The picturesque Sandia Mountains rise to an elevation of 12,440 feet.

The Magdalena railroad depot was built in 1915 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It now serves as the village library.

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Kelly Gatlin, La Luz Photography

The picturesque Sawtooth Mountains rise to an elevation of 9,240 feet.

The stockyards, shown as they appear today, were the destination for untold thousands of cattle and sheep.

Quemado’s Sacred Heart Church

Example of a trough—installed by the CCC—this one is at BLM’s Datil Well Campground.

Leave No Trace: Plan ahead and prepare - Travel and camp on durable surfaces - Dispose of waste properly - Leave what you find - Minimize campfire impacts - Respect wildlife - Be considerate of other visitors.
In the 1930s, drought and overgrazing threatened to reduce condition, resulting in a reduced sale price for producers and forage, livestock often arrived in Magdalena in poor shape. It was open range, however, and was often overused by ranchers from a vast area of western New Mexico and eastern Arizona began trailing their cattle and sheep to the Magdalena railhead—enough grass would be available for the trailing herds. The peak trailing year was 1919, when 150,000 sheep and 21,677 cattle made the trip. Ranchers from a vast area of western New Mexico and eastern Arizona began trailing their cattle and sheep to the Magdalena railhead, a journey of over 120 miles for some herds. The peak trailing year was 1919, when 150,000 sheep and 21,677 cattle made the trip.

In the early 1920s, World War I veteran Clyde Norman, a Texan who liked to bake, began making dried apple pies at his business on a rocky ridge on the Ocean to Ocean Highway, later to become U.S. 60. The word got out that the best pies anywhere were to be found in what came to be known as Pie Town. You can still satisfy your pie craving at one of several eateries in Pie Town.

In 1916 the Stock Raising Homestead Act was passed, allowing for much large homestead claims of 640 acres—a square mile each. Stockmen were worried that these large homestead claims, especially if fenced, would block the trail. They petitioned the Secretary of the Interior for formal withdrawal of the lands for moving livestock to the railroad or between summer and winter range, which was provided for within the Act. This withdrawal designated the stock as a Trail, and most accounts refer to the Magdalena Stock Driveway after this designation in 1918.

The Drive was free to 10 miles wide in places so that enough grass would be available for the trailing herds. It was open range, however, and was often overused by adjoining ranches or slow-moving herds. Because of the great distance traveled and the lack of adequate water and forage, livestock often arrived in Magdalena in poor condition resulting in a reduced sale price for producers.

The CCC had been established two years earlier as part of President Roosevelt's "New Deal." The CCC's purpose was to help conserve natural resources and to provide jobs for unemployed young men between the ages of 17 and 23 who were U.S. citizens. A force about three thousand strong, they worked in the camps and earned a base pay of $30 a month, most of which was sent home to their families. The Corps was abolished in 1942.

The CCC fences and wells were in place, livestock actually gained weight on the trip to Magdalena. In 1956-rancher George Farr described the Driveway trip as "a pleasure, as well as profitable.""