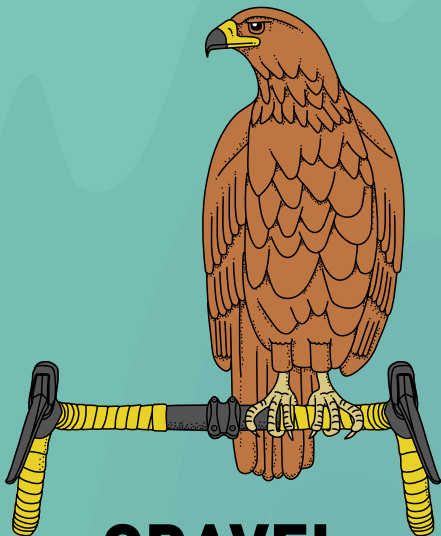


TRINIDAD / LAS ANIMAS COUNTY

SOUTHEAST COLORADO

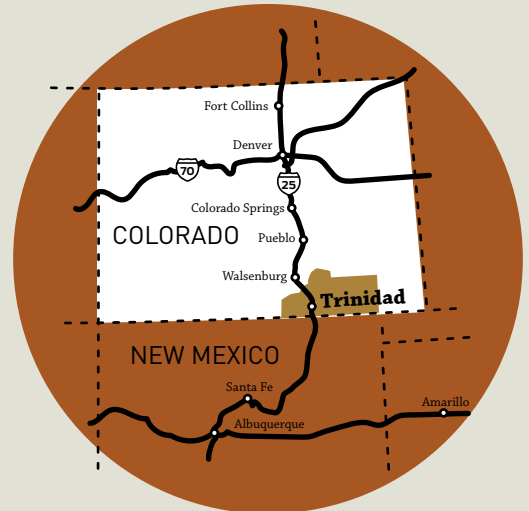


**GRAVEL
ADVENTURE
FIELD GUIDE**

TRINIDAD / LAS ANIMAS COUNTY

SOUTHEAST COLORADO

GRAVEL ADVENTURE FIELD GUIDE

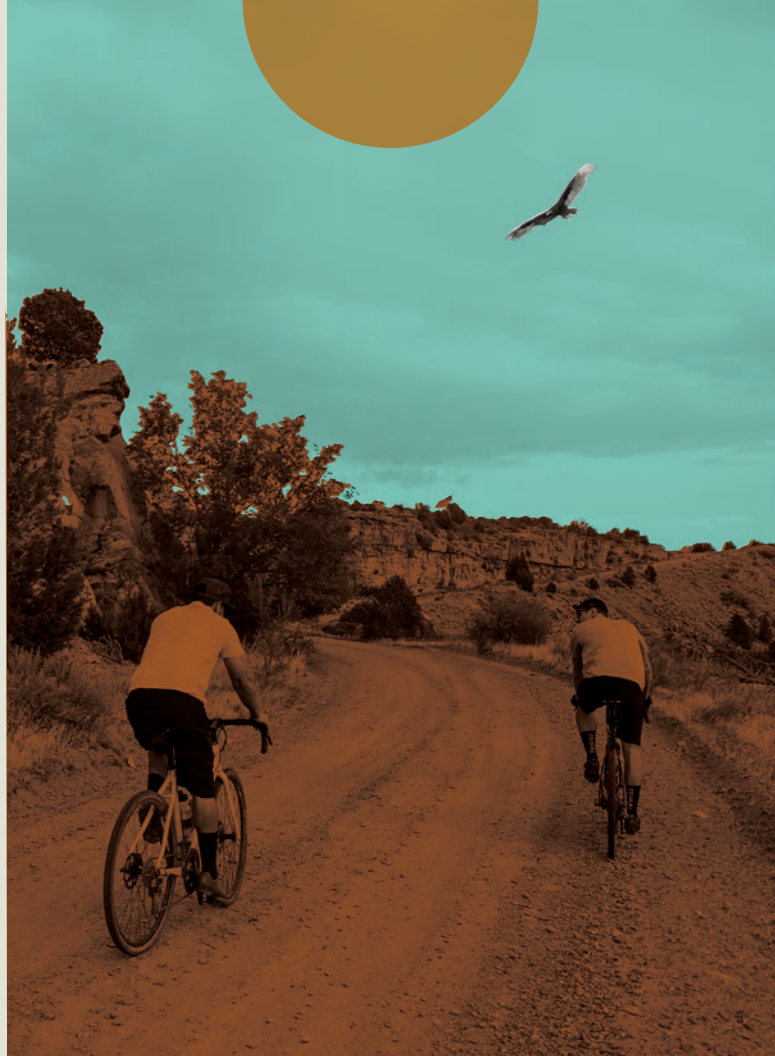


Introduction

Welcome to adventure cycling in southeastern Colorado. In a few short years, Trinidad/Las Animas County has emerged as a gravel bike destination that offers a unique old-west inspired, rural cycling experience. With a county road network of 1,600+ miles, cyclists can enjoy a number of rides that see more cattle guards than cars, all while taking in the culture, history, and scenery that make this region distinctly different than the rest of Colorado.

