

Taking time to enjoy the ruins at Stories from the Land, 2013.
Photo by Matt Barbour.

JEMEZ HISTORIC SITE

KEEP LEARNING

Visit Related Sites

Bandelier National Monument

About 40 miles north and east of Jemez Historic Site along NM 4, aka the Jemez Mountain Trail National Scenic Byway, Bandelier National Monument is where Ancestral Puebloans lived from approximately 1150 to 1550 CE. They carved their homes into cliff sides and built multistoried homes from rock blocks. This settlement is older than Giusewa, which is believed to date to the 1300s. Hours: Daily 8:30 A.M.–4:30 P.M. For info: nps.gov/band/index.htm or (505) 672-3861 x 517.

Coronado Historic Site

Forty miles south of Jemez Historic Site on scenic NM 4 (also known as Jemez Mountain Trail National Scenic Byway) and southeast on US 550, Coronado Historic Site is in the town of Bernalillo. This is a first-contact site, similar to Jamestown, Virginia (1607), or Plymouth, Massachusetts (1620), but decades older, dating to Francisco Vásquez de Coronado's encounter with the Tiwa people of Kuaua village in 1540. Here, you can see some of the 500-year-old Kuaua murals and enter the Painted Kiva, providing a glimpse into the religious life of the Tiwa people, which is shrouded in secrecy even today. Hours: Wednesday–Monday, 8:30 A.M.–5 P.M. For info: nmhistoricsites.org/coronado or (505) 867-5351.

Jemez Mountain Trail National Scenic Byway

This 80-mile stretch of highway runs right past Jemez Historic Site. Upon exiting the parking area, turn left (south) to visit the spa town of Jemez Springs, the Walatowa Visitor Center, the gorgeous red rocks of present-day Jemez Pueblo, and Coronado Historic Site in Bernalillo. Turning right will take you north, then east, past the breathtaking Valles Caldera National Preserve and to Bandelier National Monument outside Los Alamos. For info: newmexico.org/jemez-mountain-trail/.

Walatowa Visitor Center

The Pueblo of Jemez is closed to the general public but welcomes you to the Walatowa Visitor Center, about 12 miles south of Jemez Historic Site on NM 4. Here you can shop for works by Jemez Pueblo artists, take a guided hike of Red Rock Canyon Trail, visit a replica of a traditional Jemez fieldhouse, and see demonstrations of traditional lifeways. Hours: winter, daily 10 A.M.–4 P.M.; summer, daily 8 A.M.–4 P.M. For info: jemezpueblo.com or (575) 834-7235.

BRING YOUR EXPERIENCE HOME

Further Reading

Adams, Eleanor B., and Fray Angélico Chávez (annotators). *The Missions of New Mexico, 1776: A Description by Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez with other Contemporary Documents*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1956.

Hodge, Frederick Webb, and Charles Fletcher Lummis (annotators). *The Memorial of Fray Alonso de Benavides, 1630*. Translated by Mrs. Edward E. Ayer. Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace, 1965.

Liebmann, Matthew. *Revolt: An Archaeological History of Pueblo Resistance and Revitalization in 17th Century New Mexico*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012.

Sando, Joe S. *Nee Hemish: A History of Jemez Pueblo*. Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishing, 2008.



**NEW MEXICO
HISTORIC SITES**

Explore history where it happened

SIGNIFICANCE

Why Visit Jemez Historic Site?

At Jemez Historic Site you can learn about the culture of the people of Giusewa (pronounced GEE-say-wah) and the role the Franciscan mission system played in the colonization of New Mexico, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and New Mexico as we know it today. This is a place of spiritual power that one can feel in the fresh mountain air, the invigorating scent of surrounding pine forest, and the sense of serenity that seems to emanate from the stone ruins. These are some of the best-preserved ruins you will see in the American Southwest.

Ruins of the San José de los Jémez Mission, Jemez, New Mexico, ca. 1940. Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), Negative #006410.



TIME & PLACE

Imagining the Mission of San José de los Jémez of the early 1600s

Giusewa is an ancestral village of the present-day Jemez Pueblo, a sovereign nation of 3,400 members, about 60 percent of whom live on tribal land. Its full name, GEE-say-wah-tuu-wah, is a Towa word that translates to “village by the sulphur,” a reference to the multitudes of hot springs in the area. For hundreds of years, Giusewa and other villages in the region were home to the people who call themselves the Hemesh, which the Spanish interpreted as “Jémez.” The villagers of Giusewa raised corn, squash, and beans—also known as *las tres hermanas*, or the three sisters—in addition to hunting game and collecting herbs.

