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Travel & Tourism

New Mexicans to Know: This is why Visit Albuquerque's Tania Armenta loves to sell Albuquerque




Image: courtesy Visit Albuquerque

Tania Armenta, president and CEO of Visit Albuquerque.

COURTESY VISIT ALBUQUERQUE



By [Aayush Gupta](#) – Real Estate Reporter , Albuquerque Business First
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See Correction/Clarification at the end of this article.

In New Mexico, where culture meets desert beauty, Tania Armenta shines as a leader in promoting Albuquerque's tourism.

As president and CEO of Visit Albuquerque, a nonprofit destination marketing organization, Armenta has spent over two decades showcasing her home state to the world. Raised in San Juan County, Armenta returned to New Mexico in 1998 after a stint in Nebraska for her education and early career.

Since then, she has been with Visit Albuquerque, shaping its path for the past 26 years.

"[My husband and I] are big fans of our climate and our culture and what that means from an overall quality of life [standpoint]," Armenta said. "For us, that's what drew us back, especially having lived in the Midwest."

Armenta's journey in the tourism industry began with a degree in mass communications and journalism, with an emphasis on advertising and public relations. Her early exposure to the hospitality sector, while working at the The Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln, Nebraska, laid the groundwork for her eventual transition into promoting Albuquerque's attractions and offerings.

Since reaching the helm of Visit Albuquerque in January 2016, Armenta has led efforts to make the Duke City a top travel destination. Under her guidance, the organization has launched marketing campaigns targeting a wide range of travelers, from leisure tourists to business executives.

"We call our target audience, curious explorers," Armenta said. "They can be of any age, race, ethnicity or gender. But, what sets them apart is they're seeking authentic experiences where they can immerse themselves into a destination's culture and environment. They're attracted to things that make Albuquerque unique such as its traditions, cuisine, architecture, landscape and attractions. We say they are travelers, not tourists."

Some of Armenta's biggest successes have centered on expanding the city's reach. Campaigns like wrapping trains in Denver with Visit Albuquerque branding and placing ads in cities like Seattle and Los Angeles have boosted the city's visibility and appeal.

Looking ahead, Armenta is excited about the ongoing Destination Master Plan, a strategy to ensure long-term success in tourism by increasing visitation and reviving business travel.

In April, Armenta and her team also opened applications for Visit Albuquerque's Tourism Grant Program, offering a total of \$500,000 to those looking to either improve their tourism-related facilities or create new ones.

On May 15, Armenta was inducted into New Mexico Hospitality Association's Tourism Hall of Fame, highlighting her decades-long commitment and service toward boosting

tourism in the Land of Enchantment.

"I say to my kids that I hope they're fortunate to identify a career where they find as much fulfillment and joy that I have, something that they love doing because it makes all the difference in the world," Armenta said.

Recently, Albuquerque Business First chatted with Armenta to learn about the importance of tourism and the significance the industry has played in her life over the past 26 years.

The interview was edited for clarity and brevity.

Albuquerque Business First: What was your initial reaction to being inducted to the Tourism Hall of Fame?

Tania Armenta: I'm really very grateful. When I first heard that I was being inducted, it did take me a little bit to wrap my arms around that. Just thinking about that also signaled that I'm at a certain season of my career. But to have that news shared with me, it was meaningful and validating. So, I'm very grateful for the honor from the New Mexico Hospitality Association and from my peers.

Have you learned anything from your personal or professional travels that you are now trying to implement at Visit ABQ? I truly believe in the power of tourism. And for me, I really think many of our world's problems can be solved with more travel. I think that travel opens up those experiences to better understand one another, to foster cultural exchange and understanding and preserve heritage.

What do you like most about your current role? The overall impact that it has on the community. I mean, this is an industry that brings significant economic generation to our city and our state, one that puts a lot of folks to work in our community and provides opportunities. I often think about much of what we experience, our quality of life as residents, that is made possible by tourism.

Are there any skills you learned from past roles that are helping you now? Certainly. I think from a young age, something my family instilled in me was a really strong work ethic. I played sports and was on the dance team, so I was a big believer in being a good team player. Also, just from a motivation and determination standpoint, I've always been fairly competitive, so if I want to do something, I want to do it well. When I think about work ethic, that team component, and then the overall drive, those are probably what I would identify early on that shaped me.

How does Visit ABQ market the region to those who have never been? From a marketing standpoint, our marketing is going to range from digital to outdoor advertising to some print advertising. So, working with various travel media and influencers for positive promotion of the destination. When people are traveling here, sharing their experiences through social media and different user-generated content. We have a visitor's guide

and we have a sales team that goes on the road to promote meetings, conventions and sports tourism.

Do you have any hobbies outside of work? I love to water and snow ski when I can. I just love being outdoors, so we'll go camping on occasion and those are special family times. I'm [also] trying a little pickleball, and I'm trying to improve my golf game a little bit.

Correction/Clarification

A previous version of this article stated the incorrect place of birth of Tania Armenta. That location has been updated.