



Coronado
National Memorial



Though it has errors of costume and equipment, Frederic Remington's portrayal of the Coronado Expedition captures the flavor of the historic trek. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Coronado National Memorial

Commemorating the first major exploration of Europeans into the American Southwest, Coronado National Memorial lies on the international boundary within sight of the valley by which the Coronado Expedition entered the present United States.

WITHIN 50 years of Columbus' discovery of America, the Coronado Expedition made the first extensive European penetration into northwestern Mexico, the American Southwest, and the western plains. Although deemed a failure at the time—for no riches were found—the expedition brought back knowledge of vast lands and many peoples to the north and paved the way for later Spanish colonization and settlement.

Spain in America—1540

Spain had a rich colonial empire in the New World. From southern Mexico to Peru, gold poured into her coffers, and large areas were opened for settlement. The northern frontier lay a few hundred miles north of Mexico City; beyond was unknown land.

This was the situation in 1536 when Cabeza de Vaca and three tattered companions, sole survivors of the shipwrecked Narváez Expedition to Florida, arrived in Mexico City after 8 years of wandering through the Southeast, Texas, and northern Mexico. They brought tales of a land to the north of Mexico where there were large cities, with streets lined with goldsmiths' shops, houses of many stories, and doorways studded with emeralds and turquoises. Was this another Peru?

The Seven Cities of Cibola

Antonio de Mendoza, the Spanish Viceroy, was interested, but cautious. In 1539, he sent Fray Marcos de Niza, accompanied by some guides and Estevan, a Negro who had been with Cabeza de Vaca, to check on the story. Fray Marcos returned within the year with glowing reports of the Seven Cities of Cibola. Presumably what he saw—and only from a distance—was the Zuni Indian pueblo of Hawikuh, near what is now Gallup, N. Mex., which he described as being larger than Mexico City. Estevan, scouting ahead of the party, had been killed by the Indians, and the friar dared not approach too close.

Francisco Vázquez de Coronado

Viceroy Mendoza was convinced. He promptly started preparations for an expedition to Cibola and chose his friend, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, to command it.

Coronado, the 30-year-old younger son of an aristocrat, was born in Salamanca, Spain, and had come to the New World in 1535 to seek his fortune. Through his friendship with the viceroy and his able execution of several important missions, he soon attained a position of prominence. He served a term on the Mexico City council and in 1538 was appointed governor of the frontier province of New Galicia.

In January 1540 Coronado was commissioned commander of the expedition and captain-general of the lands he was to conquer.

The Expedition

Quickly organized, the expedition passed in review before the viceroy and left Compostela in Mexico on February 23, 1540, with 300 Spanish soldiers, 4 priests, and 800 Mexican-Indian allies.

From Culiacán Coronado set out with an advance party of 100 Spaniards, the priests, and some Indians, leaving the main army to follow at a slower pace. His small force, weary and weak from hunger, reached the fabled Cibola on July 7, 1540.

It was a bitter disappointment. Instead of a golden city, they saw only a rock-masonry pueblo building crowded with Indians who were ready to fight. The Spaniards attacked, drove the Indians back, and soon forced them to abandon the village. Well stocked with precious food, the pueblo of Hawikuh was Coronado's headquarters until November 1540.

After the capture the now unpopular Fray Marcos de Niza, whose tales had raised so many futile hopes of fortune, returned to Mexico City.

While at Hawikuh, Coronado sent his captains out to explore. Don Pedro de Tovar discovered the Hopi villages in northeastern Arizona, and Lopez de Cárdenas, acting on information Tovar had picked up, discovered the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

Meantime, Coronado had visitors from the pueblo of Cicuye (Pecos Pueblo in eastern New Mexico). They brought hides of a strange "humpbacked cow" (buffalo) and invited Coronado to visit their pueblo. He sent Alvarado with 20 men to explore the new region.

Traveling eastward past Ácoma and the Tiguex pueblos, Alvarado and his men reached Cicuye on the upper Pecos River. Here they met a Plains Indian, nicknamed The Turk "because he looked like one," who guided them out into the buffalo country of what is now the Texas Panhandle. The Turk, a master storyteller, astounded them with tales of an unbelievably rich land to the east, called Quivira. The buffalo were forgotten, and Alvarado took The Turk back to Coronado's winter quarters at Tiguex on the Rio Grande.

