

Guided Tour of
The Armendaris Ranch and Jornada del Muerto

Offered by Socorro County Historical Society, Socorro, New Mexico
SATURDAY, SEPT. 26, 2015

INFORMATION PACKET FOR THE GUIDED TOUR

This is a unique and rare opportunity to tour the Jornada del Muerto and Ted Turner's Armendaris Ranch. With special ranch permission, the auto tour visits many historical sites and features normally closed to the public. Some of the highlights of the trip:

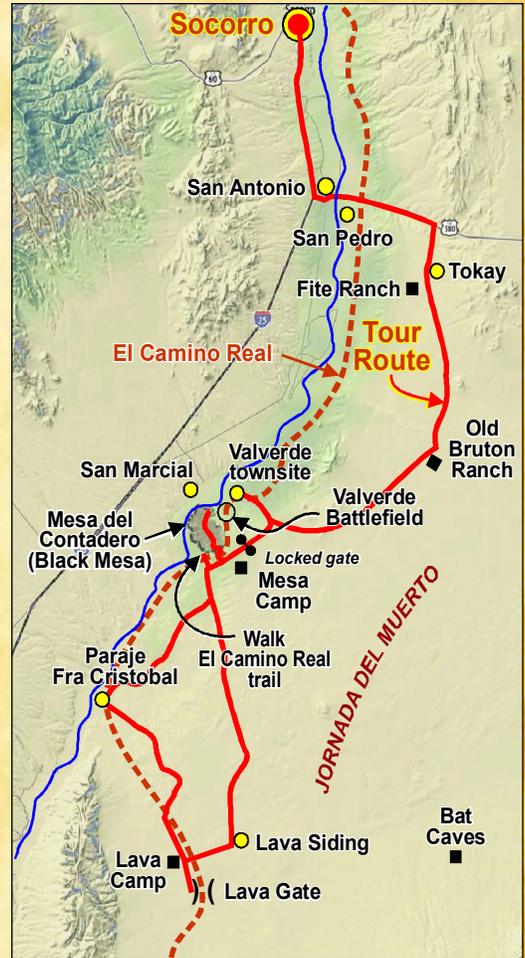
- **Valverde** townsite ruins and Valverde battlefield
- See and walk a few segments of **El Camino Real** trail
- Visit **Paraje Fray Cristobal** landmark & townsite
- A drive to the top of **Mesa del Contadero**
- Experience the dry & desolate **Jornada del Muerto**
- Other historic sites along the way (see map next page)

Tour is led by a local experienced guide familiar with El Camino Real, Armendaris Ranch and regional history.

The Drive: This is an **all-day drive** beginning and ending in Socorro, NM. Drive departs 9 a.m. from the south Chevron station (next to Arby's) and returns about 6 p.m. The tour route is 142 miles, mostly along dirt roads in various conditions; a high-clearance vehicle with AWD or 4WD a must. Participants without a proper vehicle will be paired with those who do.

Food and Drink: The Jornada del Muerto is a long, hot, dry and dusty trip with no accommodations. Bring food, water and refreshments to keep hydrated. Our lunch stop is at Paraje Fra Cristobal; **bring your own lunch.**

Reservations. The number of cars on the auto tour is limited. For more information, or to reserve your passage, email tour@socorro-history.org or call tour guide Paul Harden at 575-838-4775 evenings.



AUTO TOUR EXCURSION

NO. 2
ARMENDARIS RANCH
TOUR NUMBER AND NAME

About this tour:

Tour #2	Drive distance 140 mi.	Length of tour 8-9 hours
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S.C.H.S. Certificate for Passage 

Entitles the bearer to passage on the excursion caravan

Name _____

Date **SEPT 26 2015**

Car 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Fare **\$100**

FIRST CLASS PASSAGE

Validation Stamp
 Fees & Taxes **PAID** S.C.H.S.

