



# Welcome to The Mandala Center

## GUEST GUIDE

We are so pleased you have made your way to The Mandala Center. We welcome you.

This guide is designed to answer many questions guests often have and provide you with some information you may need.

It is to help ensure your comfort, safety and enjoyment.

Please feel free to ask any questions this guide may not answer for you.

**WELCOME!!**

### **First a few commonly asked questions:**

**Do you have a pool or hot tub?** We have neither. Instead, we have clean air, bright expansive blue skies, beautiful sunsets, lots of space, wildlife, and a peaceful, quiet place to rest.

**Is Alcohol Permitted?** The use of drugs and alcohol is prohibited on the grounds. In a few very restricted and controlled situations wine with dinner may be permitted. For the comfort and respect of all guests we ask you to refrain. Guests who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol who are behaving in any manner that puts The Mandala Center, staff, or guests at risk or discomfort, will be asked to leave immediately without refund.

**Are pets welcome?** Pets are not allowed at The Mandala Center on the grounds or in buildings. Pets can pose liabilities such as fleas, bites, noise, and discomfort of other guests. We want everyone to have a restful retreat and sharing space sometimes means limiting options.

**Are children allowed?** Most of our guests are adults. At this time, we do not offer children's programming. Children are welcome with supervision of an adult and encouraged mindfulness of the retreat experience of others.

**Where are we located?** We are located in Des Moines, New Mexico... 35 miles east of Raton NM, on highway 87/64, mile marker 383. TMC is located in the unique high plains of Northeastern New Mexico centrally located between major cities such as Santa Fe NM, Amarillo TX, and Colorado Springs, Colorado. We are in the upper eastern corner of the state very close to both the Colorado and Texas borders. The major airports in Albuquerque, NM, Amarillo Texas, and Colorado Springs, CO are all approximately 3 to 4 hours drive to the center. Those who fly into Colorado will find a very scenic drive down through the mountains at the Raton pass just beyond Trinidad, with the Rocky Mountains in the rear view mirror. Whatever airport you come from, the drive is a wonderful time of pilgrimage to unwind, center, and mentally prepare for your retreat experience as you drive ever deeper into the beauty of our area.

### **Information about your stay...**

**SHARING SPACE/QUIET** - Many people come to The Mandala Center to participate in workshops and socialize; others come to seek solitude and silence. If you have come with a group please talk to each other about your needs for quiet/alone time and how you can respect the different needs of the group. If you are here alone or notice others who are visiting at the same time, please respect their need for quiet in the guest lodges and other areas.

Please be mindful of others who may retire early or sleep in late when holding conversations in the common room after 9PM and before 9AM especially. We do request that all guests observe quiet time before 9AM and after 9PM in the guest lodges and be mindful in the Casa Mandala as some people choose to sit quietly in the chapel or the contemplation loft for meditation or prayer. People in the Casa Mandala should be aware that meal times are times of shared community and conversation (unless there is a silent retreat). When workshops are being held certain rooms will be designated for group use as needed and may not be available to all guests.

**KEYS and LOCKS:** You will receive a room key. Although some guests do not choose to use a room key, we need to give you one to ensure you always have the choice to lock up your personal belongings. We cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items from your room. There are times guests have locked themselves out of their rooms and need a key to get back in. We suggest you carry your key with you. (NOTE: doors locked from the inside remain locked when you leave unless YOU UNLOCK them. Be mindful of the door lock before closing if you do not have your key.)

**THE CASA MANDALA** is the main center lodge. This area is shared community space for meals, meetings, worship, relaxing and workshops. This building is open 24 hours a day when guests are on the grounds.

**DEER LODGE** is a smaller guest building next to the Casa Mandala. It has two suites. Two bedrooms are joined by a shared bath. Guests in this lodge are still welcome to go to the Wolf Lodge to use the kitchen and common room or the Casa Mandala.

**WOLF LODGE** is a guest house. It has 8 rooms with 2 twin beds each and private baths. It has a common area and a kitchen and refrigerator for all guests to use. (There is a second guest refrigerator in the Casa Mandala dining area) Please mark food items and remove them when you leave.

**LIBRARY** – The Center has various areas with books and magazine available for reading. Please enjoy them, take care of them, and return them before you leave. Thank you.

**THE CONTEMPLATION LOFT** – The spiral staircase in the Casa Mandala goes up to our tower and contemplation loft. Feel free to explore that space. Be mindful of other guests using the space when entering. Also be mindful of guests in common spaces. Take time to see who is around you or up in the loft. Soft voices work best in shared spaces unless you know you are all together in one group and no one else is present.