We strive to inspire cyclists to ride in small groups to create their own personal gravel experience. All of the routes highlighted in this **Gravel Adventure Field Guide** start and end in downtown Trinidad. Come see why the relatively undiscovered dirt of rural Las Animas County is some of the best gravel bike terrain in the state. Explore what we have to offer. We are confident you'll come back for more.

Settled in 1859, incorporated in 1879. El Rio de las Animas; Santisima Trinidad. Ride to the top of Simpson's Rest for a great overview of the area.



Climate:



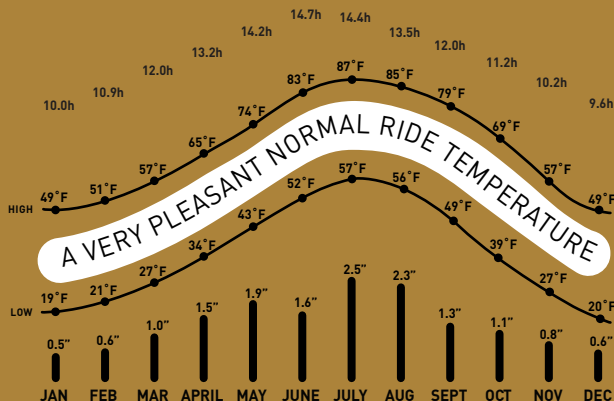
DAY
LIGHT
HOURS



TEMP.



AVRG.
RAIN



Getting to Trinidad:

Drive 3-hours south from Denver.

Drive 3-hours north from Albuquerque.



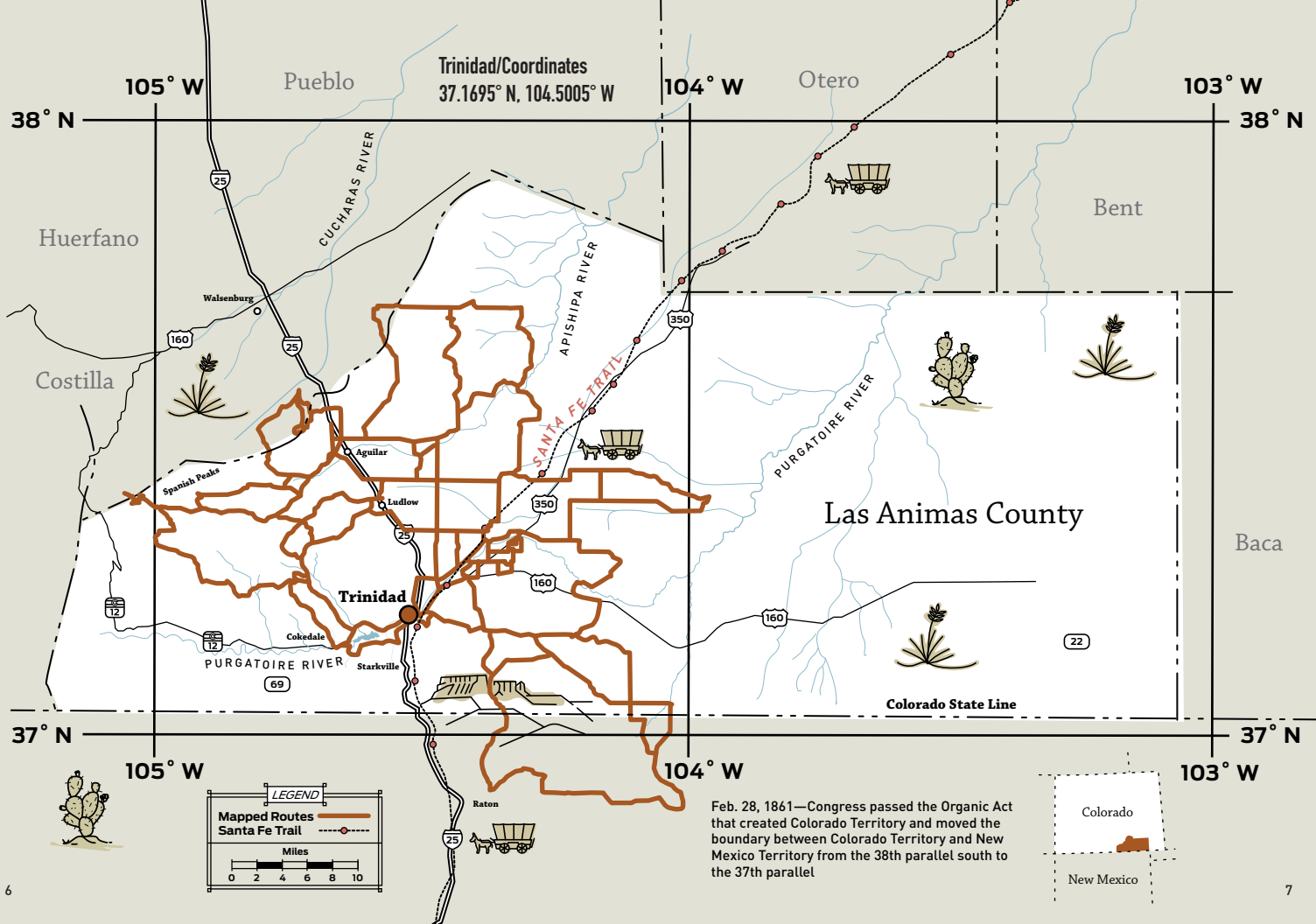
Riding north out of Trinidad on County Road 75, cyclists will quickly see an expansive landscape marked by roads steeped in history.

