Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate

The Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate was a Spanish military encampment that dates to the 1770s. Spanish soldiers were stationed here to pacify the northern border of New Spain - the Apache forced them to leave. You may visit this site to view its ruins and learn about Spain's colonial period along the San Pedro River.

History: A Spanish military post, named the Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate, was built by Hugo O'Conor under orders from the King of Spain along the San Pedro River in 1776 to protect Sonora from Apache raiding. The rectangular fort was located on a bluff above the San Pedro River. Grazing for the presidio livestock and farmlands were located along the river. Captain Francisco Tovar, the first commander of the garrison, initially led two officers, forty soldiers, and ten Indian scouts. They were equipped with 352 horses and 51 mules. Also housed at the Presidio was half of the 45-man Flying Company of Sonora, a troop of light cavalry who patrolled the roads. There were also settlers and soldiers' families at the site living outside the walls of the Presidio.

The Apache attacked incessantly, at first in the form of ambushes and raids on the Presidio herds. On July 7th, 1776, Captain Tovar and 29 soldiers were killed in a battle. In September of 1778 the Apaches inflicted a major defeat, killing the new Commander, Captain Trespalacios, and 19 others. Following this, the garrison was reinforced by the arrival of the Second Company of Catalonian Volunteers. Their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Pedro Fages became acting commander at the Presidio. At the end of 1778 and in early 1779 the Apache assaulted the fort. The soldiers retained the Presidio at the cost of 39 dead. An inspection of Santa Cruz in 1779 found poor morale and training, inadequate weapons, and an incomplete building. The croplands and pastures at the fort were too far away for the garrison to defend and the crops planted there could not be harvested. Supplies brought along trails were generally captured by the Apache. Finally in 1780 orders were given to abandon the Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate.

Plan your visit: The hike to the Presidio is 3 miles round-trip. There is no shade or water. Trails are rough and you must navigate a rocky slope. Know your route, bring adequate water, and dress for the weather. Let someone know where you are going and what to do if you do not return on time.

The trailhead is along In-Balance Road. It includes a gravel parking area with space for horse trailers. No water is available. There is a horse pass-through gate.

The San Pedro Trail is open to hiking, equestrian riding, and bicycling. Sections of the trail in this area are on a historic railroad bed, and administrative vehicle roads. Many people use the trail - respect their rights.

Pets must be leashed in developed facilities and posted areas. All dogs must be kept under direct control at all times. Clean up after your dog and pack out the waste.

The educational trail at the Presidio begins on the historic railroad grade and winds through the site among remnants of structures with interpretive signs about the Presidio and life on the Spanish frontier in the 1770s. THE TRAIL THROUGH THE SITE IS CLOSED TO BICYCLES AND HORSES.

Preservation: The Presidio was made of adobe on stone foundations. Only sections of the walls remain standing. Walls are capped annually with a fresh coat of protective adobe mud. Please do not climb on the walls.

Camping is not allowed at the trailhead, parking area, or educational trails in the Presidio. Backcountry camping is allowed 1/2 mile from the trailhead and public roads. A permit is required for camping, available from self-service stations located at most trail heads. There is a $2 per person per night fee.

Dispose of Waste Properly: A waterless toilet is available near the Presidio. Pack out all your trash.

Leave What You Find: Vegetation, archaeological, historical, and paleontological sites and artifacts are protected by federal law. It is illegal to damage, destroy or remove any artifacts or structures in the SPRNCA. METAL DETECTING IS NOT ALLOWED.

Potential hazards include thorny vegetation, falling tree branches, hidden sink holes, quicksand, steep drop offs, unstable ground, collapsing riverbanks, rattlesnakes, large predators, venomous insects, extreme temperatures, flash floods, and others.
Directions: From Highway 90 at Mustang Corner go east on Highway 82 about 9 miles to In Balance Road, then north about 2 miles to the trailhead.

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