

Royal Road to the Land of the Tejas



Colorado River
Río Colorado
NPS / CHRISTOPHER TALBOT

Vast open skies. Swollen streams and great rivers. Lush rolling hills and deep forests. Dark swamps and hot deserts. This varied and expansive landscape was home to American Indians for hundreds of years. The land offered no apparent riches, but Spain was intent on protecting its territory from France. Spaniards claimed this land and named it Tejas for the Caddo word meaning friend. Missionaries and soldiers traveled time-worn routes, built missions and presidios (military posts), and opened a *camino real* (royal road), a vital artery across the heart of the land. El Camino Real de los Tejas brought change—exploration, trade, migration, settlement, war, independence, and statehood. It fostered cultural interactions and created a distinctive mosaic of language and lifeways.

Camino Real a la Tierra de los Tejas

Ríos y arroyos caudalosos, ciénagas, bosques profundos—todos nos cedieron el paso.

Jean Louis Berlandier, 1830

Vastos cielos abiertos. Arroyos y ríos caudalosos. Colinas exuberantes y bosques profundos. Ciénagas oscuras y desiertos calurosos. Este paisaje variado y amplio fue el hogar de indígenas durante siglos. La región no ofrecía riquezas aparentes, pero España estaba resuelta a proteger este territorio en contra de Francia. Los españoles reclamaron esta tierra y la llamaron Tejas, palabra del idioma caddo que significa amigo. Misionarios y soldados viajaron por rutas deterioradas por el tiempo, construyeron misiones y presidios y abrieron un camino real, una arteria vital a través del centro de la región. El Camino Real de los Tejas provocó cambios—exploración, comercio, inmigración, asentamientos, guerra, independencia y la creación de una provincia. Fomentó interacciones culturales y creó un mosaico distintivo de lenguas y modos de vivir.

Swollen streams to ford, great rivers, swamps, deep forests—all made way for us.

Jean Louis Berlandier, 1830



A ROYAL ROAD

El Camino Real de los Tejas was the northeastern segment of a network of royal roads radiating from Mexico City. Terrain, weather, and relations with local tribes influenced travel, so many routes developed over time.

UN CAMINO REAL

El Camino Real de los Tejas fue el segmento noreste de una red de caminos que originaron en la ciudad de México. El terreno, el clima y las relaciones con las tribus locales influyeron los viajes y recorridos; con el tiempo se crearon una gran variedad de rutas.

COLONIZATION AND CONQUEST

The Spaniards arrived in the New World in 1492 and ruled a vast empire for nearly 350 years. As they moved northward from central Mexico, explorers, missionaries, and soldiers traveled on long-established Indian trails, expanding and improving roads, creating *caminos reales*, a road network connecting the provinces of New Spain.

Franciscan missionaries tried to Christianize American Indians. Most tribes resisted, but some, decimated by European diseases and attacked by stronger tribes, sought refuge in mission life. This protection, in some cases, destroyed tribal cultural and ethnic identity.

Missions were important economic institutions that contributed to the development of the region. Their lands included cultivated fields, ranches, and water systems. Presidios were established to protect missions, guard the coasts and frontiers, and control trade. Early settlers established *villas* (towns) around the missions and presidios. These settlements and outlying ranches provided the foundation and subsistence for the province's permanent occupation.

Presidio La Bahía (right) was the main military post between San Antonio and the Gulf of Mexico. The mission-presidio settlement of Los Adaes (below) served as the capital of Texas from 1729–73.



Presidio La Bahía (izquierda) fue el principal puesto militar entre San Antonio y el golfo de México. Los Adaes (abajo) funcionó como la capital de Tejas desde 1729–73.

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<p>1542 Spanish expedition encounters Caddo.</p> <p>1685 Frenchman René LaSalle establishes outpost on Garcitas Creek.</p> <p>1686–89 Spanish expeditions search for LaSalle's colony, which they find in ruins.</p>	<p>1690–1773 Spaniards establish presidios and missions in an effort to convert numerous Indian groups who lived in the area.</p> <p>1731 Canary Islanders settle at San Antonio.</p> <p>1762 France cedes Louisiana to Spain.</p>	<p>1800 Spain cedes Louisiana to France.</p> <p>1803 US acquires Louisiana from France, opening door to influx of new settlers.</p> <p>1812 Louisiana admitted to US as the 18th state.</p>	<p>1821 Mexico gains independence from Spain.</p> <p>1823 Mexico allows foreign immigrants to settle in Texas.</p> <p>1835 Texas Revolution begins with the Battle of Gonzales.</p>	<p>1836 Republic of Texas is created.</p> <p>1845 Texas is admitted to the US as the 28th state.</p> <p>1848 Mexico and US sign treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ending war between the two nations.</p>	<p>1859 Caddo are removed to Indian Territory in Oklahoma.</p> <p>2004 El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail is added to the National Trails System.</p>
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CHANGE AND SURVIVAL

For hundreds of years this land was a cultural crossroads for American Indians, such as the Caddo, who lived along the eastern end of El Camino Real de los Tejas. The Caddo comprised an organized and complex society. They built ceremonial centers and temple mounds, and participated in long-distance trade networks.