TERMS

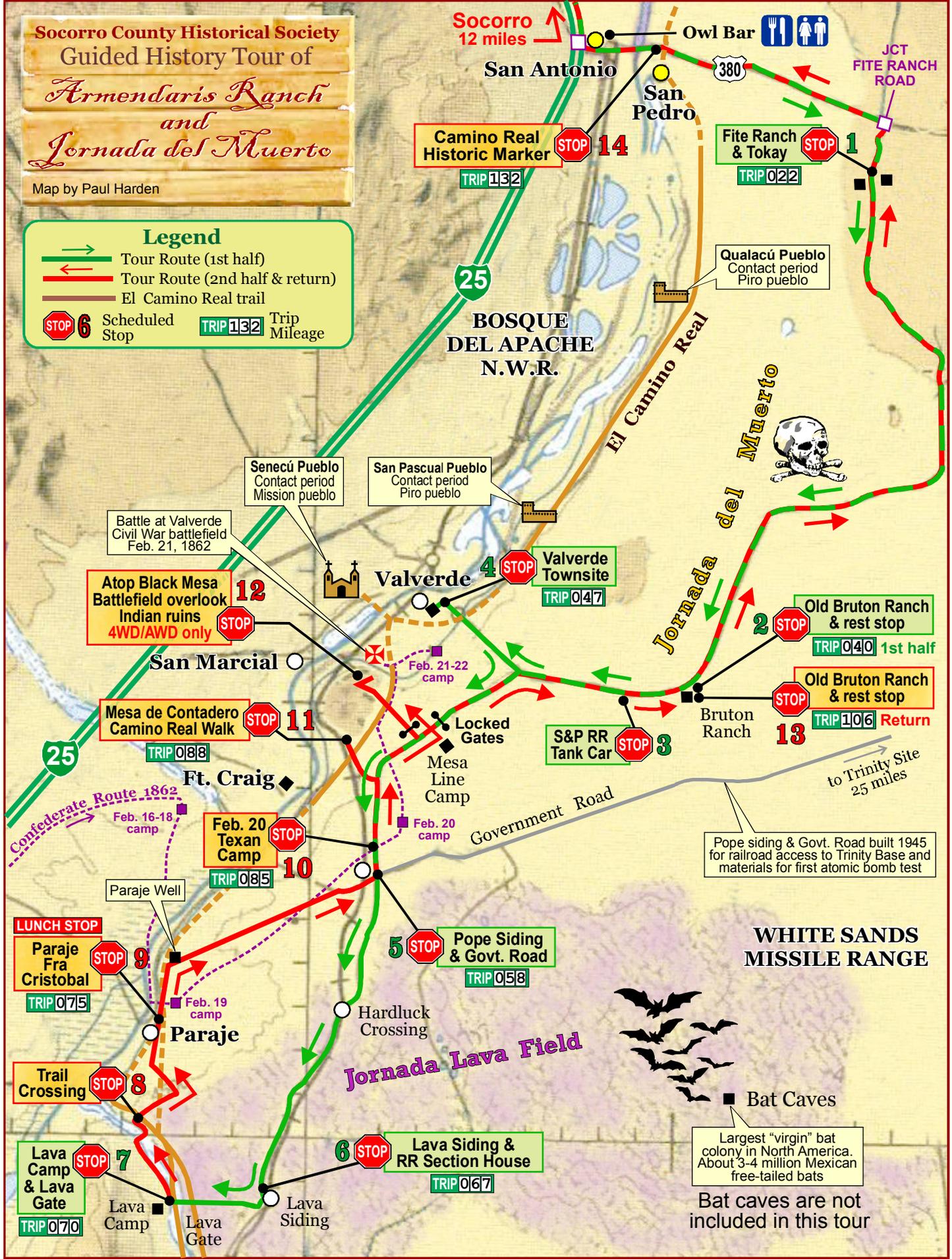
- ☞ Participation in this special auto excursion is at your own risk. SCHS is not responsible for any mishaps on the auto tour. Liability Waiver must be signed.
- ☞ Auto tour is led by an experienced, knowledgeable & friendly guide.
- ☞ If excursion is cancelled due to inclement weather or other reason, fare will be cheerfully refunded in full.