**DECKS/PATIOS** - There are decks for guest use around the Casa Mandala and behind the Wolf Lodge. The Casa Mandala does have a covered patio that is partially enclosed. Guests may use this space to meet. Grills are for staff use only unless previous arrangements have been made.

**THE LABYRINTH** – Our outdoor labyrinth built in 2002 is designed after the Chartres Cathedral labyrinth but does not have the inside petals. You will find it below and to the north of the Casa Mandala. The Labyrinth is an ancient symbol and experience that has come to be understood today as a mindful pathway. It is not a maze, but rather a single winding path that spirals in and back out. Many consider it a type of pilgrimage, a meditative walk; a time for contemplation. Each journey is unique. You may feel quiet and peaceful, experience a range of emotions, have insights or simply enjoy a quiet walk in nature. There is no right or wrong way to experience the labyrinth. You may walk, dance, run, skip, be silent or sing your way through. More than one person may walk at the same time and this always provides added personal insight into our state of mind and adds depth to our journey. Enjoy the labyrinth. It awaits you.

**ENERGY** – Please help us conserve energy by turning off lights and room fans, making sure windows are closed while the heat is on when you leave your room, and making sure doors are securely closed in the lodges when entering and leaving. If you open a window at night during

warm weather, please close the window and blind during the day to help your room remain cool. Water is precious here. Please conserve when possible.

**PANTRIES, LINEN CLOSETS AND KITCHENS** – Our retreat center is small and intimate but we are still a public building and business. We kindly ask guests to respect our employee areas and not enter pantries, closets, center refrigerators and prep kitchen areas. This policy is due to safety and health regulations. It is also important for staff to be able to account for items used. If you need yoga mats, extra tables, chairs, TV or art supplies you should inform our staff for assistance.

There is a refrigerator in the Wolf Lodge and the Casa Mandala for guest use. Please remove your food items upon departure.

**FEATHER PILLOWS** – If you are allergic to feather pillows please check with staff to ensure you have an alternate pillow provided.

**EXTRA BLANKETS AND TOWELS** are available.

**CAUTION** - DO NOT leave clothes, towels or bedding on the floor of your room. This is a precaution against scorpions that sometimes come indoors in the summer and may wander under clothing or towels. Please see section on Desert Life Precautions for more information.

**FIRST AID** – First Aid Kits are available in our entrance area. Please notify staff if you require first aid or have any injuries during your stay. Should you suffer any medical emergency for any reason, dial 911 and seek staff assistance.

**FLASHLIGHTS** – Flashlights are good to have with you at night. There should be flashlights near entrances for your use.

**MOVING FURNITURE** - You may move furniture during your stay but PLEASE return all furniture to its original place before departing. Indoor furniture should not be moved out of doors.

**SHOES** – Sturdy shoes such as boots or sneakers are recommended if you plan on walking beyond the parking lots. It also is advisable, because of the insect world here, to shake out your shoes before putting them on.

**SHOE RACKS** – Shoe racks are available at the entrance for guests to use if you choose to remove your shoes while indoors.

**TELEPHONES** – There are no phones in the guest rooms. There is an intercom phone in each building that guests may use to page staff. Guests may use line 3 to call out with a calling card. Most cell phones do have service here but there are times or places that service can be interrupted. Phone lists for intercom and staff numbers are posted near each phone.

**TV/ DVD and WIRELESS INTERNET** - We DO NOT have TV/cable here. Our goal is to provide you with a time and space to rest and reconnect with your deepest self, your creative talents, and your spiritual journey. We seek to limit distractions. We DO have a TV and DVD player for group and workshop facilitators who may need it for teaching purposes. We also have an overhead projector. We DO have a wireless internet connection in the Main Casa Mandala building for your use. The guest lodges do not have wireless service.

**GUEST JOURNALS** – You may find guest journals on tables around the center. Please feel free to write anything in the journals that may be inspired by your visit here for guests in the future to enjoy and contemplate. We hope this creates a sense of shared community.

**ROPES COURSE** – We do have a ropes course on the property. You may notice it from the road. PLEASE DO NOT use either of the ropes courses unless your group has contracted with us for the use and has proper insurance. This course can only be used under the direction of a certified ropes course instructor.

**MEALS** – Our chefs prepare meals for groups or guests of 10 or more upon request at time of registration. Individual retreatants may purchase meals when group meals are being prepared. When our cooks are not preparing meals individuals may bring their own groceries and fix meals in the kitchen at the Wolf Lodge. We do not have any pop or vending machines. See below for more information on food options. Higher elevations also can have effects on cooking. Since the boiling point is lower it takes longer to cook foods than at lower elevations.