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Colorado owned and operated since '93. We make solid, dependable, and rock steady bike racks for when you absolutely, positively can't ride it there.



Welcome

We would like to welcome everyone to Trinidad, Colorado, to experience the area's gravel road opportunities. We are art of Las Animas County, the largest county in Colorado, consisting of 4,775 square miles with 1600+ miles of gravel roads.

These roads take in the expanse of the eastern plains and the western mountains for the enjoyment of area citizens and visiting cyclists.

The City Council of Trinidad is encouraged by the potential of becoming the next big adventure hub for gravel bike enthusiasts in the state. Make your next stop Trinidad, Colorado. Enjoy our deep history. Ride our soil. See remnants of our past, and help us build a new future.



The Bloom Mansion, located at 312 E. Main Street, was constructed in 1882. Today it is the home of the Trinidad History Museum

The Purgatoire

"Ute coming down from the mountains to hunt buffalo on the plains used to camp here. This spot (Trinidad) on the Purgatoire River where we now live was long a favorite camping ground, first for the Indian and then the White. The fur trapper knew the Purgatoire as a beaver stream and set their traps up and down its winding banks. Before wheeled vehicles were put to use, great caravans of pack mules, numbering as many as 75 to 200 animals in a pack train passed by here and along the trail later to be known as the Santa Fe Trail."

— Arthur Roy Mitchell
Western Artist & Colorado Historian



Overlooking the river west of Trinidad. The Purgatoire River was also known locally as the Picketwire. French trappers named the river after Spanish explorers killed by Native Americans. Purgatoire means Purgatory in French.
Photo Courtesy: A. R. Mitchel Museum.

Fishers Peak State Park

Fishers Peak is a natural landmark that helped guide travelers on the Santa Fe Trail and cemented Trinidad's identity as an early old west trail town. In 2019, the former privately-owned Crazy French Ranch (19,200 acres) was acquired by the state of Colorado and declared the 42nd state park. It was the result of a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, the city of Trinidad, and Great Outdoors Colorado. While the property is currently off limits to bikes, a master plan is in development that will only improve the off-road cycling experience of Trinidad/Las Animas County, and eventually expand the experience with connections to the city of Raton and Sugarite Canyon State Park in New Mexico. Expect the gravel adventures from downtown Trinidad to only get better in the years ahead.

30

square-miles

3k'

elevation gain

39,000

acres

To put the size of Trinidad's Fishers Peak in perspective, Vail has 5,289 skiable acres. It has the same vertical gain as most '14ers.



Roll out of town and the roads turn into smooth gravel. You'll capture some amazing views, and pieces of the town's history will reveal themselves in pockets along your adventure.



Trinidad Lake State Park is located five miles west of downtown; these county roads are included in a few routes.



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Experience the region's mining past as you pass old infrastructure and a few pack mules on ranch land.



Take in wide open views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and the Spanish Peaks.



Explore and discover new terrain in smaller size groups, on county roads with little to no traffic.



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Together We Make Biking Better.

Since 1999, PeopleForBikes has created a prominent place for bikes in transportation, mobility and recreation decisions at all levels of government. We ensure bikes are prioritized and positioned as a real solution to improve Americans' health, connect communities, boost local and state economies, strengthen our nation and protect our planet.

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Together, we work with federal, state and local officials to make biking better for everyone. peopleforbikes.org

Ride Spot by PeopleForBikes:

Turn-by-turn navigation made easy. Get the app, enjoy our routes, free.



