

Visit The Trails - Northwest

Oregon and California Trails



Oregon and California
National Historic Trails

Santa Fe Trail Association
Oregon-California Trails Association
City of Gardner
National Park Service

A Look Back In Time

The Oregon and California trails were pathways for the greatest mass migration in American history. From the late 1820s to the 1870s, an estimated 300,000 fur traders, missionaries, settlers, and gold seekers followed these trails. In the 1840s and 1850s, emigrants from the eastern and central United States walked 2,000 miles from the Missouri River landings to fertile Oregon farmlands or California goldfields.

Once-friendly western tribes watched in mounting anger as emigrants impacted the game, grass, water and wood. The rich and varied cultures of the Great Plains Indians were changed forever.



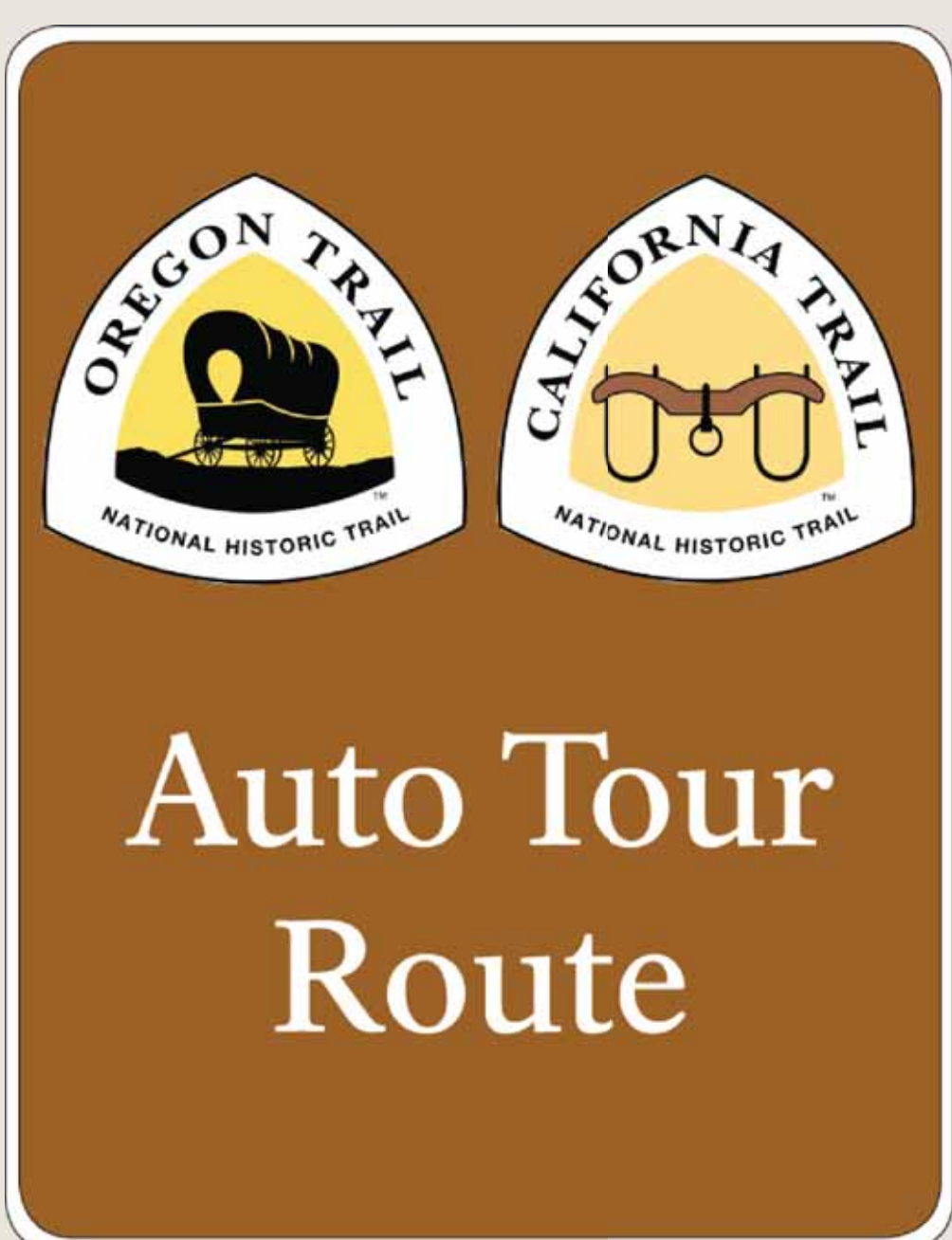
Visiting the National Historic Trails Today



The Oregon and California trails had significant roles in the history of the United States, and were designated by Congress as national historic trails. The National Park Service partners with site owners to preserve the trail and to develop opportunities for visitor use and enjoyment.

The map and photographs here are a sampling of the trail sites you can explore. For maps and further information about these trails, visit:

- Gardner Museum, Gardner
- Watkins Community Museum of History, Lawrence
- Kansas Museum of History, Topeka



Look for the Oregon and California National Historic Trails' official logos, as well as signing for the Auto Tour Route. This automobile tour route parallels the trails via modern highways and provides directional signing to trail sites.