There is a small country store about 10 minutes away in Capulin that offers milk, eggs, drinks and snacks. At certain times of the year they also have a café available.

There is a local gas station and small convenience store in Des Moines offering coffee, snacks, drinks, bread, canned and frozen food items.

The Sierra Grande Restaurant, another 10 min drive into Des Moines, offers a full day menu of breakfast, burgers and Mexican cuisine.

The closest major grocery store is in Raton, approximately 40 minutes away. There are local food establishments in Raton including fast food, Mexican food and Chinese food

**GIFT SHOP** – The Mandala Center now has a small gift shop area in our office. The gift shop is only available during limited hours when staff is present in the office. Please inquire with staff if there is something for which you would like to shop. We offer journals, note cards, meditation benches, and a variety of unique items.

Practical items – If you have forgotten something please let us know. We MAY have shampoo, razors, toothbrushes etc available.

**SMOKING/FIRE SAFETY** – ALL MANDALA CENTER BUILDINGS ARE NON-SMOKING AREAS. SMOKING OUTDOORS is discouraged due to our high fire hazard in a dry climate. Guests who do smoke should check with staff regarding fire conditions and designated areas for smoking. Some guests smoke in their cars. Please keep ashes and butts in the car as well.

**SCENTS/INCENSE** - We ask you refrain from the use of candles and incense in rooms to prevent fires and also because we try to keep the center as scent free as possible. Many guests do have allergies and sensitivities and keeping the rooms free from anything that may aggravate these conditions is helpful. Please refrain from strongly scented perfumes or soaps when attending with a group.

**BULLETIN BOARD** at the main door of the Casa Mandala is there for you to leave notes for each other OR we may post messages there for guests as well.

**HIKING/LEAVING THE GROUNDS** - Please inform a member of your group, or a staff member, if you are going to go hiking (and especially if going alone). If no one is around to tell, please leave a note on the bulletin board near the main door of the Casa Mandala telling us where you are headed, what time you left, and when you are expecting to return. (See section on Desert Life Precautions for more information on hiking)

**TIPPING** - Please do not leave “tips” in rooms or at tables. We are very pleased to provide you with the highest quality service we can at all times. The Mandala Center is a non-profit organization and if you wish to make a donation to the Center we will gladly accept it and use it to care for this special place and ensure others may come to enjoy it.

**EVALUATIONS** – We welcome your comments about the Center and our services. Your feedback is very important to us. Where you heard about us, why you came, how you felt about your experience, suggestions about what we can do better or different, are all pieces of information that help us do our jobs better. Please complete them before you leave and write as much as you want. We also love stories about your stay and if you give us permission we may use your story on our blog.

**CHECKING OUT** – Please check carefully for all your belongings. If you do forget an item we would be glad to mail it to you, but you will be charged a MINIMUM postage handling fee of \$10. Routinely, rooms must be empty by 12 noon on your day of departure although you may remain on the grounds until 3pm or the time designated. Please return keys and evaluation forms to our key return box near our main office in the Casa Mandala before leaving the grounds.

**STAFF** – Please speak with any of us about concerns that you have or help that you need. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve in any way we can.

## **SPECIAL SECTION: Outdoor Precautions**

Every ecosystem has its beauty and dangers. The high plains region is no different. Whenever we journey to a new land it is important to educate ourselves so as to be mindful guests and also to take care of ourselves to the best of our ability. The following information is respectfully offered so you may be well informed to prevent mishap or crisis.

### **The Landscape**

This is a land of wonder, beauty, expansive skies, endless stars, breathtaking views and delicate bursts of colors amidst some challenging terrain. We want you to enjoy your visit. Here are some tips.

The surrounding area is mostly volcanic land and the landscape is scattered with lava stones and rocks. It is advisable to wear good hiking or walking shoes or boots and remain on pathways if possible. With prickly dried grass and cactus it is not advisable to go barefoot. If you go “cross country” pay attention to your footing and also make sure you pay attention to the route you are taking to find your way back. You should inform a staff member or group member of your general destination and expected return time when you leave the Center.

Also, the weather here can change quickly and temperatures can drop at dusk and at night. Make sure you have extra clothing, a flashlight, and water with you. A cell phone may also be a good idea to call for help in case of an emergency.

The Mandala Center is situated in an area of higher elevations - around 7000 feet. The top of the Sierra Grande is over 8000 feet. At these elevations newcomers sometimes experience mild headaches and may find that physical exertion will be more difficult.

The land and air is also drier. Drink lots of water during your visit and you may wish to use skin and lip moisturizers.