The Turk's stories renewed the army's hope, but nothing could be done until spring. The Tiguex Indians, at first friendly, became openly hostile during the winter because of Spanish breaches of hospitality and friendship. In the battles that followed, the Spaniards massacred the inhabitants of one pueblo and forced the Indians to abandon several others.

Quivira

On April 23, 1541, the entire army set out for Quivira, guided by The Turk. After a journey of more than 40 days across the plains, Coronado sent most of the army back to Tiguex. Though suspicious of The Turk because his tales were contradicted by other Indians they met, he continued with 30 men. Finally Coronado reached Quivira—and became completely disillusioned. The towns of straw houses they saw there were probably those of the Wichita Indians in what is now Kansas.

The Turk finally confessed that the story of Quivira was a plot hatched by the Pueblo Indians to lure the army out into the plains in hopes that they would die of starvation. Thereupon, he was strangled on the spot, and Coronado returned to Tiguex in the autumn of 1541.

Return to Mexico

The winter of 1541-42 was an uneasy time. The high hopes for fame and fortune were gone. Word was received of the massacre of the supply garrison left at Corazones in northern Mexico. In addition, Coronado was severely injured in a fall from his horse.

These circumstances led to the decision to return to Mexico City. Upon their arrival in midsummer, Coronado was poorer by far than when he had started for the Golden Cities of Cibola.

Results of the Expedition

Immediate effects of the Coronado Expedition were few, but the hardships and disillusionment were not in vain. Vast new lands had been explored and knowledge gained about the geography of the territory north of Mexico. These lands had a far greater potential value than the gold and silver Coronado sought.

The next Spanish expedition into the Southwest came 40 years later and by a different route, through Chihuahua and up the Rio Grande into what is now New Mexico. This route was followed by others until the 1690's, when Jesuit priests pushed northward by a roughly parallel route through Sonora, which approximates that taken by Coronado.

The Spanish introduced cattle and horses as well as European crops to the Southwest, in addition to their religion and manner of living. Close relations with the Indians modified the Spanish culture to the extent that it took on a character of its own, which is still evident throughout the Southwest.

About your visit

Coronado National Memorial is about 30 miles west of Bisbee, Ariz., the nearest place for meals and overnight accommodations. The Montezuma Canyon road, which leads into the memorial, joins Ariz. 92 about 20 miles west of Bisbee. It is about 6 miles from this junction to memorial headquarters.

From the parking area at Montezuma Pass, a foot trail leads to Coronado Peak, where you are afforded a sweeping view of the country through which the Coronado Expedition marched. The memorial is near Coronado's point of entry into the United States.

Exhibits along this trail present additional information on the Coronado Expedition and the interesting natural features of the memorial. A park ranger is on duty daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to give you further information on the area.

Another trail, offering striking views, leads from the Coronado Peak Trail down to the headquarters and lunch area. About 3 miles long, the trail follows Smugglers' Ridge and Joe's Canyon to the junction of the main road and the road to the lunch area.

Because of the high fire hazard, fireplaces are not provided in the lunch area; however, gasoline or propane stoves may be used.

Help protect the Memorial

The memorial is closed to hunting. Firearms are not permitted in the area unless packed to prevent use. You are asked to refrain from defacing the natural features and vegetation in any way and to take every precaution against fire in these grasslands.

Administration

Coronado National Memorial, established on November 5, 1952, and containing 2,843 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

The development of this area is part of MISSION 66, a 10-year program to develop and staff the areas of the National Park System so that they can be used and enjoyed by both present and future generations.

A superintendent, whose address is Star Route, Hereford, Ariz., is in immediate charge of the area.

America's Natural Resources

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.

