LAUREL BRANDI
REAL ESTATE

2026-27 EDITION

The Local's Guide to *Las Cruces*

Neighborhoods, a month-by-month events calendar, and the tips I wish people knew sooner, for anyone who just landed in the Mesilla Valley or is thinking about it.

- The weekly rhythm
- 12 months of events
- 12 neighborhoods
- Tips from a local



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WELCOME TO THE MESILLA VALLEY

Start here

Las Cruces has a lot going on, and not all of it shows up in one place. That's why I keep a community events calendar on my site, and it's why I put this guide together.

Whether you're brand new, a few months in, or still deciding whether to make the move, these pages cover what I'd tell a friend over coffee: the weekly rhythm of town, what happens each month of the year, what each part of the city feels like, and the little things that take most newcomers a season or two to figure out.

Keep it on your phone, print it for the fridge, and check the live calendar for exact dates. If something here sparks a question, about a neighborhood, an event, or a move, reach out anytime.

— Laurel

Las Cruces at a glance

WHERE
New Mexico's second-largest city, in Doña Ana County, with the Organ Mountains on the east and the Rio Grande on the west.

ELEVATION
Roughly 3,900 feet. Thinner, drier air and a strong sun.

TIME ZONE
Mountain Time, the same as El Paso next door.

NEARBY
El Paso about 45 minutes south · White Sands National Park about an hour northeast · Hatch about 40 minutes north.

UNIVERSITY
New Mexico State University (Go Aggies) is a big part of the city's calendar and culture.

THE WEEKLY RHYTHM

Things you can count on

SATURDAYS · 8:30 A.M.–1 P.M.

Farmers & Crafts Market

Main Street downtown, year-round. Hundreds of local growers, makers, food, and live music.

WEDNESDAYS · 8:30 A.M.–1 P.M.

The Mini Market

Plaza de Las Cruces. Smaller and more relaxed than Saturday, great for a quick produce run.

FRIDAYS & SUNDAYS

Mesilla Plaza Market

Arts, crafts, and local goods on the historic Mesilla Plaza. Pair it with lunch nearby.

FIRST FRIDAY · 5–10 P.M.

Fine Art Flea Market

Downtown Main Street and the Plaza: art, vintage finds, food, and drinks each month.

NEW IN TOWN?

An easy first weekend

SAT A.M.
Coffee and a slow lap of the Farmers & Crafts Market on Main Street.

SAT P.M.
Wander the Old Mesilla Plaza, peek into the Basilica of San Albino, and stay for an enchilada plate.

SUN A.M.
An early walk at Dripping Springs or the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park.

SUN P.M.
Catch the sunset turning the Organ Mountains pink. Locals still stop to look.

MONTH BY MONTH

A year in Las Cruces

The big annual traditions, in the order they come around. Timing below is typical. Exact dates shift a little every year, so confirm on the live calendar or the host's site before you go.

January

CLEAR, COOL DAYS

Mesilla Valley Balloon Rally. Hot-air balloons over the valley on a mid-January weekend. Bring a jacket for the early launch. MID-JAN

Best hiking season. Crisp mornings make it a great time for Dripping Springs and the Organ Mountains foothills.

February

ART MONTH

For the Love of Art Month. Weekend studio tours and exhibits all month, a great way to meet local artists. ALL MONTH

NMSU basketball. Aggie games are a fun, affordable night out this time of year.

March

WIND STARTS

Bataan Memorial Death March. Thousands march at White Sands Missile Range to honor WWII POWs, with full and shorter honorary routes. The 2027 march is set for March 20. MAR 20, 2027

Spring blooms. Desert wildflowers and blooming cactus start showing up on local trails.

April

FESTIVAL SEASON

Las Cruces International Film Festival. Screenings, panels, and guest filmmakers. EARLY–MID APR

¡mira! Las Cruces. The city's free spring festival downtown: music, art, food, and a kids' zone. That weekend the Saturday market usually moves to Sunday. LATE APR

May

WARMING UP

Cinco de Mayo in Mesilla. Music, dancing, and food on the historic plaza. EARLY MAY

New Mexico Wine Festival. State wineries, food trucks, and music at the fairgrounds west of town. MEMORIAL DAY WKND

June

HOTTEST & DRIEST

Juneteenth. The city hosts a community celebration each June. MID-JUNE

Summer strategy. Locals do outdoor plans early morning or after sunset, then spend the afternoon somewhere air-conditioned.

