



PHOTOS BY TERRY THOMPSON

Today's Mabel Dodge Luhan House continues the legacy of its namesake's Taos salons by hosting retreats for writers and artists. Read more about Luhan herself in "Classic New Mexico Couples" (page 42) and "Southwest Flavor" (page 52).



LIVING NEW MEXICAN: TAOS

# Salon Style

**FROM TIME TO TIME**, I'm disappointed when friends in more rain-blessed states decline to visit me in Taos. "High desert? Sagebrush? Uh . . . why don't *you* come see us again this year?" When that happens, I sit on my patio, gaze at Taos Mountain, and think about Mabel Dodge Luhan.

A strong woman and a talented writer, Luhan hosted salons at her Taos home for inspiration and companionship. For this former Manhattan doyenne, the little village with its spectacular skies and towering mountains was a "fabulous honeycomb, irresistible and nourishing," for artists, photographers, writers, dancers, musicians—whomever she could lure to her rambling adobe compound. Expanded to its present size after she bought it in 1918, Luhan's home became the center of this rich honeycomb, and today it remains a cultural hub for creativity and learning.

Luhan's guests were not minor talents: D.H. Lawrence, Mary Austin, Willa Cather, Aldous Huxley, Carl Gustav Jung, Georgia O'Keeffe, Ansel Adams, Edward

Weston, Leopold Stokowski, Martha Graham—these are just a few of the names in her guestbook. One attraction was Luhan's husband, Taos Pueblo's Tony Lujan, and another was the pueblo itself. Besides promoting living in harmony with nature, as Native Americans did, Luhan intended that her home be a retreat for "the movers and shakers of the earth . . . to relax and recover their energy . . . the scientists, artists, statesmen, creators, promoters of values and changers of the world."

In 1970, Luhan's heir sold the home to actor-director Dennis Hopper, who had just finished filming much of *Easy Rider* in the Taos area. Like Luhan, Hopper attracted "movers and shakers," including Bob Dylan, John Wayne, and Jack Nicholson—even U.S. Senator and Democratic Presidential candidate George McGovern showed up to investigate the magical aura here.

Today, Luhan's home is a nonprofit inn and conference center where workshops feature established writers, artists, and teachers. Natalie Goldberg, author of

*Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* (Shambhala, 1986), who has led writing retreats there for 20 years, says that she talks about Luhan wherever she is, and invites her students to Taos. "We often follow our retreats with a silent, slow walk to Mabel's grave" in the nearby Kit Carson Park cemetery, she says. "We thank her for creating this space and for allowing us to have a part in fulfilling her dreams. I feel that my continuing to teach in her home has helped keep Mabel's vision alive." Artist Sas Colby also considers it a privilege to hold her annual retreat at the **Mabel Dodge Luhan House**. "We are at home there, connecting the creative stream of Mabel's time to our own," she explains. "And we feel well taken care of by the incredibly supportive staff, who seem to effortlessly run the place, like Mabel—she was a grand hostess."

**From \$98 nightly; (800) 846-2235, (575) 751-9686, [www.mabeldodgeluhan.com](http://www.mabeldodgeluhan.com)  
—Linda Thompson**