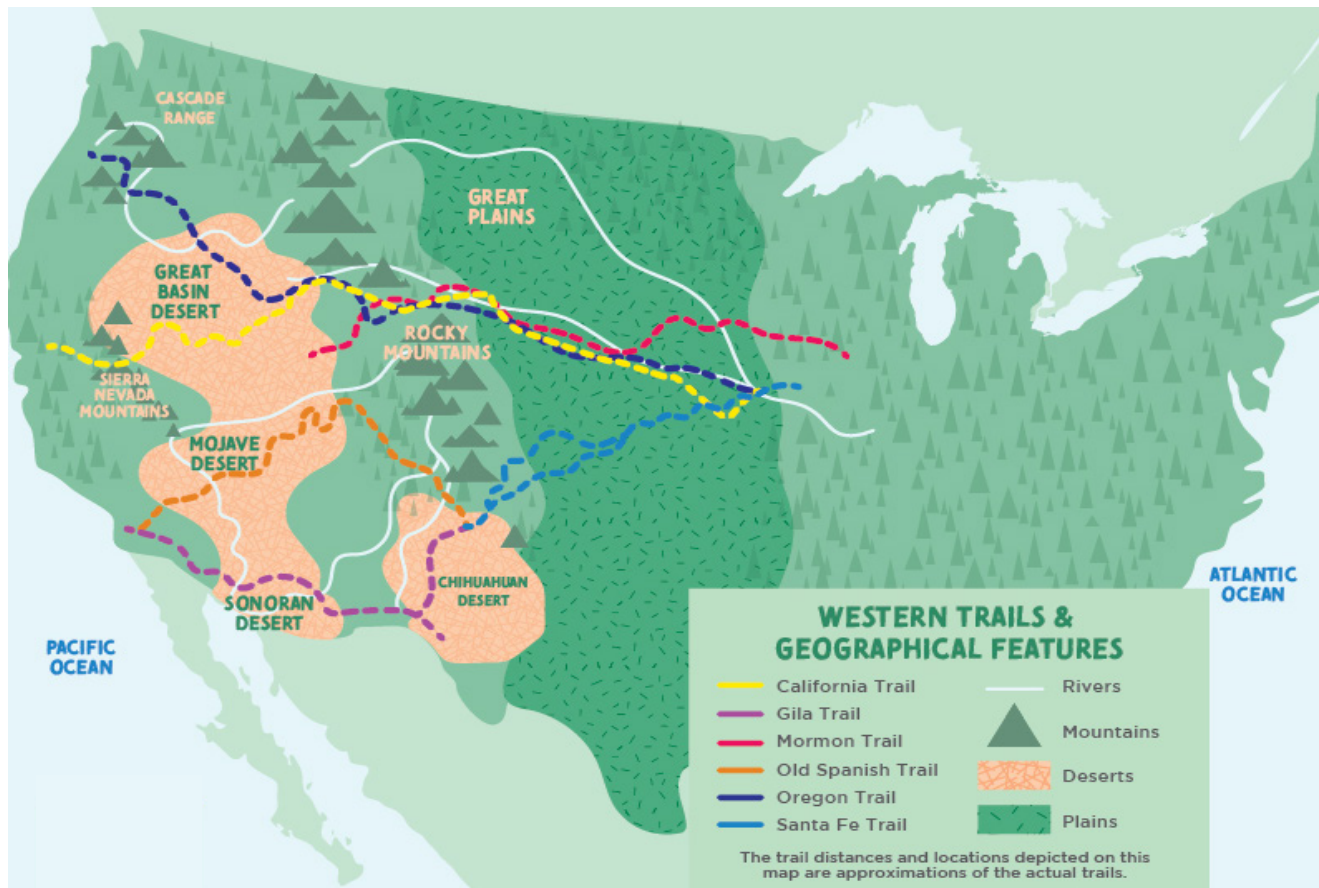


Six Trails West

PART 1 – During the mid-1800s, thousands of people living in the United States *migrated* across the country to the western regions of the United States. These *migrations* of people were part of the growth and expansion of the United States from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Many of these people traveled to the American West by sea and along *overland trails* such as the California Trail, Gila Trail, Mormon Trail, Old Spanish Trail, Oregon Trail, and the Santa Fe Trail. The journey was uncomfortable, physically demanding, and *hazardous* with limited food and water along most of the trails. Read the “Six Trails West” summaries to learn more about how and why people traveled to the American West during the mid-1800s. Please look for definitions of the italicized words in the boxes underneath the summaries.



Glossary

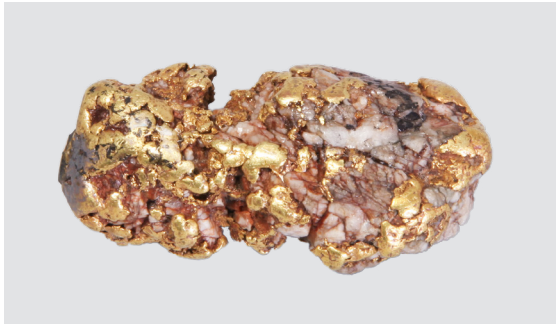
Migrated: moved

Migrations: movements

Overland trails: any of several trails of westward migration in the United States

Hazardous: risky, dangerous

Six Trails West



Gold nugget. Autry Museum of the American West; 91.221.583

California Trail: The California Trail was a 2,000-mile journey through *arid* plains, mountains, rivers, and vast deserts from Independence, Missouri to Sacramento, California. The last part of the trail was difficult traveling through 40 miles of desert and then over the Sierra Nevada mountains. Over 250,000 people walked along this trail to look for gold and to work in California during the *California Gold Rush*.