Socorro County Historical Society
 Guided History Tour of
Armendaris Ranch
 and
Jornada del Muerto

Map by Paul Harden

Legend

- Tour Route (1st half)
- Tour Route (2nd half & return)
- El Camino Real trail
- Scheduled Stop
- Trip Mileage



Socorro
12 miles



San Antonio
 San Pedro
 Camino Real Historic Marker STOP 14
 TRIP 132

Fite Ranch & Tokay STOP 1
 TRIP 022

Qualacú Pueblo
 Contact period
 Piro pueblo

BOSQUE
 DEL APACHE
 N.W.R.

El Camino Real

Jornada del Muerto



Battle at Valverde
 Civil War battlefield
 Feb. 21, 1862

Senecú Pueblo
 Contact period
 Mission pueblo

San Pascual Pueblo
 Contact period
 Piro pueblo

Atop Black Mesa
 Battlefield overlook
 Indian ruins
 4WD/AWD only STOP 12

Valverde 4 STOP
 Valverde Townsite
 TRIP 047

Old Bruton Ranch & rest stop
 TRIP 040 1st half

San Marcial

Mesa de Contadero
 Camino Real Walk STOP 11
 TRIP 088

Locked Gates
 Mesa Line Camp

S&P RR Tank Car STOP 3

Old Bruton Ranch & rest stop
 TRIP 106 Return

Ft. Craig

Feb. 20 Texan Camp STOP 10
 TRIP 085

Feb. 20 camp

Government Road

Pope siding & Govt. Road built 1945
 for railroad access to Trinity Base and
 materials for first atomic bomb test

to Trinity Site
 25 miles

WHITE SANDS
 MISSILE RANGE

LUNCH STOP

Paraje Fra Cristobal STOP 9
 TRIP 075

Paraje Well

Feb. 19 camp

Pope Siding & Govt. Road STOP 5
 TRIP 058

Jornada Lava Field



Bat Caves

Largest "virgin" bat colony in North America.
 About 3-4 million Mexican free-tailed bats

Bat caves are not included in this tour

Trail Crossing STOP 8

Lava Camp & Lava Gate STOP 7
 TRIP 070

Lava Camp

Lava Gate

Lava Siding

Lava Siding & RR Section House STOP 6
 TRIP 067

Stops Along the Trail

STOP 1 Fite Ranch and Tokay: The first stop is to point out the well-known Dean and Evelyn Fite Ranch. Some of the nearby structures are what is left of the coal mining town of Tokay. The old ranch house was built by mine owner B. H. Kinney. Tokay Post Office 1919–1932.

The drive down the Fite Ranch road skirts White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) to the east.

STOP 2 Old Bruton Ranch: This fairly intact ranch was ordered abandoned in 1945 as part of the Trinity atomic test, about 17 miles due east. This is one of the 99 ranches abandoned by the Army to establish WSMR, of which about 35 were on the Jornada del Muerto.

STOP 3 Tank Car: Following WWII, area ranchers bought surplus railroad tank cars for water tanks. There's an interesting story of the "S&P RR" and how the ranchers profited from purchasing these tank cars.

STOP 4 Valverde Townsite: Major floods in 1929 and 1937 inundated the towns of San Marcial, Tiffany, Valverde, and others. Declared "untenable" in 1938 by the Army Corp of Engineers, the area has remained abandoned ever since. Many families now living in Socorro have their roots in San Marcial or Valverde. Nearly due west of our stop was the location of the *Senecú mission pueblo*, and later, *Fort Conrad*, the precursor to *Fort Craig*. El Camino Real runs north from the Valverde cemetery to pass the contact period *San Pascual pueblo* – the largest Piro pueblo on the trail. This stop is a visit to the Valverde cemetery and the ruins of the old church and WPA built school.