Please download the free Ride Spot app to navigate the routes using visual and audio directions and track your ride.



Hover over the QR code with the camera on your smartphone. Follow the prompt and download the app.



Once you have downloaded and registered, scan the QR on any of the following map pages to immediately see, save and navigate the gravel route.

GRAVEL ADVENTURE FIELD GUIDE

Trinidad / Las Animas County



Route Maps

Under 25 Miles

Arroyos and Ditches pg. 20

Trinidad Lake Loop..... pg. 22

25 to 50 Miles

Perry Stokes Airport Loop..... pg. 24

Corrido de Casimiro pg. 26

50 to 75 Miles

Al's Escape pg. 28

Dirty Trinidad Revival pg. 30

Sunflower Valley Tour..... pg. 32

75 to 100 Miles

Pancho & Lefty's Loop..... pg. 34

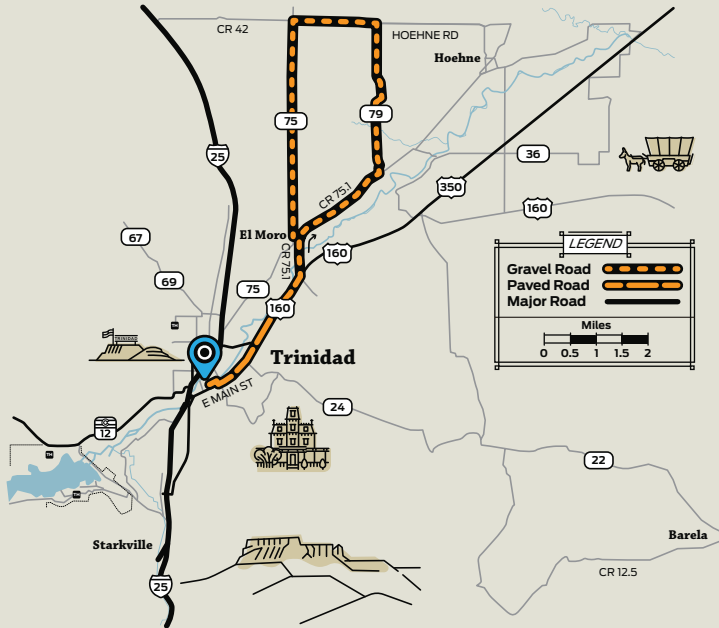
Miner's Classic..... pg. 36

Revenge of the Black Hand pg. 38

Over 100 Miles

Vuelta Huajatolla..... pg. 40

Arroyos & Ditches



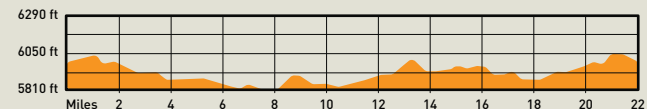
As farmers moved north from New Mexico and implemented traditional irrigation systems, they began to construct a series of ditches. Pedaling along this route, you'll see how this method of water distribution is still crucial to the agriculture and cattle operations in the Sunflower Valley. A mix of abandoned and working ranches lend a sense of heritage to this ride. Arroyos carved by water and time, seen along the way, add visual texture to a short sub 25-mile route that starts and ends in town.

Distance: 22 Miles

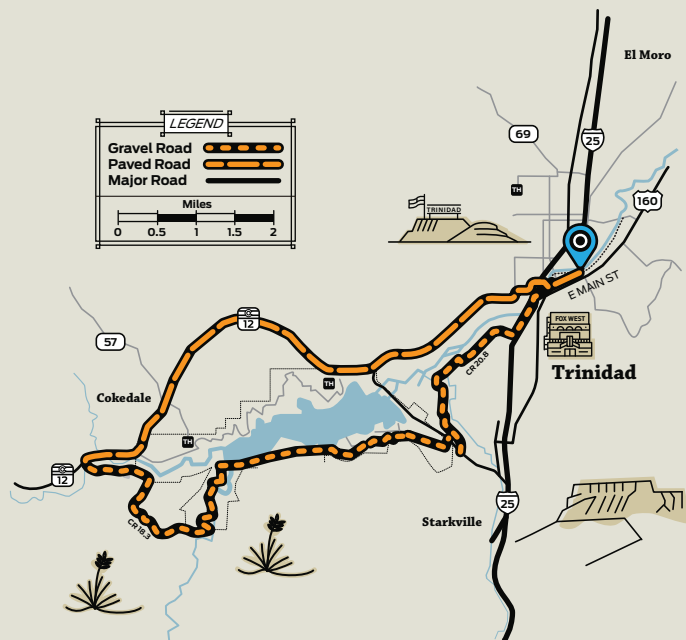
Elevation: +636 Ft

Max Grade: 3.1%

Approx: 70/30 Unpaved/Paved
ridespot.org/rides/255075



Trinidad Lake Loop



The Trinidad Lake Loop is a great short loop that takes you west out of town. Utilizing the wide shoulder on Highway 12, the ride finishes strong on a fun stretch of dirt and double-track road starting at Longs Canyon. There's a good chance you'll even see wildlife, including elk, turkey, bears, and mountain lions. While riding along the south shore of the lake, imagine what life was like in Sopris, a former mining community that is submerged beneath the lake today.