In the winter of 1540–41, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and his entourage of 400 Spaniards, at least 1,500 Native American allies, four Franciscan friars, and dozens of African slaves overtook the Tiwa village of Kuaua (now Coronado Historic Site), about 40 miles to the southeast, and camped nearby for the winter. From there, Coronado sent an exploration party under the direction of Captain Francisco de Barrionuevo, who reported visiting Giusewa. In 1598 Don Juan de Oñate led Spanish settlers to colonize and Christianize New Mexico. The first missionary assigned to Giusewa was Fray Alonso de Lugo, who constructed a small church here around 1598.

CHARACTERS & CONFLICT

How did life change for the people of Giusewa when their village became a Spanish mission?

The ruins you see before you today are what came to be known as the San José de los Jémez Mission. Fray Gerónimo Zárate Salmerón designed it in the winter of 1621–22, and the Giusewa people built it of local materials. Note that the walls throughout the site are of stone, not adobe, and in some places, they are seven feet thick. Before the arrival of the Spanish, the villagers of Giusewa had conducted their religious ceremonies in underground kivas. Here, they performed rituals that revered spiritual beings and asked for blessings of sun, rain, fertile crops, and healthy families.

Though we have limited written records of San José de los Jémez Mission specifically, once Salmerón expanded the mission and built the massive church, it is likely that the people of Giusewa attended mass three times per day, as was common at other missions. Accounts of other missions also state that Pueblo people were taught to play and sing Christian music. At some missions, Native people also learned reading, writing, and European crafts. The Spanish brought innovations such as domestic animals, fruit trees, and iron tools.

Though the Spanish invested a substantial amount of effort in this mission, it was only in use for about twenty years. Franciscans abandoned the mission in 1640, when Spanish authorities chose to concentrate their efforts on a neighboring mission at Walatowa.

STAND WHERE HISTORY HAPPENED

Your Self-Guided Tour

1 Visitor Center (Trail Number 1)

Our small museum highlights the history and culture of the Jemez people, in their own words, beginning with their creation story and ending with a presentation of modern Jemez artwork. Though today's Jemez people don't live at Giusewa, they maintain their cultural traditions and deep-rooted connection to this site. Please, no photographs while inside the Visitor Center.

2 Spanish Horno (Trail Number 1)

The horno, or oven, is a form of architecture that arrived with the Spanish. Before that time, Native people cooked food in open hearths or roasting pits. The horno allowed them bake bread and other flour-based foods.

3 Mounds of Giusewa (Trail Number 2)

The small hills and stone walls surrounding you are the ruins of Giusewa Pueblo. Only 18 percent of this site has been excavated. Much remains intact in the earth beneath your feet. Archaeologists believe this village was first occupied in the 1300s and is ancestral to the Jemez people.

4 Reconstructed Kiva (Trail Number 4)

A kiva is a ceremonial structure used by Pueblo peoples. Kiva 1, the largest excavated kiva at Jemez Historic Site, is believed to date to the 1500s and is still actively used by Jemez tribal members. Note that the vent shaft, deflector, and hearth inside are oriented to the south. This varies from what you will find at precontact Tiwa villages, such as Kuaua, now Coronado Historic Site, and has been used to suggest that the Jemez people migrated from the Four Corners area, where this configuration is more common. Please, no photographs while inside.

5 Spanish Administrative Offices (Trail Number 5)

Before you is a roomblock modified by the Spanish in the 1600s. It is believed to have been an office building and inn for civil authorities visiting the mission. In the 1930s, archaeologists identified the large room on the east end as a stable.

6 Excavated Roomblock (Trail Number 6)

The block of rooms before you dates to the early 1600s. Excavated by archaeologists in the 1920s, only those closest to you would have been living quarters. The remainder would have been used for grain storage.

7 Camposanto (Trail Number 7)

The open space in front of you is the mission cemetery, or camposanto. Catholic converts would have been buried here. Exactly how many graves are here remains unclear. Much of the cemetery is unexcavated.

8 San José de los Jémez Mission Church (Trail Number 8)

The large structure before you is the church constructed under the guidance of Fray Gerónimo Zárate Salmerón in 1621–22. It was designed in the baroque style, which was popular in Europe at the time and encouraged by the Roman Catholic Church. The mission church may have had a peaked roof. In contrast to the drab rock remnants we see today, brightly colored frescoes once adorned these walls and would have included Spanish lace and fleur-de-lis patterns as well as Native motifs such as plants and animals. Fragments of selenite, a translucent mineral, were found at the base of the church walls during a 1921–22 excavation and suggest this material was used for windowpanes. Painted pine panels (retablos) and carved wooden statues (bultos) of saints would have adorned the twelve Stations of the Cross. Today, only their pedestals remain.



9 Lugo's Church (Trail Number 15)

Current research suggests that these rooms represent the initial church, built by Alonso de Lugo around 1598. This assertion is based on a 1596 date from a roofing beam from the 1621–22 mission church and its articulation with these earlier rooms, which it may have been built around. If so, Lugo's Church may have been a relatively small structure consisting of a portal, sanctuary, sacristy, and bedroom.

