

Visit the Trail - West

Santa Fe Trail



Santa Fe National Historic Trail

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

A Look Back in Time

The Santa Fe Trail stirs the imagination as few other historic trails. Spanning 900 miles of the Great Plains between the United States (Missouri) and Mexico (Santa Fe), this great trail of commerce between two countries was also a route for the frontier military and emigration to the West.

For 60 years, the trail was one thread in a web of international trade routes. It influenced economies as far away as New York and London. The 1865 close of the Civil War released America's industrial energies and stimulated the push to develop railroads westward. Railroad expansion gradually shortened the Santa Fe Trail—finally replacing it in 1880.



Trade on the Santa Fe Plaza,
—by Charles Goslin

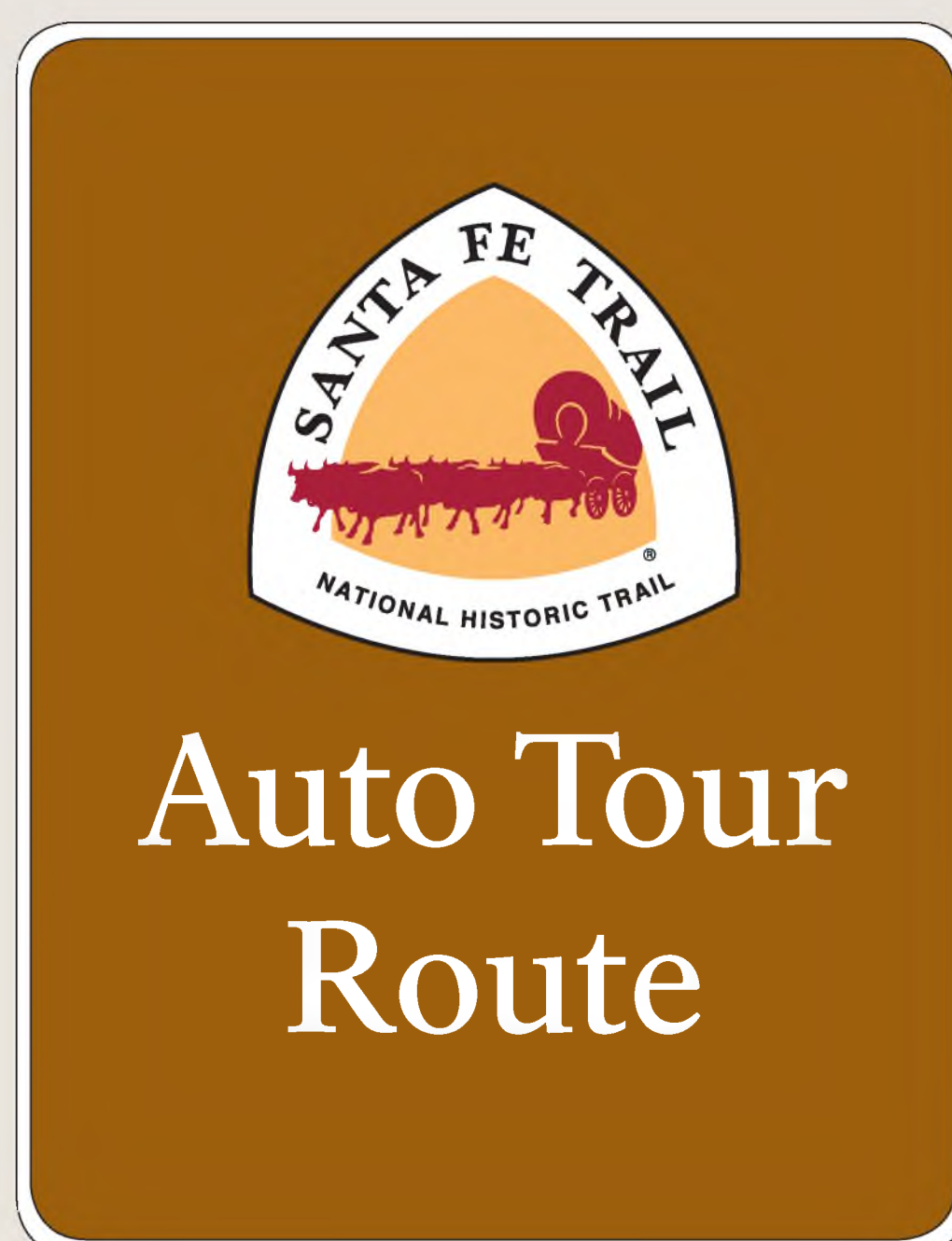
Visiting the National Historic Trail Today



The Santa Fe Trail had a significant role in the history of the United States, and in 1987 was designated by Congress as a national historic trail. 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 the trail, visit:

- Old Castle Museum, Baldwin City
- Kaw Mission, Council Grove
- Gardner Museum, Gardner



Look for the Santa Fe National Historic Trail official logo, as well as signing for the Auto Tour Route. This automobile tour route parallels the trail via modern highways and provides directional signing to trail sites.



