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The Santa Fe Trail (Sandy Carlson, editor)

The Great Prairie Highway

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THE GREAT PRAIRIE HIGHWAY

The Santa Fe Trail was primarily a highway of commerce. Euro-American traders hauled U.S. freight westward to Santa Fe in gigantic wagons often pulled by teams of 12 oxen. Headed the opposite direction, the wagons of Hispano traders transported goods from Mexico and the Southwest to eastern markets. The traders often filled their wagons with more freight for the trip back home.

But — what was life like on a wagon train traversing the trail? Fortunately, some trail travelers, including women, gifted us with journals describing their experiences. Read on for the nitty-gritty about life on the trail, the trail itself, the jargon used, the songs likely sung, a lively first-person account of bullwhacking on the trail, and the equipment and animals necessary to haul all that freight.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Santa Fe Trail (trail shadow)

Tod Seelie