

A Cultural Showcase – Gallup Summer Nightly Indian Dances

Written by By Dee Velasco Sun Correspondent
Friday, 05 June 2015 14:07



This summer when you're planning of things to do and visit, be sure to mark down and experience, "The Gallup Summer Nightly Indian Dances." Nestled in the heart of Gallup, New Mexico, this deeply rooted cultural experience is a must to see.

Sponsored by the City of Gallup and the Gallup Chamber of Commerce, the GSNID has been a tradition that draws crowds from all over the world. Making this year its Thirty-first year tradition, the GSNID offers you traditional Native American dances from various Native American tribes from around the area.

Tribes include: Zuni Pueblo, Navajo Dine Nation, Lakota Sioux, San Juan Pueblo, and others. Gallup is considered to be the, "Indian Capital of the World", and thus it permeates it with the rich cultural heritage each night with traditional dances.

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Located in downtown Gallup at the McKinley County Court house plaza, the outdoor setting is just right for the ambience. The GSNID begins each night at 7 pm and last for one hour. Each year it begins on Memorial Day and ends on Labor Day.

As the preparations for each night begin, tourists as well as locals begin to seek a place to sit and are getting ready to enjoy the nightly performance. If by chance you're tummy is calling for food – you're in luck, a local food truck is on hand.

Not just any food but, authentic Native American food prepared by members of the Navajo Dine nation. A local favorite is, Fry bread, and of course – green chili. If you've never had one ... now's the time. You'll also find local Native American artisans on hand displaying their arts & crafts of all sorts. This event is for the entire family, young and old, and best of all it's free!

It's the highlight of Gallup summer activities. When you attend the performances, be sure to bring your camera, as this is highly recommended by the emcees to take all the pictures you want; in fact you can also take group pictures with the performers after their performance. The GSNID is a hidden treasure just of Interstate Forty.

Teri Frazier, Director of the GSNID says, "It's a family, safe and educational atmosphere and it's entertaining."

The GSNID are held every night of the week and are even emceed by local Native Americans as well. Each night they inform the audience of the history of Gallup, the significance of the dances, and even tell of their own tribal ancestry. Locals and tourists leave with a deep spiritual sense of the great southwest and a new kinship among Native Americans.

Tourists from the entire world come out to enjoy these performances: Germany, Europe, China, Great Britain, France, Switzerland, and many from all over the United States. An ambassador of the GSNID, is also present to answers questions and hand out free literature to the audience. The GSNID can also be found on the web at www.nightlyindiandances.com.

Each night the GSNID offers performances from groups such as: The Cellicion Traditional Zuni

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Dancers, White Eagle Dancers, The Roach family, Morningsong, and others just to name a few. Each group brings its distinct style of traditional dances, their regalia, and the sacred meaning behind the dances.

Fernando Cellicion, group leader of the, Cellicion Traditional Zuni Dancers, says, “Our dances are to teach, preserve, and pass down the social songs and dances.” Cellicion and his group are from the Zuni Pueblo, which is the largest of the Pueblos in New Mexico. The group was founded in 1983 by his late parents, and since then, Fernando has kept the group going.

Cellicion says, “Our group has always been a family affair consisting usually of fifth-teen family members.” The group is well renowned and has traveled throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, and even, Northern Africa. They have traveled to thirty-eight countries so far and recently have been invited to perform in Turkmenistan, for a festival this coming July. Cellicion also plays the flute and mesmerizes the crowd with a virtuoso performance each time.

So whether it's the Cellicion group or one of the Native American dance groups, all are sure to please; a schedule of the performance groups is available so as to be sure you don't miss any of the performances. You'll soon find yourself coming back for more. Such is the case for this writer, one night three years ago, I was intrigued by the sound of drumming and ventured over, and that was it...now I look forward to it each year.

Whether if you're a local or perhaps passing through Gallup, don't miss out on the GSNID. Come enjoy a cool evening outdoors as the sun begins to dip in the horizon, partake of authentic Native American cuisine, and be prepared for a breath-taking performance. Known also as, “New Mexico True”, the GSNID offers a rich, cultural, adventure that everyone should experience.

See the Gallup Sun's Calendar on page 23 for Nightly Indian Dances time and location.