Cemetery at Valverde townsite, Stop 4. El Camino Real is behind the bushes.

STOP 5 Pope Siding: *Pope Siding* was built in 1944 as the closest railroad point to the Trinity Site. The first atomic bomb, the "Big Boy" casing, and tons of building materials, were transported to Trinity Base along the dirt Government Road. Trinity Site is 30 miles northeast from Pope Siding.

STOP 6 Lava Siding & Section House: An old railroad station with lots of history. First built as a water stop in 1880 for thirsty engines in the dry Jornada del Muero. Corrals were soon built by the *Diamond A Ranch* for shipping cattle by rail. From 1898–1908, guano was mined from the bat caves 12 miles to the east. The Jornada guano fertilized the pineapple fields in Hawaii. The mined guano was also loaded onto the trains at the *Lava Siding*.



The old "Section House" at Lava Siding

About 1890, the Santa Fe

Railroad built a "section house" for the engine and track crews. For years, many miles of track through the Jornada were rebuilt to elevate the flood prone track during monsoon rains. Much of the old section house still stands, though the water tank is long gone.

STOP 7 Lava Camp: Lava camp marks the half-way point of the tour. The original ranch house was built in the 1890s when this was part of the famous *Diamond A Ranch* empire, which sported over 10,000 head of cattle on the Armendaris. The ranch house is still used for ranch workers, hunters, and researchers. The stop also includes a look at **Lava Gate**, where El Camino Real passed in front of the lava cliffs to the east.



STOP 8 Trail Crossing: An opportunity to see and walk El Camino Real trail where it exits Lava Gate. Several segments run parallel to each other in this area leading to Paraje Fra Cristobal. Our stop on the road is between two segments about 100 yards apart. The trails here are sandy wagon swales lined with mesquite bushes, caused by seeds in the oxen droppings over the centuries. How old are the mesquite bushes?

STOP 9 Paraje Fra Cristobal: This is our lunch stop. Paraje Fra Cristobal was the most anticipated landmark on the Jornada del Muerto – the first water in 90 miles and often three days on the Jornada. This was a general camp site, or *paraje*, along the river bank. Caravans would stop for the day to rest the livestock and draft animals. The people would also rest, though used the time to wash their clothes and bathe in the river. Sheep were often slaughtered for a hearty feast before continuing their journey. There were no trees to block the river in the days of the trail; the bosque is the result of Elephant Butte Reservoir and 20th century floods.



A village was built here in the 1850s, popular due to its close proximity to Ft. Craig and for serving travelers on El Camino Real. The town went into decline when it was bypassed by the railroad in 1880. The town of *Paraje* was destroyed by high waters from Elephant Butte Lake with little remaining.

STOP 10 Feb. 20 Texan Camp: During February 16–19, 1862, the Confederate Army, consisting mostly of Texas Mounted Volunteers, attempted to capture Fort Craig. Union soldiers refused to leave the protection of the fort walls. On Feb. 19, the Texans crossed the Rio Grande and camped at Paraje. The following day, they followed our path from Paraje where they struggled to get their wagons up these sand hills, forming a "dry camp" on Feb. 20. The Battle of Valverde was fought the next day, Feb. 21, 1862.

STOP 11 Mesa del Contadero: A close-up look at the towering lava “Black Mesa” and a pristine stretch of El Camino Real. *Mesa del Contadero* was another major trail landmark – symbolizing “just 30 days to go to Santa Fe.” The volcanic mesa is steeped in history from Paleoindian and Piro Indian occupation to the nearby railroading town of *San Marcial* – destroyed by flood in 1929. Our stop is on a pristine portion of the Camino Real called *el contadero*, or “counting place.” Caravans were accompanied with hundreds, if not thousands of sheep, cattle and livestock. They were counted here to determine how many animals were slaughtered or perished on the trail before arriving in Santa Fe. In the Spanish days of the trail, taxes were paid on the number of animals each family brought into New Spain. At this stop, the wagon swales of the trail are easily seen – and walked.



