Once you’ve made the journey to Los Alamos, you can begin to understand how much the culture and the people are defined by this remote and beautiful landscape. While Los Alamos is known to many as the birthplace of the atomic bomb, the town’s history dates back 1.6 million years with a different kind of energy — volcanic eruptions that created the Pajarito Plateau and the meadows and canyons where communities have settled for millennia. Ancestral Pueblo people, Homesteaders, Ranch School students, and thousands of scientists, soldiers, and engineers from all over the world who came to work on the Manhattan Project and stay to create the Los Alamos community. Experience the dynamic history of this great place by visiting the museums, National Parks and other attractions profiled in this guide.

Valles Caldera National Preserve
NM-4 (18 miles west of Los Alamos)
Visitor Center: May-Oct: 8am-6pm
Nov-Apr: 9am-5pm
575-829-4100 x3 | nps.gov/vall

Imagine your home carved from volcanic tuff rock and your crops planted in mesa top fields. Corn, beans, and squash were central to your diet, supplemented by native plants and meat from deer, rabbit, squirrel, and domesticated turkeys. Your dogs assisted in hunting and provided companionship. Step onto the trails, ladders and into the past as you experience life as an Ancestral Pueblo person.

Bandelier Shuttle Information - May to October:
Visitors must use the shuttle from White Rock Visitor Center between 9am-3pm. Some exceptions apply.

Bandelier National Monument
15 Entrance Road off NM-4, Los Alamos
Park Hours: Dawn to Dusk
Visitor Center Hours: mid-May to mid-Oct: 9am-6pm
mid-Nov to mid-April: 9am-5pm
505-672-3861 x0 | nps.gov/band

More than 6,000 scientists, engineers, technicians, military, and support personnel came to live in Los Alamos and work on the Manhattan Project. This National Historical Park was established to tell the stories of these people, events, and the science that led to the creation of the atomic bomb that helped end WWII.

Los Alamos: Gateway to Three National Parks

Historic District Fun Facts
Ashley Pond Park is named after Ashley Pond Jr., the founder of the Los Alamos Ranch School, an outdoor school for boys started in 1917 to provide an education that would promote good health, strength and self-confidence.

Bathtub Row was named after the homes adjacent to Fuller Lodge, originally belonging to the Ranch School Headmasters. During the Manhattan Project, the head scientists called them home, including Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer. These were the only homes in town with bathtubs.

The Historic Performing Arts Center was constructed in 1943 and served as the East Mess Hall during the Manhattan Project, while also hosting a variety of shows, including a community production of the play "Arsenic & Old Lace," featuring Lab Director J. Robert Oppenheimer in a came role as "the corpse."

There's a Historic Photo Gallery in the lobby outside the Blue Window Bistro, in downtown Los Alamos, with historic photos of Lab directors, facilities, and noteworthy scientists.

Must Do Discoveries:

Local Museums
- Find the Nubian Prize at the Hans Bethe House, and learn about the honored scientists who lived there.
- Take the Guided Walking Tour of Los Alamos Historic District and learn the stories behind the buildings, gardens, parks, monuments, and the people who put Los Alamos on the map.
- What if you could power your life using pond scum? Learn about turning algae to biofuels at the Bradbury Science Museum.

Manhattan Project National Historical Park
- Get your National Park Service Passport stamped with the special 3-section Manhattan Project stamp.
- See replicas of Fat Man & Little Boy at the Bradbury Science Museum.
- Learn about the "Secret City" at the Los Alamos History Museum.

Bandelier National Monument
- Pueblo Loop Trail - Walk in the footsteps of Ancestral Pueblo people, search for petroglyphs, and watch wildlife along the creekside.
- Alcove House - Climb four ladders and stone steps to this alcove home, located 140 feet above the floor of Frijoles Canyon.
- Cultural Demonstrations - Every weekend between Memorial Day and Labor Day, enjoy a variety of programs, including pottery-making, drum-making, and dancing.
Registration is done in advance and is on a first-come, first-served basis. Tours last approximately three hours. Tours limited to 16 people.

Los Alamos History Museum Guided Tours

Step inside the homestead-era Romero Cabin, visit an Ancestral Pueblo site, hear about the famous 20th-century physicists who walked these streets, and learn how Bathtub Row got its name. Tours last approximately 1.5 hours. Tickets include museum admission and are available at the Los Alamos History Museum Shop. Tours limited to 16 people.

Monday - Saturday 11:00am
Tuesdays Additional tour at 1:30pm
$15 ages 19+, 18 and under - FREE with a ticketed adult from any venue

Bradbury Science Museum
1350 Central Ave., Los Alamos
Sunday-Monday 1-5pm | Tuesday-Saturday 10am-5pm
505-667-4444 | lanl.gov/museum

Los Alamos Nature Center
2600 Canyon Rd., Los Alamos
Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 10am-4pm
Tuesday 10am-8pm | Sunday 1-4pm | Thursday CLOSED
505-662-0460 | losalamosnature.org

Equipped with a full-dome planetarium, wildlife observation room, indoor and outdoor play areas, interactive indoor and outdoor exhibits, and the world’s largest Penstemon garden, the Los Alamos Nature Center is your visitor center to outdoor recreation on the Pajarito Plateau. Enjoy spectacular views of canyons, mesas, mountains, and skies.

What Will You Discover?

Browse the demonstration gardens, get dirty in the nature play area, explore the Rotary Treehouse, learn about all the plants and animals that make up the Vertical Mile of Diversity, and find your next adventure on the large-scale, 3-D topographic map.

Come inside and meet all the critters, including the Canyon Tree Frogs, a Tiger Salamander, snakes, insects, and the resident ants in their visible ant mound. Play with the Pajarito Plateau model, cuddle up with a book in the Children’s Discovery Area, or just relax and admire the breathtaking views from the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Planetarium Shows

Enjoy 360-degrees of immersive entertainment in the Nature Center’s planetarium. Explore the cosmos, hear about the latest in space-science, see a feature film, and more!