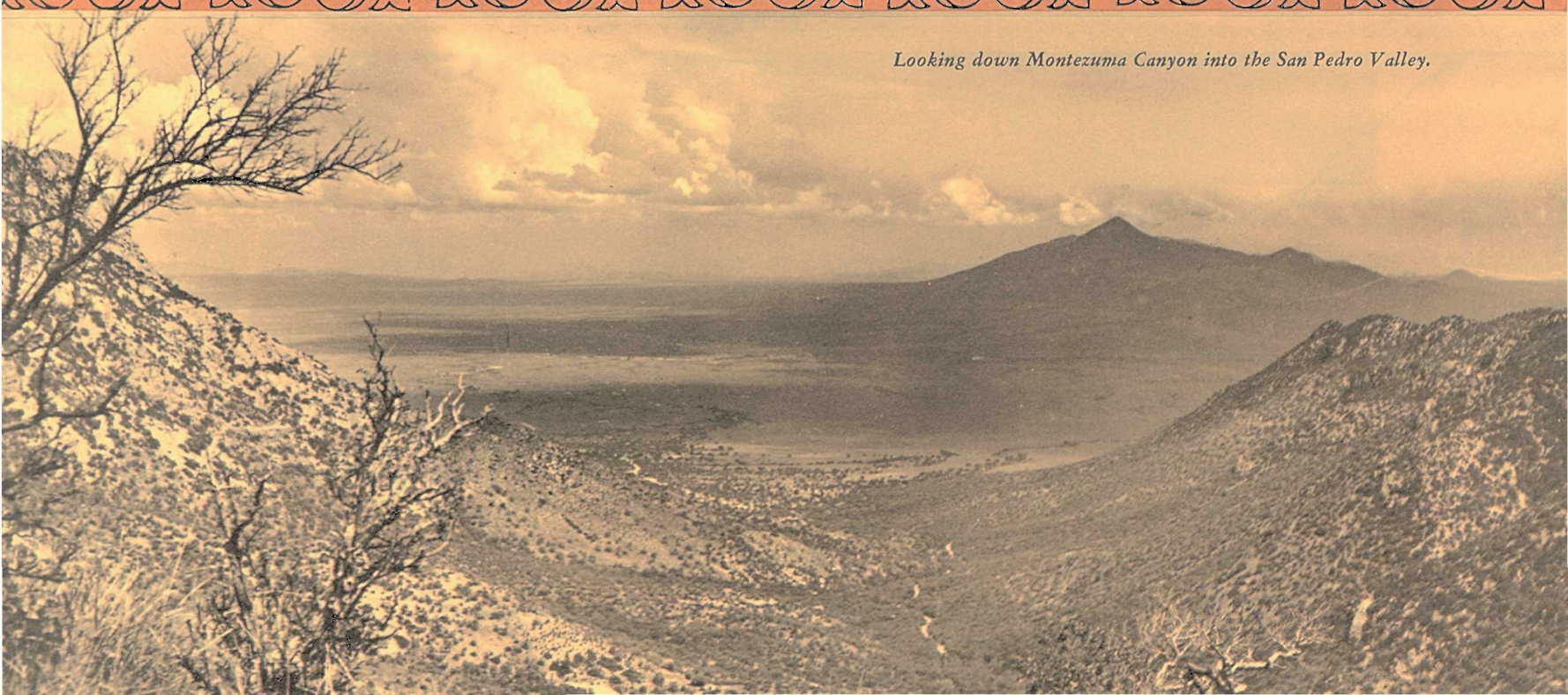


UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service



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Looking down Montezuma Canyon into the San Pedro Valley.





THE VIEW TOWARD SONORA, MEXICO

ALONG THE MEMORIAL'S TRAILS

YOU may find unsought treasures at Coronado National Memorial. For, while contributing to the memory of the great explorer, the memorial also preserves an assemblage of plants and animals rare in the United States.

What are some of the more interesting plants that you can see along the trails? Guide booklets, keyed to numbers beside the plants, make identification easy.

The Schotts yucca, or mountain yucca, is a member of the lily family. From April to August, it puts forth a central stalk with clusters of white blossoms. Indians used the plant in many ways. For food, they used the buds, flowers, and young flower stalks (eaten raw and boiled); for needle and thread, the sharp point of the leaf and the long fibers; for rope, matting, sandals, and baskets, the tough leaf fibers.

Sacahuista (sah-cah-WEEES-tah), or "beargrass," is not a grass but another member of the lily family. Its blossoms appear in May and June. This plant is used extensively in northern Mexico as roof thatching.

Of the many species of cholla (CHO-yah) cactus, the one found here is the cane cholla. Its deep-red blossoms appear in May and June, and the bright, lemon-yellow fruit develops in July and remains on the plant until it ripens in March or April of the following year. Indians baked the fruit, another item in their diet.

