

Colorado Explorer

ACTIVITY

Floating with the wind

There you are, floating hundreds of feet above the ground. The world drifts away silently, and there is no sensation of moving. That's because you're in a hot air balloon and you go, unresisting, where the wind blows. The quiet drift is broken only by the occasional *whoosh* of hot air being forced into the silken balloon above your head.

To experience this unique ride, attend one of Colorado's many balloon festivals this summer or fall. For a fee, you can arrange to ride with one of the balloonists. The price may be steep, but the experience is priceless.

The Colorado Balloon Classic, held each Labor Day weekend in Colorado Springs' Memorial Park, is the oldest continuous balloon festival, as well as the largest, in the state. More than 100 balloons make their ascent each morning, and each evening, there's a "balloon glow" – the balloons are lighted but don't go up.

Make a reservation now, because available rides fill up fast. Call 719-471-4833.

A ride at this event costs \$245 for about an hour. Rides are totally dependent on the weather – how long they last, where they go and if they happen at all.

Other balloon festivals offer similar experiences. To find a complete list, go online to www.coloradoballoonclub.net/upcomingballoonrallies.html.



SHOPPING

Going to pot(s)

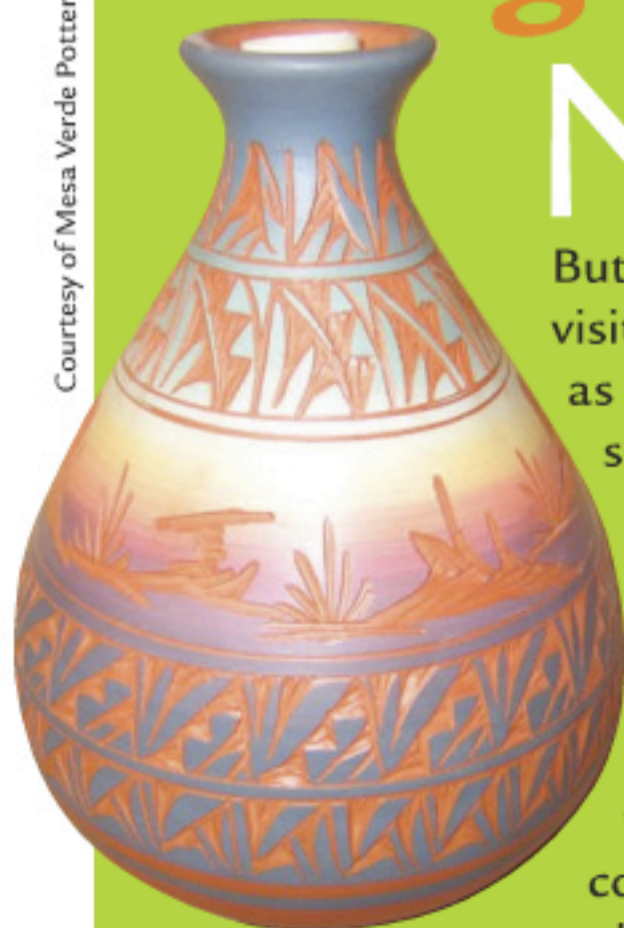
Nearly every Colorado art gallery displays pottery made by local artists. Some even specialize in just pottery. But there are only a handful of places where visitors can view the pottery being made as well as buying finished pieces. Here are several worth a visit.

Mesa Verde Pottery: Ute and Navajo artists ply their craft while you watch them carve, paint and throw pots and other pottery pieces. With several different styles, from softly blended colors of the Navajo style to the vivid scenes and colors of the Red Earth (Monument Valley) style, there's plenty from which to choose. 800-441-9908 or 970-565-4492 or www.mesaverdepottery.com.

Ute Mountain Indian Pottery: Located in Towaoc, eight miles south of Cortez, their method starts with the clay slip being poured into molds. Then artists hand-paint each piece with highly stylized black-and-white symbols, and then signs it. Then it's hand-glazed and fired to finish. 970-565-8548 or <http://utepottery.com>.

Van Briggle Pottery: Established in 1899 by Artus and Anne Van Briggle in Colorado Springs, this collectible art pottery is world-famous. Muted colors and a soft matte glaze set this work apart. They're famous, too, for their pottery tiles, which grace many a fireplace in the Pikes Peak region. Tours by appointment only. 719-633-7729 or www.vanbriggle.com.

Courtesy of Mesa Verde Pottery



Virginia Silas' monument-style drop vase.