10 Mission Courtyard (Trail Number 18)

This open space within the mission would have served as the mission courtyard. Here, missionaries would have tended to their livestock and kept a small garden.

11 Evidence of Volcanic Eruption (Trail Number 19)

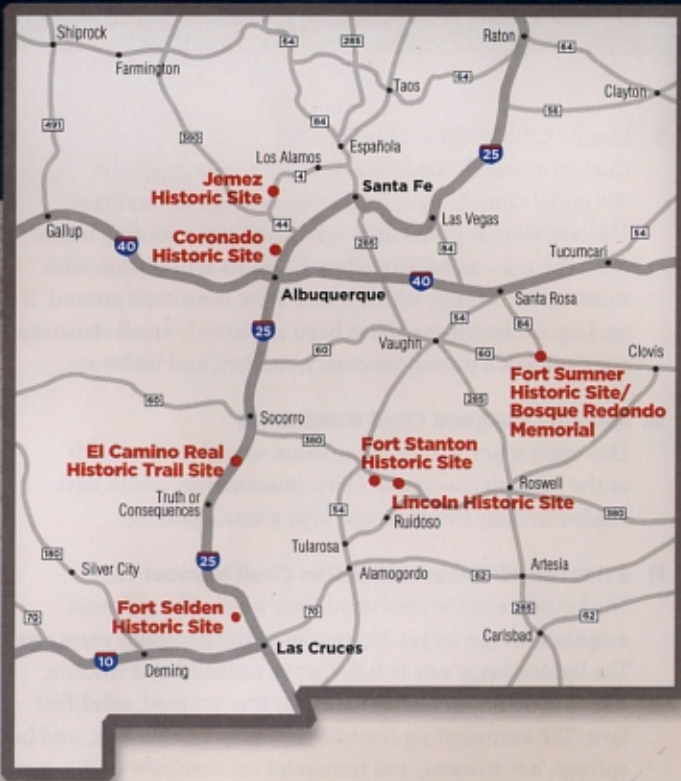
The boulders in the courtyard were formed by volcanic eruptions in the Jemez Mountains about a million years ago. The lighter, beige one is tuff, that is, consolidated volcanic ash. The darker rocks are basalt, or fine-grained, solidified lava. The surrounding Jemez Mountains are volcanic, and hot springs, hot streams, and fumaroles are common in the area.

12 Secure Storeroom (Trail Number 22)

The second largest structure within the mission is this secure storeroom. The missionaries maintained control over the villagers by controlling access to their food and seed stores. During the famine of 1668–1672, structures like this one were commonplace in Franciscan missions throughout New Mexico. This has led some scholars to theorize that San José de los Jémez Mission was occupied up until the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, not abandoned around 1640, which is the more widely accepted school of thought. However, as of yet, there is no archival evidence to support the theory.

13 Adaption of Space (Trail Number 23)

After the Franciscan missionaries departed, the Jemez people continued to occupy Giusewa. The room before you has a hearth, deflector, and vent shaft. It may have initially served as a priest's living quarters but was converted into a kiva following Franciscan abandonment. The presence of this structure within the mission ruins indicates the resilience of the traditional Native American belief system.



JEMEZ HISTORIC SITE

Jemez Springs

8:30 A.M.–5:00 P.M. · Wednesday – Sunday

NM 4 · 43 miles north of Bernalillo

(575) 829-3530 · NMHistoricSites.org

New Mexico Historic Sites are storied places where the past is palpable. They invite you to hit the road, explore, and get out in the golden New Mexico sun. It's your chance to follow in the footsteps of indigenous people, Spanish conquistadors, Civil War soliders, outlaws, and lawmen. Visiting a New Mexico Historic Site promises to grant you a deeper understanding of those who have gone before us and helped make us who we are today.

Cover: Ruins of the San José de los Jémez Mission.
Photo courtesy of DCA/NMHS.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Conversation Starters

- Compared to the Tiwa people who lived along the Rio Grande (and at what is now Coronado Historic Site), the Hee-mish made their homes in a colder, less hospitable place. Why do you think they chose to live here?
- Touring Jemez Historic Site, you have seen a kiva as well as a church. Do you think both religions were practiced here simultaneously? Why or why not?
- Around 1640 the Franciscans abandoned San José de los Jémez Mission. However, archaeological evidence suggests that the Jemez people continued to live at Giusewa. Why do you think the priests left the area? Why did many Jemez people choose to stay behind?

HANDS-ON FUN

Come Back for Events

April

Spring in Your Step, Sunday closest to Earth Day

A two-mile hike up Church/Oak Canyon.

August

Pueblo Independence Day, Sunday closest to August 10

Celebrating the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 with a 10-mile run, Jemez dances, and arts and crafts fair.

December

Light among the Ruins, Second Saturday evening in

December Luminarias, Jemez dances, and arts and crafts fair.