ANY MONTH OF THE YEAR

Close-to-home outdoors & day trips

~25 MIN EAST

Dripping Springs

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument trails, a historic resort ruin, and big canyon views.

~40 MIN EAST

Aguirre Spring

Shaded campground and trailheads on the far side of the Organ Mountains.

IN TOWN

Mesilla Valley Bosque

State park on the Rio Grande with easy trails and great birding.

~20 MIN NORTH

Leasburg Dam

State park with river access, camping, and guided bird walks.

~1 HR NORTHEAST

White Sands

National park with gypsum dunes for hiking, sledding, and sunsets.

~1 HR 15 MIN NORTH

Elephant Butte

New Mexico's largest lake, for boating, beaches, and weekend getaways.

July

MONSOON BEGINS

Electric Light Parade. Lighted floats on the evening of July 3, starting at Apodaca Park, with an Electric 5K beforehand. JULY 3

Fourth of July fireworks. The city's Independence Day celebration with music and family activities. JULY 4

August

CHILE SEASON

Chile roasting. Roasters start turning outside grocery stores and stands. The smell is how you know summer is ending.

Sunset at White Sands. Summer evening ranger-led strolls at the national park are worth the drive. SUMMER WKNDS

September

THE BIG MONTH

Hatch Chile Festival. Parade, roasting, and the chile queen in the village of Hatch. LABOR DAY WKND

Harvest Wine Festival. Another Labor Day tradition at the fairgrounds. LABOR DAY WKND

Diez y Seis de Septiembre. Mexican Independence Day fiesta on the Mesilla Plaza. MID-SEPT

Las Cruces Space Festival. Celebrating the region's aerospace history. SEPT

October

PERFECT WEATHER

Southern NM State Fair & Rodeo. Rodeo, livestock shows, carnival, and concerts at the fairgrounds 12 miles west on I-10. LATE SEPT–EARLY OCT

Sky Fiesta. The air show over the Las Cruces airport. OCT

Corn mazes & pumpkin patches pop up across the valley. SEPT–OCT

November

DÍA & MARIACHI

Día de los Muertos in Mesilla. Altars, a procession, music, and vendors on the plaza. LATE OCT–NOV 2

Las Cruces International Mariachi Conference. Workshops and big concerts that bring student and professional musicians to town. MID-NOV

> **Heads up:** The Doña Ana Arts Council, which ran the Renaissance ArtsFaire at Young Park for decades, closed in early 2026, and the 2026 faire was canceled. I'll post any news about its future on my calendar.

December

LIGHTS & CHILE

Tree lightings on the Plaza de Las Cruces and the Mesilla Plaza, with music and a visit from Santa. EARLY DEC

Christmas Eve luminarias. Mesilla Plaza glows with paper-bag lanterns. Go early; it gets busy. DEC 24

Chile Drop. A giant lighted chile drops at midnight on the Plaza de Las Cruces. Free, family-friendly, and you get to vote red or green. DEC 31

Event details are drawn from public sources and can change. Please check the event host's website for the most up-to-date information.

Want the exact dates every week?

My community calendar has the specific dates, times, and details for everything above and plenty more. Scan the code, or get the weekly events email and I'll send the highlights straight to your inbox.

GETTING TO KNOW THE MAP

Neighborhoods at a glance

Las Cruces covers a lot of ground, and each area has its own setting, lot sizes, and age of homes. Here's a quick lay of the land for some of the areas people ask me about most.

Mesilla & Mesilla Park

Historic adobe, tree-lined streets, and pecan orchards near the Old Mesilla Plaza, the Basilica of San Albino, and the shops and restaurants around it.

