The Presidio Trail
A Historical Walking Tour of Downtown Tucson

This historical walk, designed as a loop, begins and ends at the intersection of Church and Washington Streets, the north-east corner of Tucson’s historic presidio. The complete walk (about 1/2 miles in length) takes 1 1/2 to 2 hours, but it can, of course, be done in segments, beginning and ending wherever you like.

More than 20 restaurants are within a few blocks of the walk, providing plenty of opportunities for lunch or a break. Most of the sites on the tour are marked with historical plaques that provide additional information.

Enjoy this walk through the heart of our city, which has expanded out from the adobe fort that was its beginning.

Tucson is generally warm and sunny even in winter, so it is advisable to take water and wear a shady hat.
Garcés, the Franciscan priest who rode north from Tubac was the largest in the Southwest. Allande personally was the premier weapon of the day. The Mission Revival style Corbett house was built in 1907 with the help of the ambitious Rio Nuevo redevelopment project.

SOLDADO DE CUERA (LEATHER JACKET) SHOES

This Spanish soldier stands in the battle uniform typical of the late 1700s. The leather vest [7 layers of rawhide] could stop an arrow. The leggings protected him from thighs. This shoe helped to differentiate his 10-foot-long lance which was the premier weapon of the day.

ALLANDE FOOTBRIDGE

This bridge, crossing Pennington St., is dedicated to Don Pedro de Allende y Saavedra who was appointed one of the first commanders of the presidio in 1777. Allende personally financed the early construction efforts at the presidio, which was the largest in the Southwest.

CARRILLO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This early 20th century commercial building once housed a spacious dance hall on the second floor. The Odd Fellows have been an active social club since 1891 in Tucson as well as a charitable group whose goals include helping fellow community members in times of need. The building now houses a restaurant as well as art and photography galleries and studios.

FERRIN HOUSE (now CUSHING STREET BAR & RESTAURANT)

This old adobe house was built in the 1860s by tailor Joseph Ferrin and his wife Theresa. The Ferrin's daughter Clara were instrumental in building the first synagogue in Arizona on south Stone Ave. A store was added to the residence in the 1880s; the structure now operates as a family-owned restaurant and bar.

SOSA-CARRILLO-FREMONT HOUSE

This house museum was once owned by the Sosa-Carrillo family; the oldest of the family was a well-known lawyer who was appointed the Territorial Governor in 1878. This Soson ranch house contains an excellent example of an 1800s, a central hall leading from the front to the rear. The mission fig in the courtyard was probably planted in the 1700s.

JACOME ART PANEL AT TUCSON CONVENTION CENTER

This panel, depicting the arrival of the Spanish, used to be displayed on the front of the Jacome Department Store in downtown Tucson. When that store was demolished in the 1970s, the Jacome family donated the art to the new convention center.

TEMPLE OF MUSIC & ART

This 1927 theater, constructed on behalf of The Saturday Morning Music Club, brought a flourishing musical scene to Tucson including world famous artists such as Jascha Heifetz. Built in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, this building features an inviting courtyard with a fountain. The building was restored in 1990 and is a popular theater venue, renowned for its excellent acoustics.

CARRILLO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This elementary school, built in 1930 in the Mission Revival style, was named for Mexican businessman Leopoldo Carrillo. He explored throughout the region and died in 781 during an Indian uprising. This hill, located just north of “A” Mountain, means “horned lizard” in the Tohono O’odham language. In an O’odham legend a giant horned lizard suddenly began eating people. The O’odham prayed to their god T’otzi to help them. T’otzi heard them and turned the lizard into a rocky hill. Now Tumamoc is the home of the University of Arizona’s Desert Laboratory, founded in 1903. This hill is the site of the longest continuous botanical monitoring plots in the Sonoran Desert. In addition, the hill was used by indigenous people for farming and other purposes for several thousand years and is an important archaeological site.