The sun is warm and the cool breezes that tend to blow here year round can make you feel as if you are not getting a lot of sun. Please use sunscreen and pay attention to your sun exposure outdoors. You may wish to bring a hat that fits snugly on your head.

### **The Animal Life**

The area abounds with wildlife including rabbits, mule deer, elk, prairie dogs, birds, hawks, turkey, lizards, and antelope! Any time we explore the wild it is important to remember our place. Walk gently on the earth. Almost all of the time wild animals will run away from human intruders when they can. Most often, if they do not feel cornered or threatened they pose no danger. Generally, it is best to “sneak a peek” and quietly walk away from animals. To ensure you have a safe and enjoyable hike in the area please pay attention to the natural world around you. There are some animals to be mindful of including bear, bobcat, mountain lion, coyote, and rattlesnake.

### **Snakes**

Snakes have been sited on our grounds over the years but it is a rare occurrence. We do mention them here because information is helpful to have when an unexpected situation does occur. If you see a snake on the grounds please avoid contact with it and notify staff if possible. FYI - There have been no known snake bites during The Mandala Center’s history.

Snakes are a necessary and common animal in nature all around the world. Snakes are primarily a nocturnal animal, hunting for prey on warm summer nights. Snakes are, however, seasonally diurnal and move between hunting sites during the day in the cooler spring and fall months. They also like to sun themselves during the day. They do hibernate and are usually in their dens mid October through March (or later) in our area. Most snakes are not venomous. *There are only four different species of venomous snakes in the United States.* The one common to Northeastern New Mexico is the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake.

**THE WESTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE** - This is a collection of information from various websites on Diamondbacks. *IDENTIFICATION* - Look for the flat triangular head that is thicker than the neck, black “mask” or strips from eyes back to jaw, white and black striped tail, and a rattle on tail. Rattlesnakes will hold the rattle up in the air to rattle. They are active late in the day and at night during hot summer months but can be found outdoors **at any time of day.** They eat rodents and birds. The Western Diamondback Rattlesnake is most often found in

open desert areas, rocky hillsides and overgrazed short grassed prairies. They are poor climbers and cannot out run a human who wants to get out of the way. They want to avoid you as much as you want to avoid them and most bites occur when someone toys with the snake or enters or reaches into an enclosed space and surprises the snake causing it to react out of self-defense.

**BULL SNAKES** are non-venomous snakes with similar coloring to rattlesnakes and often are mistaken for one. Because they often share habitats, the Bull Snake must have adapted to imitate a rattlesnake for protection. Bull Snakes are constrictors but they can still bite and leave a bad cut so it is best not to handle them. Compared to the rattlesnake, the head and neck are more similar in size and they lack the “black mask” and the black and white striped tail and rattle. They will coil and also beat their tail on the ground to try and imitate the rattle they lack.

#### TIPS FOR SAFTY IN AREAS SNAKES MAY BE FOUND

1. Stay alert.
2. Do not try to handle or approach a snake. Remember baby snakes are still venomous.
3. Move directly backwards from a snake that is sighted. Movement to the left and right can be perceived as a threat. A rattlesnake can strike a distance of  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{2}{3}$  of its length.
4. Do not panic and glance around your surroundings to make sure you are not running toward another snake in the area.
5. Step on top of logs or rocks before stepping over to look at the area and make sure you are not stepping onto a snake. A walking stick can help to check out areas before stepping into them.
6. Do not reach into crevices or fallen trees etc. If you must move something or reach in something use a stick first. Boots and gloves are always suggested when working outdoors.

### Scorpions

Scorpions are eight-legged invertebrates belonging to the class *Arachnida*, and the order *Scorpiones*. About 90 species are found in the U.S. All but four of these naturally occur west of the Mississippi River and are abundant in semi-arid regions. The highest concentration of scorpions is found in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas. Scorpions are nocturnal and hide during the day. Some species will hide under rocks, logs and in cracks; other species will dig and hide in burrows.

**Striped Scorpions** - The small Striped Scorpion is the most widespread scorpion in the United States and it is found here in our area. This small species has a powerful sting that can produce intense pain that may last for several hours but is not poisonous to humans. The sting can be painful like a wasp or bee sting, but is not dangerous unless you are allergic and rarely results in further medical complications. Scorpions are not aggressive and most often sting as a result of a human accidentally sitting or laying on one. Usually there is swelling and sometimes numbness and an itchy welt. The site is often tender and sensitive to hot and cold. If a person begins to have other symptoms or a greater allergic reaction medical treatment should be sought.

We found the following basic first aid instructions for treating scorpion stings on several websites **BUT THIS IS NOT** meant to replace your own judgment or to replace seeking sound medical advice.