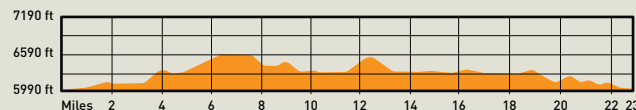
Distance: 23 Miles

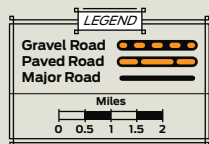
Elevation: +1,500 Ft

Max Grade: 10.3%

Approx: 50/50 Unpaved/Paved

ridespot.org/rides/255072





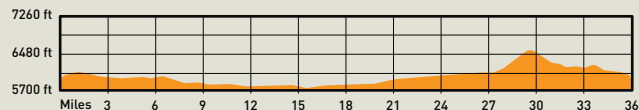
On the dirt roads northeast of Trinidad lies a small rural airport with a cool story. It started in 1936 as a WPA project, and then served as a WWII training field, weather observation post, and commercial airport. In 1944, aviator Perry Stokes arrived and began to coordinate the first DC-3 commercial flights between Denver and Albuquerque from 1949 to 1957. A terminal was built in 1951. Looping the airport provides fantastic handlebar sweeping views of the Spanish Peaks, Fishers Peak and Mesa, and a glimpse into Trinidad/Las Animas County's aviation history.

Distance: 36 Miles

Elevation: +1,200 Ft

Max Grade: 9.1%

Approx: 70/30 Unpaved/Paved

ridespot.org/rides/255071

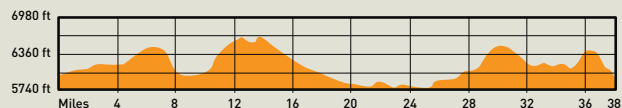
Corrido is Spanish for “to run”. Corrido also doubles as a storytelling ballad, and this one is named for Casimiro Barela. He served both in the Colorado Territory and State legislature, and after 40 years became known as the “Father of the Senate”. Senator Barela advocated for bilingual education and preservation of Hispanic culture in southern Colorado. This route follows the contours of Fishers Peak Mesa and passes a number of cattle ranches and the village that bears the Barela name.

Distance: 38 Miles

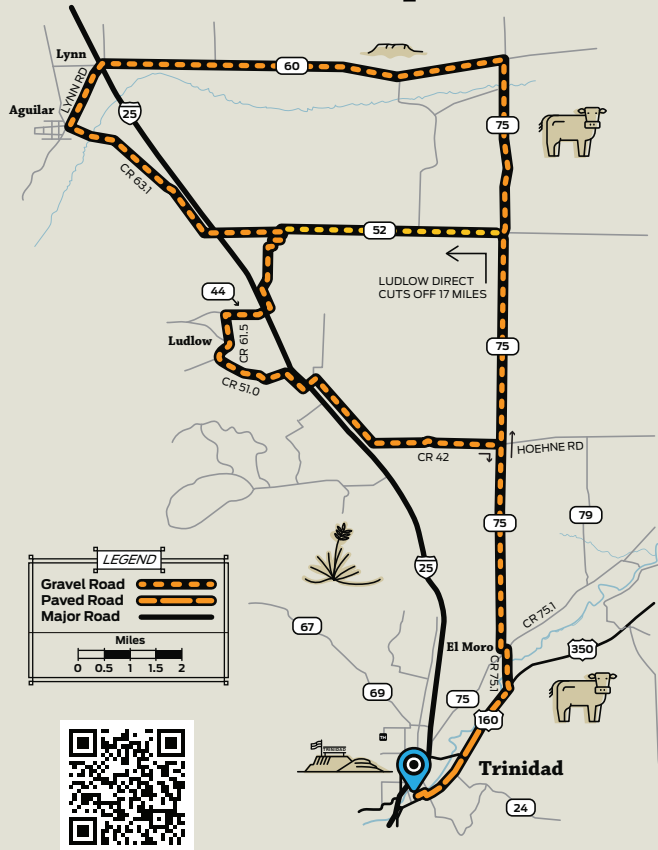
Elevation: +3,100 Ft

Max Grade: 8.7%

Approx: 90/10 Unpaved/Paved

ridespot.org/rides/255061

Al's Escape



Al Capone is a notable 20th century personality who cast his shadow onto the history of Trinidad and Aguilar. Each community had considerable Italian immigrant populations. Mr. Capone soon realized it was a great place for either himself, or those that worked for him, to retreat to when things were too chaotic for them in Chicago. County Road 75.0 represents the escape into the remote sparseness of southeast Colorado, a place where even mafia gangsters could hide out.