Among the mammals you may see as you walk the trails are the coati—a long-tailed raccoon-like creature that does not venture far north of the international boundary—peccary, white-tailed deer, and bobcat.

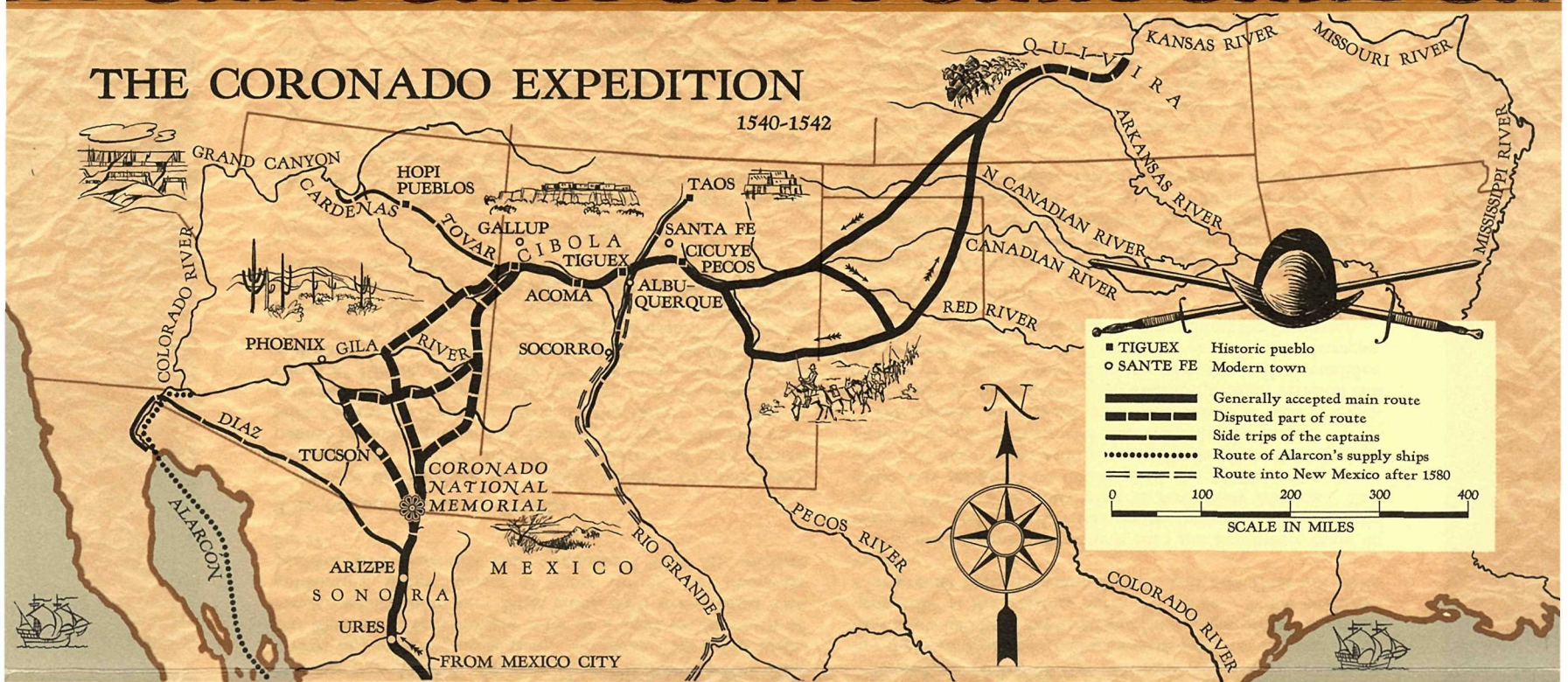
Birds that you may add to your list of sightings include the very rare (in the United States) coppery-tailed trogon, golden eagle, scrub (Arizona) jay, band-tailed pigeon (summer), white-winged dove (summer), and the handsome phainopepla (winter), and the harlequin, or Mearns', quail.

At many places along the trails, you can raise your eyes to the southern and eastern horizons and see the country through which Coronado led his company of brave explorers. The species of plants and animals that you see here were as strange to them as they may be to you—as strange as the unknown land that awaited them.



THE CORONADO EXPEDITION

1540-1542



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