*If you are a victim to a scorpion sting, capture and kill the scorpion for identification purposes. Wash the area directly using soap and water. You also can apply a cold compress to relieve the swelling and pain. Antiseptic cream may be used. Should you develop any symptoms associated with the sting of a scorpion, it is best to see a doctor immediately to receive proper treatment.*

## **SPIDERS**

There are spiders in our area and general precautions apply. Bites are very rare in the region. The main spider of concern would be the Black Widow Spider. Generally they like dark, damp areas and are not generally seen in or right around our buildings. In general, avoid contact with spiders. Do not reach into dark spaces, hollow trees or under rocks without proper gloves.

## **BIRDS**

Many mountain wild birds can be viewed and heard on nature walks. Some wild birds seen here include Red-winged Blackbird, Grackle, Crow, Raven, Downy Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black-Billed Magpie, Mountain Bluebird, Pine Siskin, House Finch, Chipping Sparrow, Wren, Cowbird, Mocking Bird, Red-tail Hawk, Golden Eagle, and more. There are National Grasslands and Mountain Lake areas in driving distance from The Mandala Center for some great additional bird watching.

## **COWS**

The Mandala Center is in the middle of a working ranch. The cows are non-aggressive and often try to avoid human contact. It is still good to be respectful of the animals and not try to interact with them.

## COYOTE, BEAR, and OTHER ANIMALS

You may hear coyote howling at night or catch a quick glimpse of bobcat as it tries to be elusive. With Bear around it is good to keep food items out of cars and bedrooms and keep windows in cars rolled up at night. Elk, antelope, turkey, and mule deer also can be seen roaming the hillsides.

## The Mandala Center is located in an area where HISTORY and NATURE abound!!

If you choose to leave the Center to venture out for a hike or adventure these are some special places that await you.

**Capulin Volcano National Monument** about 12 miles from The Mandala Center offers spectacular views and a mile hike around the rim (or down into the center of the volcano itself!)

**The Sierra Grande**, an extinct shield volcano, upon which The Mandala Center was built, offers lots of room for exploring and hiking. (see our blog page on volcanos for more information)

**The Town of Folsom**, about 15 minutes away, has historic landmarks, the Folsom Museum and an amazing history.

**Sugarite Canyon State Park**, formed in 1985, is 6 miles from Raton, NM near the Colorado Border. This pristine land is heavily wooded and offers trails and climbing areas, small lakes, creeks, Ponderosa Pines and lots of wildlife. Its name, taken from a Comanche word, Chicorica, means "land of many birds." The Coal Camp Interpretive trail can also be found here.

**Raton, New Mexico**, in its community guide claims to offer "Small Town Charm surrounded by Outdoor Adventure". The town is about 35-40 minutes from The Mandala Center and it offers a Historic Downtown Walking Tour. It is the home of New Mexico's first public school in 1884, the Santa Fe Railroad Depot, the Shuler Theater of 1915, and the Raton Museum. The Santa Fe Trail is nearby and the scenic views of the Raton Mountain pass into Colorado invoke awe.

**Maxwell National Wildlife Refuge** is located approximately 1 hour and 25 minutes from The Mandala Center off route 25 south of Raton. It was established in 1965 as a feeding and resting area for migratory birds. GREAT FOR BIRD WATCHING. Over 350 acres

of the Refuge are planted with wheat, corn, barley, and alfalfa to provide food for resident and migratory wildlife. Visitors may see bald and golden eagles, falcons, hawks, sandhill cranes, ducks, geese, white pelicans, burrowing owls, great horned owls, and more.

**Cimarron Canyon State Park** is a little bit of a drive towards Eagle's Nest about 2 hours from The Mandala Center but it is part of the 33,000 acre Colin Neblett Wildlife area – the largest wildlife area in the state of New Mexico.

**Clayton Lake State Park**, an hour and 15 minutes away, offers excellent trout, catfish and bass fishing. Walk a half-mile to the lake's spillway and see the internationally significant dinosaur trackway, containing more than 500 footprints dating back more than 100 million years.

**The historic Shuler Theater** in downtown Raton, New Mexico, is a state landmark and remains the center for performing arts in northeastern New Mexico.

**Raton Arts & Humanities Council**...their mission is to encourage and strengthen the cultural life of the area, providing residents – whether trained or untrained in the arts – with opportunities for artistic participation, self-expression, education and enjoyment. Visit their Old Pass Gallery at 145 South First Street in Raton.

**The Star-filled nights are AMAZING!** With virtually no light pollution and nothing blocking your view from horizon to horizon, the sky seems to go on forever. Just standing outside at night offers a whole universe to explore. The Center has two telescopes for your pleasure.