

W I D E

THE STRETCH OF SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO BETWEEN ALBUQUERQUE AND WHITE SANDS NATIONAL MONUMENT IS ONE

O P E N

OF THE MOST SCENIC AND CAPTIVATING IN AMERICA. EXPERIENCE IT IN THE LUXURIOUS COMFORT OF THE XT5.

S P A C E

BY KRISTIN BUTLER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSEPH PUHY

In the early morning light, the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array (VLA) radio observatory looks like something from a sci-fi movie. In a way, it is: This Y-shaped grouping of 27 230-ton dishes has been featured in several out-of-this-world blockbusters, but the VLA is very much at the forefront of reality, a here-and-now ground zero for cosmic breakthroughs and ongoing scientific exploration.



STOP NO.

1

SPACED
OUTALBUQUERQUE
TO THE
KARL G.
JANSKY
VERY LARGE
ARRAY

128 MILES



→ As I step out onto the desolate, mountain-ringed plain and walk toward the nearest antenna, the eerie silence is interrupted by the thrilling sound of an 82-foot-wide dish swiveling its head. About 700 observations, ranging from 20 minutes to 24 hours, are made here each year. Antennas are repositioned along tracks according to what the scientists want to look at. On this particular morning, the array is mapping distant colliding galaxies, intercepting radio waves from light-years away and feeding them into a supercomputer to be rendered as spirals, swirls, and puffs of radiant dust in electric blue, emerald green, and brilliant orange.

This is the first stop on my dream road trip through the Land of Enchantment—the legend written on New Mexico license plates since 1941. When I was a kid, my imagination was held captive by TV shows and movies showcasing the great Southwest in all its Wild West gunslinging, space-traveling, nuclear-missile-firing glory. Now that I'm an adult I'm no less fascinated with these things, but instead of needing Mom to drive, I'm at the wheel of an XT5 3.6L Platinum edition—Cadillac's midsize luxury crossover SUV, which blends luxurious comfort and sporty features—to cruise the 390-mile route from Albuquerque to White Sands National Monument. There will be mineral hot springs. There will be jagged mountains. There will be driving with the oversized sunroof open. There will be greasy, chile-laden burgers at 1960s diners in the middle of nowhere. And it's going to be epic.



PREVIOUS SPREAD:
Cadillac's luxury crossover, the XT5, at sunrise at the Very Large Array.

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:
Eight of the VLA's massive radio antennas scanning deep space; the XT5 on the road again.

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
View from the observation deck at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge; collecting road trip memories; Hollywood's favorite river, the Rio Grande.



STOP NO.

2

FOR THE BIRDS
KARL G. JANSKY
VERY LARGE ARRAY TO
BOSQUE DEL
APACHE NATIONAL
WILDLIFE REFUGE

69 MILES



→ From the VLA I head due east through Magdalena, a small rancher town that earned its name when Spanish soldiers spotted the face of a woman in a rock face overlooking the town center, reminding them of a peak back home called La Sierra de Maria Magdalena. As I strain to catch a glimpse of her, I veer slightly out of lane. The XT5 Safety Alert Seat vibrates to indicate the subtle drift and Lane Keep Assist autocorrects by staying the course within the lines. I'm not sure whether it's the saint or my car watching over me today, but I'll take it.

Forty-five minutes later, the sun is already high in the sky when I arrive at Bosque del Apache National



Wildlife Refuge on the Rio Grande. A year-round sanctuary for about 370 winged species, as well as deer, antelope, beaver, and coyote, this ancient flyway is at its most visually arresting from mid-November through February, when tens of thousands of migrating ducks and snow geese fill the skies and rest at the many watering holes. But now there are few birds to be seen, so I move on, making a silent promise to return someday in high season. Plus, I'm starting to feel hungry. With one touch I stream the view from the rear mounted camera to the Rear Camera Mirror, which is not only crystal clear, but also offers a substantially larger view than an ordinary mirror, allowing for stress-free backing up through the tightest of spots. I reverse out of my parking space, and I'm off.

Since there's nothing like comfort food on the road—particularly when it comes with one hell of a history—I backtrack eight miles north to Owl Bar & Café in San Antonio to indulge in fast food that quite literally fueled the development of the atom bomb. Owner Rowena Baca was a little girl when the world's first nuclear weapon was tested on July 16, 1945, at the Trinity Site 40 miles away. Her parents had opened a small-town café in the 1940s, and Manhattan Project physicists used to come here to refuel in the wee hours and place random bets with local “night owls,” thereby earning the café its name. Today, the green chile cheeseburger with grilled onions—a recipe unchanged since 1948—is as much a reason to stop by as the chance to peek at the collection of fading newspaper clippings and black-and-white photos of those first, brilliant customers.

