the bright lights of Salt Lake City for 25 years, Torres has returned to her parents' old hometown. Now, she is practicing her own weaving and embroidery skills at Tejedorías de Las Trampas — which enthralls visitors like Caroline Stans-Gage of Rochester, N.Y.

"Fiber arts are so important here," says Stans-Gage, a master weaver who is following the trail on her first trip to New Mexico, "and the fact that these traditions haven't died out is wonderful."

For more information, visit [nmlifearts.org](http://nmlifearts.org).

Summer Road Trips

Visit [travel.usatoday.com](http://travel.usatoday.com)

Plan your trip via an interactive map.

Watch a video of stops along the trail.

View a photo gallery of the route.