Spanish and French settlement and trade influenced Indian alliances and tribal lands. Horses, brought by Spaniards, revolutionized the American Indian's way of life. The Apache and Comanche became formidable, long-distance warriors across the southern plains.

American Indians controlled the majority of the province until Anglo-American migration started in the 1820s. Settlements and impacts to tribal lands and resources, such as decline of bison, provoked Indian attacks. Angry settlers demanded government action. As a result, many tribes were destroyed or forced out of the region.

CAMBIO Y SUPERVIVENCIA

Durante siglos esta región fue una encrucijada cultural para indígenas, como los caddo, que ocupaban las tierras en el sector oriental del sendero. Los caddo pertenecían a una sociedad compleja y bien organizada. Construyeron centros ceremoniales y montículos de tierra y participaron en redes de comercio.

El comercio y los asentamientos españoles y franceses afectaron tierras y alianzas indígenas. El caballo, introducido por los españoles, revolucionó el modo de vida de las tribus. Los apaches y los comanches se convirtieron en guerreros formidables a lo largo de las planicies sureñas.

Los indígenas controlaron la mayoría de la provincia hasta la inmigración anglo-americana de la década de 1820. Numerosos asentamientos, impactos a las tierras y a los recursos naturales de las tribus, como el cibolo, provocaron ataques indígenas. Iracundos colonos demandaron acción del gobierno. Como resultado, muchas de las tribus fueron destruidas y forzadas a abandonar la región.

ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

Unable to persuade many of its own citizens to settle in this remote area, Spanish authorities considered awarding land grants as incentives to attract foreign settlers. After independence in 1821, Mexico implemented this policy. El Camino Real de los Tejas carried immigrants, lured by inexpensive land, from the United States into Texas. *Empresarios* (land agents or contractors) selected settlers, allocated land, and oversaw the enforcement of Mexican law.

The influx of people brought new settlement patterns, roads, languages, religions, and slavery. Immigrants held onto their cultures. As the Anglo-American population grew, its power and demands increased. Tensions rose leading to the Texas Revolution.

CAMINO A LA INDEPENDENCIA

Incapaz de convencer a muchos de sus ciudadanos a asentarse en una región tan remota, España consideró ofrecer concesiones de tierra como incentivo para atraer inmigrantes extranjeros. Después de la independencia en 1821, México implementó esta política. El Camino Real de los Tejas condujo a inmigrantes de los Estados Unidos, atraídos por tierras de bajo precio. Empresarios (agentes de tierras o contratistas) eligieron a los colonos, distribuyeron terrenos y supervisaron la implementación de las leyes mejicanas.

El flujo de inmigrantes produjo nuevos patrones de asentamiento, lenguas y religiones. Con ellos vino también la esclavitud. Con el crecimiento de la población anglo-americana, su poder y sus demandas aumentaron. Las tensiones crecieron y eventualmente resultaron en la Revolución Tejana.

Stephen F. Austin established the first Anglo-American settlement in Texas.

Stephen F. Austin estableció la primera colonia anglo-americana en Texas.



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Caddo village, ca. 1870
American photographer William S. Soule

Villa de caddo, ca. 1870
Fotógrafo americano William S. Soule



Coahuiltecan Indian
Indígena coahuilteca
Franciscan Missionary
Misionario franciscano
Spanish Soldier
Soldado español
NPS / ILLUSTRATIONS BY GIL COHEN

UNITED STATES
MEXICO

GULF OF MEXICO

ONE LAND, MANY NATIONS

Countless feet have trod the meandering routes of El Camino Real de los Tejas bringing change to the land and its inhabitants. Various nations have struggled to control this land—American Indians, Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the United States. All have left their mark, creating a rich culture that can be experienced today as you explore the trail.

UNA TIERRA, MUCHAS NACIONES

Muchos han viajado sobre las serpenteantes rutas de El Camino Real de los Tejas transformando la tierra y sus habitantes. Muchos han tratado de controlar esta región—varias tribus indígenas, España, Francia, Méjico, la república de Tejas y Estados Unidos. Todos han dejado sus huellas creando una rica cultura que hoy se puede descubrir explorando el sendero.