1 Safety features are no substitute for the driver's responsibility to operate the vehicle in a safe manner. The driver should remain attentive to traffic, surroundings and road conditions at all times.



STOP NO.

3

WATER WORKS

SAN ANTONIO TO
TRUTH OR
CONSEQUENCES

64 MILES

→ As I cruise south, the XT5's generous windows and UltraView® sunroof provide a window on jagged peaks and spellbinding blue skies until I hit the town of Truth or Consequences—or T or C for short. Formerly known as Hot Springs, the town held a vote in 1950 to change its name in response to a publicity challenge by the producers of the game show—wait for it—*Truth or Consequences*. The change has worked in its favor: T or C, with a population of 6,246, has apparently received more publicity than any other U.S. town of a similar size since.

Many of its residents are artists, herbalists, and healers, and Passion Pie Café, downtown, is a great spot for catching exhibitions and people-watching over a spicy-sweet slice of red chile cherry pie. But ask any

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: View of Elephant Butte Reservoir, the largest body of water in New Mexico; hot mineral spring baths at Riverbend Hot Springs.

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: Hatch, N.M., is known as “The Chile Capital of the World”; Doña Ana church melds Spanish, Mexican, and New Mexico architectural elements.

sage-toting massage therapist on the street why people linger in T or C, and they'll tell you it's because there's something in the water, which has trace elements of 38 different minerals. The healing properties of local mineral hot springs—the town sits on top of one of the country's largest geothermal aquifers—are celebrated throughout New Mexico. The Apache and Mimbres tribes started coming here for medicinal and spiritual healing centuries ago. The aquifer produces about 2.5 million gallons of mineral water each day, which ranges in temperature from 98 to 115 degrees Fahrenheit, and soaks are said to detoxify the body and ease afflictions like arthritis, fibromyalgia, depression, respiratory illnesses, and circulatory problems.

An inviting place to take the waters is Riverbend Hot Springs, which offers a romantic view: Its open-air, adults-only, natural-stone baths are set on a bank overlooking the Rio Grande, the perfect spot for a dip in the chilly river waters followed by the comforting warmth of one of the inviting hot springs.

T or C also offers outdoor pursuits such as golf, rock climbing, and rock hunting. Nearby Elephant Butte Reservoir, the largest body of water in New Mexico and named for a rock formation resembling an elephant's profile, is a staging ground for boating, fishing, waterskiing, and kayaking. “If you're an outdoor enthusiast, you'll love T or C,” says Cyndi James-Clayton, a teacher and Reiki master who also works at La Paloma Hot Springs & Spa. “For a long time, this place has been kept a secret. It's a treasure in a way. It's a funky, weird, bizarre little town.”



DON'T MISS

When you're done having a soak, there's more to explore in Truth or Consequences.



EAT

a slice of red chile cherry pie—delish!



SEE

a movie at the 1930s El Cortez Theater.



STAY

at Ted Turner's Sierra Grande Lodge & Spa.

STOP NO.

4



HOT HOT HOT

TRUTH OR
CONSEQUENCES TO
HATCH

38 MILES



THE PERFECT BITE:

Don't go home without devouring one of Sparkys World Famous Hatch Green Chile Cheeseburgers. As the menu states—“Just Hatch green chile and cheese is all you need.” Sounds like very delicious advice.

¹ Full functionality requires compatible Bluetooth® and smartphone. Some devices require USB connectivity.

→ The XT5 isn't as laid back as T or C, with its powerful 3.6L Direct-Injection V6 VVT engine, sporting 310 hp. I use the Cadillac CUE¹ system's touchscreen to map my route to my next stop, Hatch, a town renowned for its sprawling fields of chile peppers, as well as an annual chile festival that lures 30,000 visitors and—not to be missed—Sparkys World Famous Hatch Green Chile Cheeseburger.

Even if I didn't have the navigation running, Sparkys is impossible to miss: its namesake tin robot, Sparky, plus a 15-foot-tall pink pig, a T-rex, and a 30-foot-tall Uncle Sam, among numerous other oversized friends collected by owner Teako Nunn, stand roadside to welcome visitors to this carnival of pure Americana. Inside, vintage memorabilia—tin signs, old photographs, a neon clock, and a moose head—adorn the walls.