1 Union Town/Herbert Reinhard Green Memorial Wildlife Park
An Oregon Trail village from 1848-1859. The 83-acre park preserves an Oregon Trail trace, pioneer graves, and restored bluestem prairie and native woodlands.



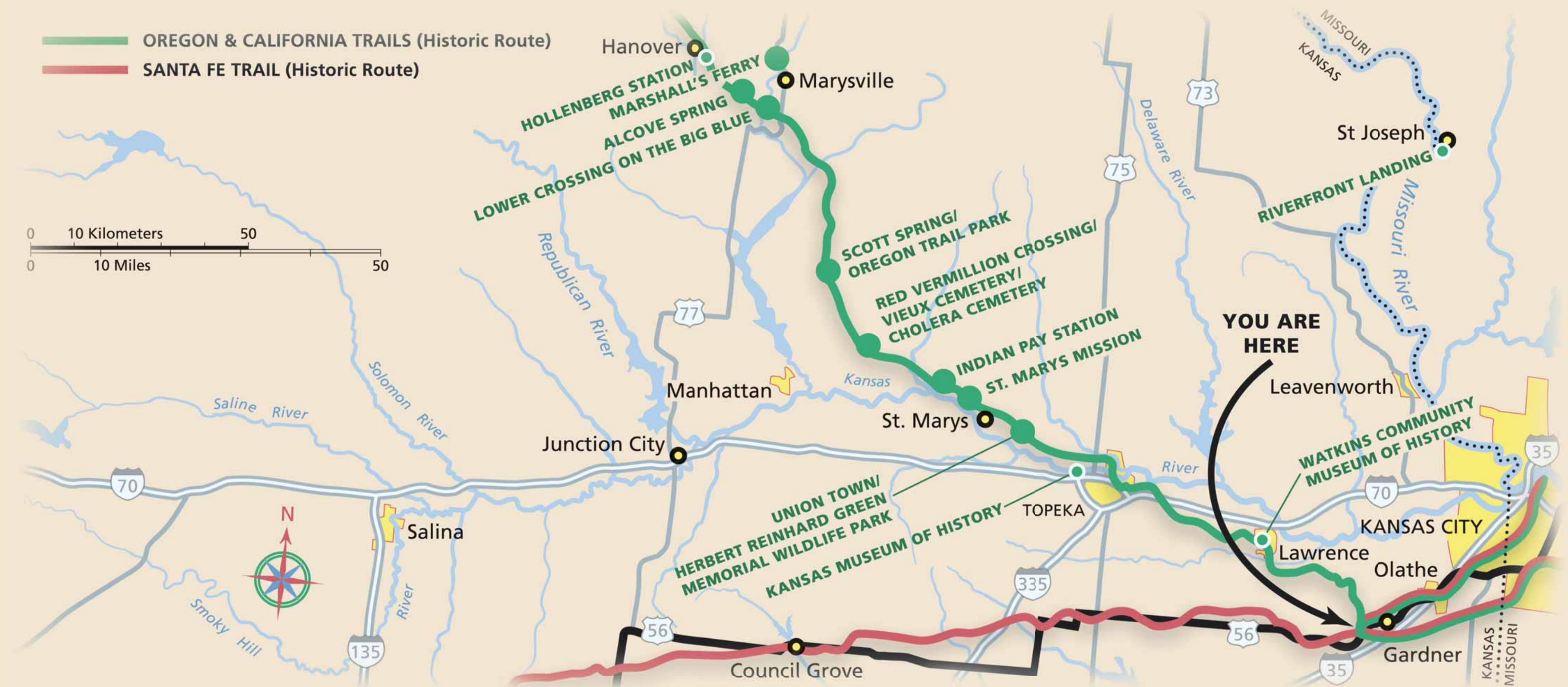
2 St. Marys Mission
This site was an important stopping point for trail emigrants. Across the highway is a public rest stop with Oregon Trail exhibits.



3 Indian Pay Station Historic Site and Museum
This Indian Agency served to meet the terms of the 1861 Treaty with the Potawatomi Indians. Emigrant wagon trains stopped here to rest, change livestock, and make wagon repairs.



4 Red Vermillion Crossing/Vieux Cemetery/Cholera Cemetery
Louis Vieux, a Potawatomi Indian, established a toll bridge here in 1847. In 1849, members of a large wagon train camped by the creek were struck by cholera, leaving 50 emigrants dead within a week.



5 Scott Spring/Oregon Trail Park
This site was another favorite campground for emigrants. Although the spring itself is on private property, there is a roadside pullout just south of the site, and a public park with trail sculptures and displays.



6 Lower Crossing on the Big Blue
This site was thought to be an alternate river crossing used in later years of the trail. A way-side exhibit explains how wagon trains dealt with crossing steep river embankments.



7 Alcove Spring
This scenic spring was a popular campsite mentioned in many emigrant journals. It is one of the most significant historic sites on the Oregon Trail in Kansas.



8 Marshall's Ferry
This was one of three major river crossings on the St. Joseph Road to California. A roadside park nearby offers wayside exhibits and a reconstructed wagon ferry.