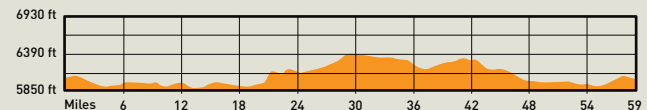
Distance: 59 Miles

Elevation: +1,600 Ft

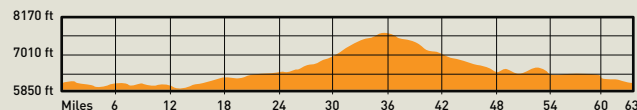
Max Grade: 2.5%

Approx: 80/20 Unpaved/Paved

ridespot.org/rides/255053



Distance: 63 Miles
Elevation: +3,700 Ft
Max Grade: 6.6%
Approx: 90/10 Unpaved/Paved
ridespot.org/rides/255049



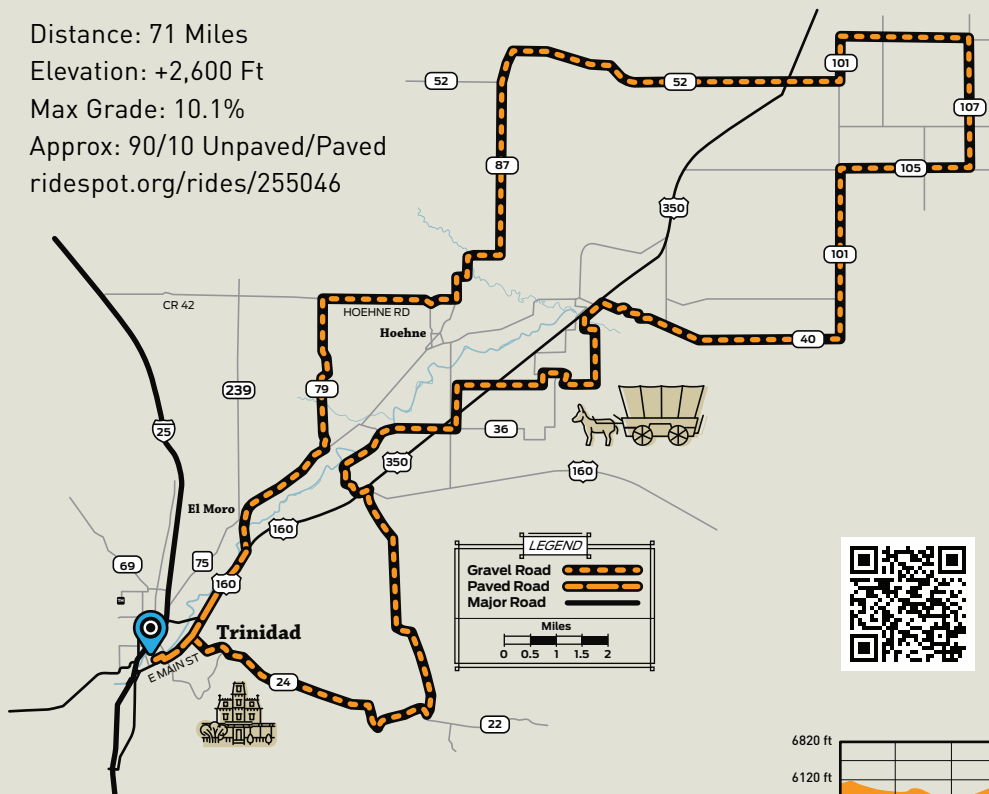
Sunflower Valley Tour

Distance: 71 Miles

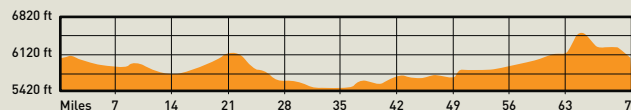
Elevation: +2,600 Ft

Max Grade: 10.1%

Approx: 90/10 Unpaved/Paved
ridespot.org/rides/255046



Generations of farmers have called the Sunflower Valley home. Historically it was the area that extended from Jansen, west of Trinidad, all the way past Hoehne to the east. These fertile lands along the Purgatoire River first drew Native Americans to the area, and later supplied fruits and vegetables to the population of miners and their families. Riding this route brings to life what the overland Santa Fe Trail experience would have been like in the 19th century. You will even see wagon trail marks from the remnants of an era that saw the region host the nation's first commercial highway.

