



Foundation Document Overview

Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail

Arizona and California



Contact Information

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Trail Nature and Purpose



The specific nature of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail is as follows:

The JUAN BAUTISTA DE ANZA NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL commemorates and interprets the route, complex story, and compelling landscapes of the 1775–1776 Anza Colonizing Expedition from Sonora, Mexico, to current-day San Francisco, California. Whether entwined with a city or isolated from civilization, the trail offers adventure, diverse cultural perspectives, multiple narratives, and an opportunity to experience history by linking the past with the present. Working with volunteer trail groups, trail managers strive to develop, maintain, and steward the trail for present and future generations to use and enjoy.

As defined by the National Trails System Act (NTSA), the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail's purpose is as follows:

The identification and protection of the historic route and its historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment [NTSA section 3 (3)],

which provides

recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. [NTSA section 5 (b) (11) C]

Trail Significance

Statements of significance for national historic trails describe the distinctive nature of the trail and the significance of the trail in the nation's history. They focus on historical uses and experiences, important places, remnants, and geographies, and values that will assist in trail planning and administration. These statements are linked to the nature and purpose of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail and are supported by data, research, and consensus. They help to define the fundamental resources and values to be considered in planning, protection, and development of the designated route.

- The Anza expedition was the first military-led colonizing expedition to Alta California and was an integral part of Spain's geopolitical and global empire building strategy. This expedition established Spanish power through colonization, a path that came at the expense of indigenous peoples and their cultures.
- The members of the Anza expedition represented families of indigenous, African, and European heritage. They migrated, seeking opportunity, and brought with them their language, customs, and traditions. They established military outposts, missions and ranchos on lands occupied by existing indigenous peoples and nations—a reminder of our complicated American story. All had a significant impact on the cultures of the indigenous peoples and on the development of California and its layered heritage.
- The landscapes of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, from urban to rural, reflect the legacy of the Anza expedition and provide a framework for understanding its stories.
- The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail allows for the creation of a contiguous, over 1,210-mile-long recreation trail that provides opportunities to physically traverse and experience the stories and landscapes of the historic expedition's corridor.
- The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail historic corridor passes through a wide variety of communities: rural, urban, indigenous, and international. Inherent in this cultural corridor is a unique opportunity for cultural exchange and recreation, inspiring a great number and diversity of people in their own communities to connect with the places, spaces and stories while providing a setting for dialogue and healing.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the trail and communicating its significance.

- **Retracement Project**
- **Partnerships**
- **Recreation Trail**
- **Historic Sites, Artifacts, Primary Sources, and Documents**
- **Education and Interpretation**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a trail or engaging with interpretive media about the trail—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a component of the National Trails System. Themes are derived from, and should reflect, trail purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for trail administrators to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all trail significance statements and fundamental resources and values.

- The network of trails that became the expedition route and the Anza trail have existed for millennia as indigenous pathways.
- The Anza expedition history represents the universal theme of people crossing great distances and enduring tremendous hardships in the hopes of finding a better life for themselves and their families.
- The colonists' diverse cultural backgrounds laid the foundation for what California would become.
- Generations of people living in what is now California have been and continue to be impacted by the colonial actions of the Spanish Empire. Particularly, colonization came at the expense of the indigenous peoples through subjugation and the taking of land.
- The Anza expedition, and the resulting colonization, was a major catalyst for change in natural and cultural landscapes.
- Today, the trail weaves through landscapes layered with biological and cultural significance; the trail is a thread connecting communities, ecosystems, and a great diversity of people.
- The Anza trail and its development connect people and cultures through time. The embodied experience of traversing the trail creates a setting for deeper dialogue about colonization, changing landscapes, and cultural heritage.
- The Anza trail and its development can serve as a setting for understanding and healing through stewardship, service, recreation, dialogue, and the sharing of space and stories.

Description

The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail (NHT) is the route traveled by the Anza colonizing expedition during the years 1775–1776. Starting in Sinaloa and Sonora, New Spain (which is now in Mexico), Anza led over 240 colonists to San Francisco to establish a mission and presidio. In addition to Anza and Father Pedro Font, the expedition was composed of colonists that included 30 soldiers, their wives, and more than 100 children, as well as indigenous guides, vaqueros, muleteers, and servants, among others. The families reflected mostly the lower castes of colonial Spain—a mix of indigenous, African, and European heritage. The historic trail (also called the Anza Trail) connects Mexico to San Francisco and the 18th century to the 21st century. The Anza Trail invites travelers to learn about the interweaving of the three elements of the Spanish plan for the colonization of its northern frontier: presidios (military forts), missions (religious centers), and pueblos (civilian towns) and makes connections to the current-day consequences of their historical actions. On June 27, 1776, the expedition families arrived in the area that is now San Francisco. Anza forged alliances with several tribes along the route, but ultimately, Spanish colonization advanced a devastating blow to the tribal world as it existed.

Today, the tribal communities whose lands Anza traveled through—Quechan, Ohlone, O’odham, Tongva, and many more—continue to thrive and pass on their traditions. The descendants of these colonist Californio families also commemorate their heritage along the Anza Trail. The current 1,200-mile Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail connects history, culture, and outdoor recreation from Nogales, Arizona, to the San Francisco Bay area. A marked auto route approximates the areas where the expedition traveled. Several communities, public lands, and parks offer developed segments of the Anza Recreation Trail for walking, hiking, horse riding, and bicycling.

Administered by the National Park Service, the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail is a component of both the national trails system and the national park system. The National Park Service administers the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail in partnership with other federal, state, and local agencies; tribal governments; nonprofit organizations; and private landowners. The NPS role includes leadership for the trail and establishing best practices and ensuring consistency among all partners involved with administration and on-the-ground management of the trail and trail resources.