El Camino Real at Mesa del Contadero

STOP 12 Black Mesa: The tour includes a drive to the top of Black Mesa. **4WD or AWD required.** It is a fairly rough, rocky road, though only about a 1/4-mile stretch. There are two stops atop Black Mesa.



The drive up Black Mesa

Valverde Battlefield overlook: From the north flank of the mesa is an extensive vista of the *Rio Grande valley* and *Jornada del Muerto*. It is also a bird’s eye view of the *Valverde battlefield*, a civil war battle fought on February

21, 1862. You can clearly see the battlefield, the “old river bed” that formed the Texan line, and almost see the New Mexico Volunteers crossing the river to face the rebels. A brief description of the battle will be offered.

Lava fortifications: We’ll walk about 140 yards to see lava rock fortifications of unknown affinity appearing to be stock corrals, and a few small Piro era block rooms and petroglyphs. Plenty of large lava rocks to climb!



Bird’s eye view of the Valverde battlefield



Atop the mesa ... having fun!

Back down the mesa, we’ll pass through *Mesa Camp*, the northern-most camp on the Armendaris. The locked gate is where we leave the famous ranch. Thank the Armendaris for their wonderful ranch and hospitality.

STOP 13 Bruton Ranch should look familiar from Stop 2 this morning. A quick stop to stretch your legs before the 29 mile return to San Antonio.

STOP 14 Camino Real Marker at San Antonio marks the end of the tour. You will likely be dusty, tired, hungry and thirsty – so we’ll decide here who wishes to return home, and those who might want to end the trail with a green chili hamburger and a drink at the historic Owl Bar and Café.

We hope this tour has brought you experiences and memories for years to come!

A Few Travel Tips

Tips for those furnishing vehicles:

1. Ensure your AWD or 4WD high clearance vehicle is in good working condition. Check fluid levels, engine coolant, tire pressures (plus spare) and have at least 3/4 tank of gas at tour departure.
2. Most driving is on dirt roads, sandy and dusty in places.
3. Keep cars together, although, keep a safe distance from the car ahead in dusty areas.
4. In event of a problem, pull over to side of road and turn on headlights and hazard blinkers to alert the leader.

The environment and setting

The trip through the Jornada del Muerto and Armendaris Ranch is a unique and enjoyable experience. Much of the tour is through extremely remote country. There are no facilities or services of any kind along the route. This is a primitive experience, though safe. In event of mechanical breakdown or medical emergency, it could be 2–3 hours until receiving outside assistance – and costly. ***Suitability for this tour is your responsibility.***

Dress

Dress for hiking with a good pair of shoes, long pants (no shorts) and a light sweater or jacket to be ready for the temperature extremes and winds that may exist.

Tips for all participants:

1. Respect the land. We are guests of the Armendaris Ranch.
2. It is hot, dry and dusty on the Jornada del Muerto. Bring plenty of water and liquid refreshments to keep hydrated.
3. ***Bring your own lunch*** and other snacks you may need. Stop 9 (Paraje Fray Cristobal) is our lunch stop.
4. Bring toilet paper and other items to be comfortable, and any medication, etc. you may need.
5. Cell phone service is spotty along most of the tour.
6. Snakes are not normally a problem, but, they do live out there! For safety, travel in pairs.
7. Most stops do not require extensive walking; the amount of walking at our stops is up to you.
8. Bring your camera with well charged batteries and binoculars if you have them. There is plenty to see, including birds, distant wildlife and buffalo herds (if lucky).
9. The trail is very dusty. Recommend keeping binoculars, cameras, etc. in plastic or camera bags to keep them clean. Armendaris dust is like talcum powder!

From past experience, the trip takes about 8 hours or more, depending upon the time spent at some of the stops. Tour reserves the right to change the stops due to ranch request, inaccessible roads, inclement weather, or other factors.