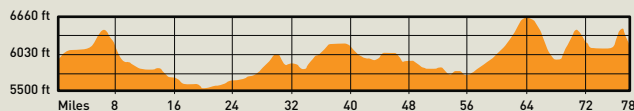


Pancho & Lefty's Loop

This route is a mashup of pop culture and local history. Townes Van Zandt who penned the song passed through Trinidad on his road trips between Colorado and Texas, and like the tale of *Pancho and Lefty* this route skirts the former borderlands between Mexico and the United States. It's a ride that reminds cyclists of the diversity of people who have called Trinidad/Las Animas County home. A portion of the ride crosses San Francisco Creek; in Spanish, Pancho is the nickname for Francisco.



Distance: 78 Miles
Elevation: + 4,600 Ft
Max Grade: 8.7%
Approx: 90/10 Unpaved/Paved
ridespot.org/rides/255039



Miner's Classic

This route gets its name because of the number of former mines found along the ride. Coal from the mines in Trinidad-Las Animas County was highly prized for its quality in creating coking fuel for Colorado's smelters further north in Pueblo. Now, ghost towns like Berwind, Chicosa, Majestic, and Tabasco all speak of a bygone era that left a strong mark on the history and landscape of the region. A route that will not disappoint cyclists looking for a ride through old west history, one can't help but ponder what life would have been like in a Colorado Fuel & Iron company town.

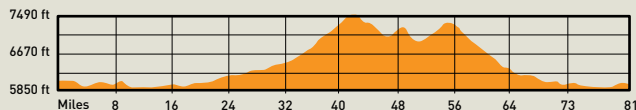
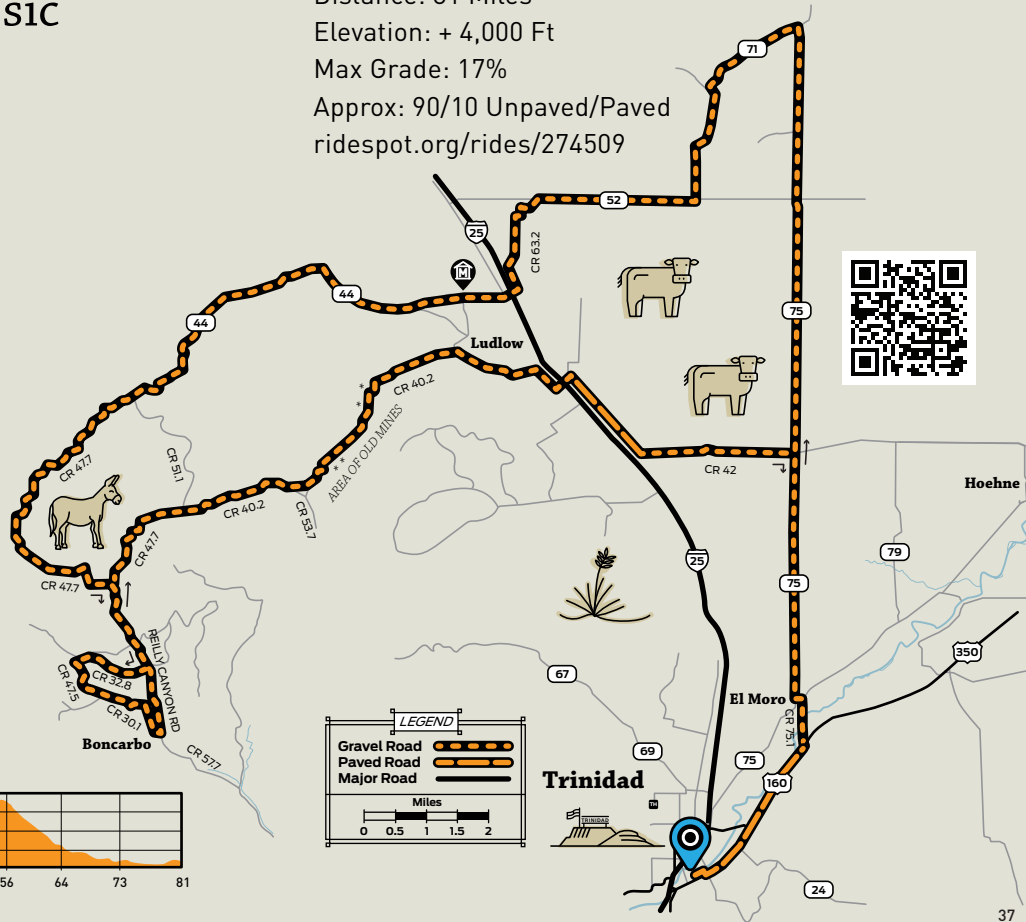
Distance: 81 Miles

Elevation: + 4,000 Ft

Max Grade: 17%

Approx: 90/10 Unpaved/Paved

ridespot.org/rides/274509



Revenge of the Black Hand

This ride is a chance to experience the dirt roads utilized by the Black Hand (Cosa Nostra) in its quest to expand Italian mafia operations along the southern Colorado Front Range. Mob activity did not start in Denver, but in the corridor between Trinidad and Pueblo. Illegal bootlegging, extortion, and contract killing activity caught the attention of the FBI, who began investigating the Black Hand in the 1920s. Traveling these quiet and remote roads around Aguilar and back to Trinidad is an experience into a world where contraband destined for other places like New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles moved freely about Trinidad-Las Animas County.