1 Lanesfield School
Built in 1869, this school is the only building that remains of the town of Lanesfield—a mail stop on the Santa Fe Trail. Next to the site is a 78-acre restored prairie where you can cross the path of the trail.



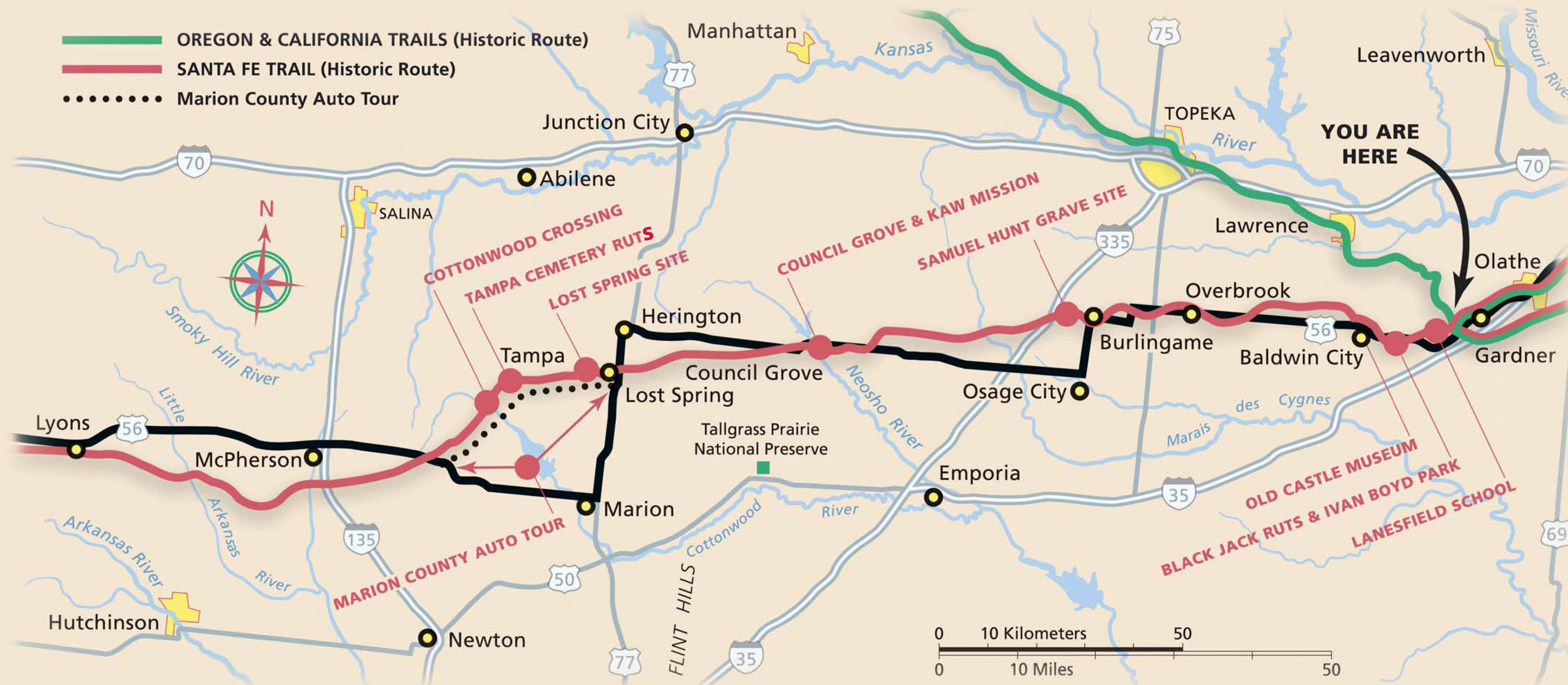
2 Black Jack Ruts and Ivan Boyd Park
Experience ruts of the Santa Fe Trail and get a taste of the prairie environment that the trail traversed by visiting this 18-acre restored prairie. The pre-Civil War Battle of Black Jack also happened here.



3 Samuel Hunt Grave Site
U.S. dragoon Private Samuel Hunt of Kentucky, who died on the Santa Fe Trail in 1835, is buried next to a pullout, on the north side of the highway.



4 Council Grove
This small community is rich with trail history. Many sites can be found in and around town. Stop at the Chamber of Commerce to get a self-guided area tour map. Wayside exhibits at many of the sites, like this one at the Neosho River Crossing, provide trail interpretation.



5 Lost Spring Site
This spring provided Santa Fe Trail travelers with water and a place to camp—some nights accommodating several wagon caravans.



6 Tampa Cemetery Ruts
Teams and wagons left their mark on the landscape while crossing Muddy Creek. These trail ruts are still clearly visible in the Lutheran Cemetery at Tampa.



7 Cottonwood Crossing
This was one of the more difficult river crossings of the trail, and was noted by most travelers in their journals. It was also a campsite with one of the last sources of wood for westward travelers headed towards the treeless prairie.



8 Marion County Auto Tour
By following these signs along county roads, you can approximate the historic route of the Santa Fe Trail and see many trail remnants and points of interest.