**Very Large Array, Western New Mexico**

**Length:** Tucson to the Very Large Array near Magdalena, NM is 5:43 and 334 miles each way.

**Directions:** I-10 east to US 191 north to AZ 78 east – about 2:26 or 160 miles. Continue on AZ 78 east for 34.7 miles or 46 minutes. Turn left onto US 180 west for 54 minutes or 45.6 miles then follow NM 12 east to US 60 east to Datil, a trip of 1:16 or 74.1 miles. Turn right onto US 60 east 14 minutes or 15.4 miles to NM 53 south for 4.1 miles or 6 minutes to the Very Large Array.

**What makes it memorable?** The Very Large Array is a spectacular engineering marvel that has featured in several Hollywood productions, the most memorable of which was Jody Foster’s 1997 film **Contact.**

It is composed of some 27 radio telescope antennae each one of which is 94’ high, 82’ in diameter and that weigh 235 tons. They are moved on tracks by huge crawler tractors to realize either wide angle or detailed views of the heavens. The rail system itself is composed of 39 miles of track.

There is also an excellent museum on the property that has fascinating displays of various discoveries realized by radio astronomy.

**Other Helpful Comments:** Tours of the VLA can be arranged *in advance* by calling the gift shop at (575)-835-7410.

30 minutes from the VLA is the charming town of Magdalena, NM. The old school gym is home to the Astronomical Lyceum which displays many vintage optical telescopes. The exhibit is curated by John Briggs.

Can be combined with or regarded as a subset of the Western New Mexico itinerary.