Arid: extremely dry, not a lot of rain

California Gold Rush: the time between 1848-1855 when people from all over the world rushed to California in search of gold



Joseph Amasa Munk, *Gila River*. Autry Museum of the American West; A.147.35

Gila Trail: The Gila Trail went through arid desert and rivers from Santa Fe, New Mexico to California. The Gila Trail also followed rivers like the Gila River. It was one of the oldest trails in the United States. *Artifacts* at least 15,000 years old were found near this trail. Mountain men also used this trail to trap beavers. *Stagecoaches* and *pack animals*, like mules, were used to carry goods and people along this route of *commerce* and travel.

Artifacts: any objects made by human beings

Stagecoaches: large, closed, horse-drawn (or mule-drawn) wooden carriages used to carry passengers or mail along a regular route

Pack animals: animals used to carry heavy loads

Commerce: the activity of buying and selling something



Andrew P. Hill (1853–1922), *Crossing the Plains*, circa early 1900s, gelatin silver print. Autry Museum of the American West; P.12974

Mormon Trail: The Mormon Trail was a 1,300-mile journey through arid plains, rivers, desert, and high mountains from Nauvoo, Illinois to Salt Lake City, Utah. Thousands of people, many of whom experienced *persecution* for being Mormon, traveled along the Mormon Trail to find a new home. The Mormon's religion is called the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints. Mormons were very organized and set up camps along the way to make it easier for future travelers. Many of them also pulled two-wheeled handcarts along this trail to carry food, supplies, and personal belongings to Utah where they could start a new life.

Persecution: treated unfairly and cruelly

Six Trails West



F. H. Maude (1858–1959), *The Canyon of the Little Colorado River in Arizona*, circa 1890s, gelatin silver print. Autry Museum of the American West; P.36149

Old Spanish Trail: The Old Spanish Trail went through arid deserts, high mountains, and rivers from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Los Angeles, California. Native American trails were first used by Spanish explorers, but the full trail was *established* in 1829. The trail became mainly a route for traders and merchants using *mule-laden pack trains*. It was considered the most difficult *trade* route in the United States.

Established: started something that was not there before

Mule-laden: mules that are weighed down with a load

Pack trains: groups of animals, used to carry heavy loads, that are moving in a line

Trade: switch something for something else



Samuel Augustus Mitchell (1792–1868), *A New Map of Texas, Oregon, and California: With the Regions Adjoining*, 1846. Autry Museum of the American West; 90.253.289

Oregon Trail: The Oregon Trail, nicknamed “The Great Migration of 1843,” was a 2,000-mile journey through the arid plains, desert, rivers, and mountains from Independence, Missouri to Oregon City, Oregon. After Lewis and Clark explored the West, *fur trappers* and Christian *missionaries* traveled along the Oregon Trail. In 1843, 1,000 people traveled this trail by *covered wagons* to move to Oregon. Bad weather, disease, and accidents made the traveling difficult. But at the end of the trail, many of these travelers received land.

Fur trappers: people who hunt and trap animals

Missionaries: people who are sent by a church to travel and tell other people about their religion, teach them, or help them

Covered wagons: large wagons with high, bonnet-like canvas tops



Santa Fe Trail: The Santa Fe Trail was a 900-mile journey through arid plains, desert, rivers, and mountains from Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico. In use since 1821, this trail was used primarily for trade opportunities. Traders traveled on this trail in wagons and on pack animals such as mules. This was a very dangerous trail as there was a shortage of both food and water.

Benjamin West Kilburn (1827–1909), *Burro Pack Train, on the way to Leadville, Col. U.S.A.*, circa late 1800s; paper, albumen print, mounted on curved cardboard. Autry Museum of the American West; 90.253.1764.2

Six Trails West

PART 2 – PICK A TRAIL

You will be going on a journey to the American West. What trail will you take? Pick ONE trail from the Six Trails West and write down information about the trail in the space below or on a separate piece of paper.

Trail name:

Reason why people traveled the trail:

What transportation people used to travel the trail:

Geographical features of the trail:

What people experienced along the way:

Geographical features: features on the earth's surface like rivers, mountains, deserts, or plains

PART 3 – PACKING LIST

Prepare for your journey to the American West! Imagine you are traveling during the mid-19th century. On a piece of paper or in the space below, make a packing list (words or pictures) of the items that you will bring with you. Only include the items that you will need to survive.

Food and Drink: (Think about food and drink that can stay for a long period of time or can be made easily while traveling.)

Clothing: (Think about clothing for different types of weather—cold, dusty, hot sun.)

Nighttime Items: (Think about lamp, blanket, pillow, tent, and more.)

Tools: (Think about tools for cooking, eating, drinking; tools for fixing things; medicine.)

One extra item of your choice:

PART 4 – JOURNAL ENTRY

Read the journal entry sample before creating your own journal entry.

Journal Entry Sample

August 10, 1850

We was on the trail, sun 1 hour high. Traveled 25 miles. The road has been very crooked, stony and mountainous. Tired. Nearly all of us have to walk and we all feel very tired. We have come all day without any grass and 12 miles. We found no water. Our horses is about beat out, and tonight nothing but browse for them to eat. We got a few lbs. flour at 62-1/2 cents today and enough pork for our dinner tonight. We ate all our flour up. I believe we are about 25 miles from the diggings.

-George Bonniwell

Write a Journal Entry

Share what you've learned about the trail by writing a journal entry about your experience along that trail. Use a separate piece of paper or write in the space below. Use complete sentences and include the following information:

- Reason you are traveling
- Who is traveling with you
- What transportation you use
- What you brought with you
- Geographical features you travel across
- What you experience along the way
- Did your packing list help?
- How was your transportation?
- How you feel during your journey

We are traveling on the _____ Trail because _____
