The Royal Road at the Jornada del Muerto in New Mexico.

Blazed atop a network of footpaths that tied Mexico’s ancient cultures with the equally ancient cultures of the interior West, Don Juan de Oñate took the first Spanish colonists in 1598 along what became “The Royal Road of the Interior Lands.” El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro began in Mexico City and continued to Ohkay Owinge Pueblo, north of present-day Santa Fe, New Mexico. As a royal road, it brought priests, solders, traders, settlers, and officials to Spain’s northern frontier—today’s New Mexico.

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro is the earliest Euro-American trade route in the United States. Tying Spain’s colonial capital at Mexico City to its northern frontier in distant New Mexico, the route spans three centuries, two countries, and 1,600 miles.

You can follow in their footsteps...
El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail runs through the heart of the Rio Grande Valley. Established by Congress in 2001, it is co-administered by the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service, who work with partners to foster trail preservation and public use. Trail sites are in private, municipal, tribal, federal or state ownership.

Bureau of Land Management
www.blm.gov/nm

National Park Service
National Trails Intermountain Region
www.nps.gov/elca

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Trail Association
www.caminorealcarta.org

Look for signs like these to retrace the Royal Road.

Scan this code for nps.gov/elca