El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro

IMPORTANT TRIP PLANNING INFORMATION

The red and white dashed line on the map shows a historic route, rather than an actual visible trail that can be followed as a hiking trail. The map highlights historic sites and communities that can be visited, along with trailheads that provide access to segments of the original route that can be followed.

THE FIRST CAPITAL

In 1598 Juan de Oñate's original colonizing party arrived at Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, named San Juan de Los Caballeros by the Spaniards. By the winter of 1599, the colony had moved to an outlying pueblo, Yunge, which they renamed San Gabriel. About 10 years later, the capital was relocated once again to Santa Fe.

RIO ABAJO, RIO ARRIBA, AND LA BAJADA

In the Spanish Colonial period, New Mexico was divided into two administrative units. These were the Río Abajo, or lower river, and the Río Arriba, or upper river. The dividing line was the escarpment known as La Bajada, north of Cochiti Pueblo.

THE RIO GRANDE

The Rio Grande is New Mexico's major river. Its valley stretches the full length of the state and provides the best water resources for irrigation in the state. The Rio Grande forms the international border between Mexico and the United States from El Paso downriver to the Gulf of Mexico.

THE CIVIL WAR IN NEW MEXICO

Confederate troops marched into New Mexico Territory along the Camino Real in June 1861. They battled Union forces and took both Albuquerque and Santa Fe. The Confederates were turned back at Glorieta Pass, east of Santa Fe, before they could reach the gold and silver fields of Colorado.

THE JORNADA DEL MUERTO

The "Dead Man's Journey" is the longest of the stretches on El Camino Real that the Spanish called jornadas. The dead man of this 80-mile, two-day trek, was Bernardo Gruber, who died on the jornada while fleeing the Holy Office of the Inquisition in 1670. Today the Point of Rocks trail leads to a viewpoint overlooking the historic route and the Yost Escarpment trail connects with one of the most isolated stretches of the original route.

PARAJES

The caravans made camps, known as parajes, every 20 miles or so on the journey from northern Mexico to northern New Mexico. These simple campsites served travelers for centuries. Some became the cities of today such as Albuquerque and Socorro.

PRESIDIOS AND FORTS

The Spanish established a handful of presidios, or forts, along the trail. El Paso del Norte and San Elizario controlled and protected the settlements near present-day El Paso. The forts were also the first federal capital and northern New Mexico. After 1846 the Americans developed their own military system of posts along the trail.

Visiting the Trail Today

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail runs through the heart of the Rio Grande Valley. The Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service administer the trail together to foster trail education and interpretation, and provide for the preservation of the historic route. Follow trail signs to retrace El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro along highways, streets, and backcountry roads.

For More Information

Trail Administrators
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
New Mexico State Office
National Trails Intermountain Region
Box 27115
PO. Box 728
Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115
Santa Fe, NM 87504-0728
(505) 988-6098
www.blm.gov/nm
www.nps.gov/elca