FRANCISCO “PANCHITO” VILLA STATURE

Through the wrought iron fence a commanding statue of Pancho Villa is visible on a grassy area in the center of Broadway. The statue was given to Tucson by Mexico in 1971, with a wry sense of irony considering Pancho Villa’s raid against the city in 1916.

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SENTINEL PEAK/“A” MOUNTAIN

To the west you will see a6a5ite peak adorned with the letter “A.” This is once a lookout for Spanish and Native American sentinels, who watched for raiders approaching the presidio and mission. The “A” was added in 1915, in a burst of new University of Arizona student enthusiasm, as the result of a football victory over Pomona College. The O’Odham name for the mountain, pronounced Schnook-schon, means “at the black base.” This is the source of the name Tucson.

CARRILLO GARDENS/EYLUSIAN GROVE & MARKET

To the west along Simpson St. was an artesian spring (El Quemado) that was the source of drinking water for the community in the 1800s. An enterprising local citizen, Leopoldo Carrillo, built a dam to form a lake and planted gardens with shade trees and roses, turning it into a popular amusement park. This was a very popular site for a picnic or a Sunday stroll. In 1887 a tremendous earthquake shook southern Arizona causing the artesian spring and the lake to dry up. When the water disappeared after the earthquake, it left behind a small fertile hollow. Trees eventually grew in the area and homes were built in a neighborhood called Elysian Grove. One of the adobe buildings became a popular market place and is a private home with a beautiful garden in the rear.

A ZOHOLOMID; TUMAMOC (HORNED LIZARD) HILL

This hill, located just north of “A” Mountain, means “horned lizard” in the Tohono O’odham language. In an O’odham legend a giant horned lizard suddenly began eating people. The O’odham prayed to their god T’otzi to help them. T’otzi heard them and turned the lizard into a rocky hill. Now Tumamoc is the home of the University of Arizona’s Desert Laboratory, founded in 1903. This hill is the site of the longest continuous botanical monitoring plots in the Sonoran Desert. In addition, the hill was used by indigenous people for farming and other purposes for several thousand years and is an important archaeological site.

EL TIRADITO (THE CASTAWAY) also known as THE WISHING SHRINE

This shrine is typical of small shrines in many communities in Mexico, where people come to burn candles and pray, asking for help with their problems. One legend associated with this shrine involves a tragic love triangle in the 1870s, with a husband killing his wife’s lover. A priest would not let the man be buried in the consecrated cemetery so local people light candles at this location to pray for his soul.

LA PILITA

This adobe structure is a small museum and store selling items made by the students at the nearby Carrillo Elementary School (Stop No. 23). It contains projects about local history created by the children. The mural on the south wall tells the story of the Hispanic community.

Former Carnegie Library

Now the TUCSON CHILDREN’S MUSEUM

Built in 1900 this building has survived fire and the loss of much of its ornamentation. The massive beam at the front was designed by California architect Bernard Maybeck and sculpted by world-famous sculptor Benjamin Bufano with the help of his 10-foot-long lance which was the premier weapon of the day.

Scottish Rite Cathedral

Designed by Henry Trost, this unusual building was built in 1915 in a variety of Neoclassical styles. The building facade, for both screen and stage events.

THE WISHING SHRINE

A person lit candles at this location to pray for his soul. With this shrine involves a tragic love triangle in the 1870s, with a husband killing his wife’s lover. A priest would not let the man be buried in the consecrated cemetery so local people light candles at this location to pray for his soul.

Edificio del Estado (now Elaborado)

This building was restored in 1990 and is a popular theater venue, renowned for its excellent acoustics.

The Temple of Music & Art

Built in 1919 across from the railroad depot, this hotel flourishes today and is one of the premier hotels in Tucson. This hotel catered to the social elite. In the mid-20th century the building became a popular market place and is a private home with a beautiful garden in the rear.

This is a replica of the original 1880s bandstand in the park and is one of the most picturesque in the Sonoran Desert. In addition, the hill was used by indigenous people for farming and other purposes for several thousand years and is an important archaeological site.