

Bent's Old Fort

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Bent's Old Fort
National Historic Site
La Junta, Colorado

Santa Fe Trail Encampment

June 4, 2016 8 am – 5:30 pm

Location: Bent's Old Fort

The sights, sounds and smells of the Santa Fe Trail and Bent's Fort in the 1840s come to life during the largest living history event of the year, the Santa Fe Trail Encampment. More than 40 living historians demonstrate the work of hunters, traders, teamsters, Indians, laborers, craftsmen, and soldiers in the fort and at their camps in the cottonwoods along the river. While traders conduct trade with the Indians, the hunters in camp will be busy skinning and packing hides for shipment by horseback. The sound of a handsaw will be heard from the shops as carpenters build a bellows. Meat and beans will be the "bill of fare" for company employees unless the women decide to bake a vinegar pie or make trappers' fruit. The fort doctor may be able to help you with your ailments. Just remember the main forms of treatment are bleeding, puking and purging!



You will encounter "opposition traders" on your walk from the parking lot to the fort and down toward the river. They will be "hawking" their trade goods at their lean-to tents. Have a look inside Susan Magoffin's tent, furnished with her fold-down writing desk and regular bed! Further along the trail to the river you will come to a small Indian camp. The tribe is here to trade at the fort and will welcome you in. Just inside the cottonwood grove you will see various kinds of tents grouped together in military fashion. This is the Topographical Engineer camp, much as it was in 1846. At the furthest camp, right along the river, are the trappers. You may smell buffalo tongue on the fire while hides are being prepared for drying. Everyone along the way is ready to help you step back in time.

Hike with a Caravan Down the Santa Fe Trail

June 5, 2016 10 am – 1 pm

Location: 15 miles southwest of La Junta, Colorado



On Sunday, June 5, the public is invited to hike 3 miles of the original Santa Fe Trail with a caravan made up of the fort's Conestoga, Dearborn and farm wagons. The teamsters will use verbal commands of "haw" and "gee" as they steer the oxen along. Much of the prairie remains as it was in the days of the trail, providing great photo opportunities. The caravan will depart from Sierra Vista Overlook, 14 miles south of La Junta, Colorado, just off of U.S. Highway 350 on State Highway 71. The caravan will leave at 10 am and should reach Timpas Picnic Area before 1 pm.

The National Park Service in cooperation with the US Forest Service - Comanche National Grassland will provide shuttle service from Sierra Vista to Timpas before the walk and from Timpas to Sierra Vista after the walk. Plan to wear sturdy boots or shoes, a hat, and bring sunscreen, water, and your lunch. The wagons will not be used to transport visitors, so be prepared to walk the 3 miles. A Junior Ranger program will be available for kids to earn a Junior Ranger badge in recognition of their accomplishment. This is a great opportunity to get a taste of what it was like to traverse the plains in the 1840s. Call 719-383-5023 for further information.