“We're quirky, and that helps. Thousands of people come just once or twice a year,” says Nunn, whose affinity for antiques got him featured on a vintage collectibles cable show.

It was his son, Dillon, now 25, who insisted he make a burger paired with homegrown chiles, which Nunn then billed as world-famous. It's definitely regionally, if not internationally, renowned: Around 500 customers stop by daily for patties prepared from scratch, heaped with local chopped chiles under a slice of melting cheese, or to try the pulled pork, brisket, or ribs. To meet demand, the family recently expanded their counter-service diner to three rooms. The Green Chile Room stage has played host to blues, rockabilly, and country stars, such as CW Ayon.

STOP NO.

5

CROSS
ROADSHATCH TO
LAS CRUCES

39 MILES

There's no music right now, though, and I have a bit of time to kill before nightfall. So I jump back in the XT5 and make one more stop as I continue south to Las Cruces. In Doña Ana, I visit Our Lady of Purification Catholic Church, which was founded in 1842, and enjoy a peaceful moment in the quiet town. Then I'm back on the road.



STOP NO.

6

ENCHANTING DESERT

LAS CRUCES TO
WHITE SANDS NATIONAL
MONUMENT

52 MILES

→ After crashing at the luxurious Spanish Colonial-inspired Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces (and a little morning pool time), I head for my final destination: White Sands National Monument, an hour's drive northeast. One of the great joys of a road trip is simply cruising along empty stretches of highway in the comfort of your car. And the XT5 with its leather-wrapped, heated steering wheel, its futuristic Head-Up Display, which can be customized to display the information you want to see, and its ergonomically designed cabin configuration offers the perfect environment to endlessly devour mile after mile of the open road.

Making my way around Dunes Drive, the 8-mile scenic drive that leads from the White Sands visitor center into the vast gypsum dune fields, XT5's intelligent All-Wheel Drive

was brilliant, navigating the drifting dunes with ease. Add to that the XT5's real-time damping suspension, which monitors the road and vehicle inputs, and you couldn't ask for a more precise ride.

On my arrival at White Sands, I heed the U.S. National Park Service's advice to carry a gallon of water, a compass, sunscreen, and a hat, and step out onto the Dune Life Nature Trail, one of many that partly traverse the 275 square miles of satin-like undulations.

As I stand on top of these strange, unbroken waves some 40, 50, or even 70 feet high, the surrounding mountain-ringed landscape is both jaw-droppingly beautiful and utterly surreal—I may as well be on a different planet. Blown into pristine, rippled dunes, the white mineral deposits resemble hills blanketed in snow and are pocked by occasional sculptures exposed by shifting winds—pedestals of gypsum, some 30 feet tall, with deep-rooted sumac or yucca clinging to the crowns. I'm surprised how easy the dunes are to traverse—the underlying gypsum is firmly cemented—and because they remain cool to the touch year-round, I kick off my boots and go barefoot.

But roughly 35 miles to the southwest, I can see the base of the 9,000-foot-high Organ Mountains and a stark reminder of humanity's mark on these lands: White Sands Missile Range, where the world's first atom bomb was detonated in July 1945 and the first missile was launched in September of the same year. It's also where more than 50 other test missiles and rockets are on display, at its museum and missile park. My thoughts instantly turn to the photos of the physicists I'd seen back at Owl Bar & Café, and I can't help marveling at how these great Southwestern landscapes fire the imagination.

Speaking of, I can't wait to get back into my XT5 and see what lies over the next horizon. ▀



From the visitor center, the Dunes Drive takes you 8 miles into the eerie landscape.

SWEPT AW

WITH ENDLESS WAVES OF AQUA BLUE AND WAVY SOFT SAND,
THE RAW BEAUTY OF MOZAMBIQUE'S BAZARUTO ARCHIPELAGO—AND
ITS EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF STUNNING ABSTRACT PATTERNS—IS
FINALLY EMERGING AS THE NEXT MUST-SEE LUXE DESTINATION

AY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
SKYHAWK PHOTOGRAPHY

ABOVE: Traditional fishing boats, known as dhows, float just offshore on the turquoise sea. **BELOW:** The Bazaruto Archipelago is famous for its endlessly shifting sand patterns, which shimmer through the shallow, crystal-clear waters of the Mozambique Channel.