Downtown, Alameda & Mesquite

The city's historic core. Older homes on smaller lots, walking distance to Main Street, the Plaza de Las Cruces, museums, and the Saturday market.

Sonoma Ranch

East side, mostly newer construction with Organ Mountain views, parks, trails, and nearby golf. Quick access to shopping along Lohman and Telshor.

Telshor & Foothills

Central-east location near the mall, medical offices, and restaurants, stepping up toward the foothills with wider views the farther east you go.

Picacho Hills

West mesa, partially gated, built around a golf course, with sweeping views of the city lights and the Organ Mountains across the valley.

Metro Verde & Red Hawk

Northeast side, newer master-planned communities with parks, walking paths, and the Red Hawk Golf Club close by.

University District

Around New Mexico State University. A mix of older homes, rentals, and quick access to campus, I-10, and I-25.

Las Alturas

Established hillside neighborhood southeast of campus, with custom homes, larger lots, and views across the valley.

Country Club & Loma Heights

Central, with mature trees and mid-century homes, near Three Crosses Regional Medical Center and close to most of the city.

East Mesa

Out toward the Organ Mountains, with newer subdivisions, more room between neighbors, and big open-desert views.

Doña Ana

Historic village north of the city with a rural feel, larger lots, and properties set up for horses.

Radium Springs

Farther north along the Rio Grande near Leasburg Dam State Park. Quiet, rural, and wide open.

Explore all 18 areas on the interactive map

Click any zone for photos, amenities, and what to expect from that part of town. Scan the code or visit neighborhoods.laurelbrandi.com.

FROM A LOCAL

Tips I wish people knew sooner

01 **"Red or green?"**

You'll hear it at nearly every New Mexican restaurant. It's your chile choice. Can't decide? Say "Christmas" and you'll get both.

02 **Spring is windy**

March through May brings gusty afternoons and the occasional dust storm. Plan patio dinners and yard projects around it.

03 **Respect the monsoon**

From about July through September, afternoon storms can roll in fast. Never drive through a flooded road or running arroyo.

04 **The sun hits harder here**

At almost 4,000 feet, sunscreen and water are non-negotiable. Hike early, and bring more water than you think you'll need.

05 **Use the mountains as a compass**

The Organ Mountains are always east. If you can see them, you know which way you're headed.

06 **Buy chile by the sack**

In late summer, buy a sack of fresh-roasted green chile, bag it in portions, and freeze it. You'll be set until next season.

07 **Go to the market early**

The Saturday market is busiest mid-morning. Arrive close to 8:30 for the best produce and easier parking.

08 **Think desert yard**

Native and drought-tolerant landscaping looks great here and is easier on your water bill. Ask neighbors what thrives on their street.

IF YOU'RE BUYING OR SELLING HERE

A few New Mexico things that surprise newcomers

- **Online home values are often off.** New Mexico is a non-disclosure state, so sale prices aren't public record, and automated estimates have less to work with. Local sales data gives a much clearer picture.
- **Title companies run the closing.** Buyers and sellers usually sign at separate appointments, and keys change hands after the deal funds and records with the county, not at the signing table.
- **Thinking of renting it out short-term?** Las Cruces adopted short-term rental regulations that took effect January 1, 2026. Check the city's current rules before you buy with that plan in mind.
- **School districts don't always follow city lines.** More than one district serves Doña Ana County, so check the specific address with the district.

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THINKING ABOUT A MOVE?

Let's talk, *no pressure*

Whether you're relocating, buying your first home, moving up, or just curious what's out there, I'm happy to answer questions about neighborhoods, the market, or what life here is really like.

Call or text (575) 640-6511

Email homes@laurelbrandi.com

Web laurelbrandi.com

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Never miss what's happening

Scan for the live community events calendar, updated regularly, and sign up for the weekly events email. Hosting something? Submit your event.
laurelbrandi.com/las-cruces-events

BUYING

Buyer's Resource Library

buyers.laurelbrandi.com

SELLING

Seller's Resource Library

guides.laurelbrandi.com

EXPLORING

Neighborhood Map

neighborhoods.laurelbrandi.com

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