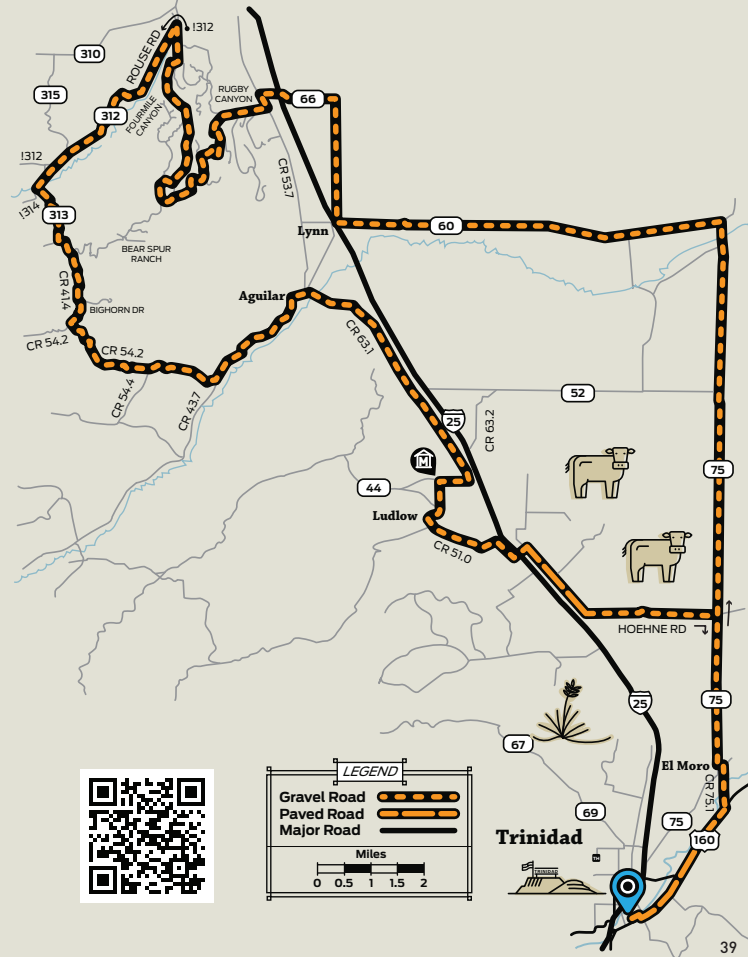
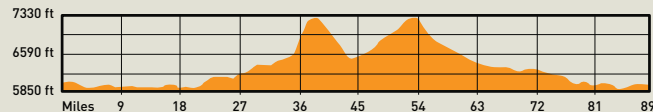
Distance: 89 Miles

Elevation: +4,300 Ft

Max Grade: 19.7%

Approx: 90/10 Unpaved/Paved

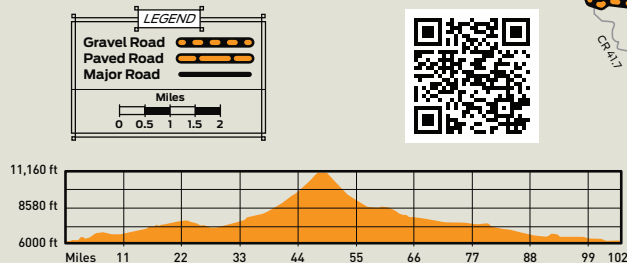
ridespot.org/rides/255024



Vuelta Huajatolla

The Spanish Peaks are two prominent mountains on the Trinidad/Las Animas County skyline. They were originally referred to as Huajatolla by the Comanche. It means double mountain. The route also doubles-back over the western portion of the county. This route is for those looking for a day's worth of climbing on shaded pine forest-lined roads, while soaking up the stunning views of the peaks. A highlight is topping out Cordova Pass (11,238 ft) and then descending the rolling hills that skirt the southside of the Spanish Peaks Wilderness Area all the way back to Trinidad (6,022 ft).

Distance: 102 Miles
 Elevation: +9,400 Ft
 Max Grade: 10.7%
 Approx: 90/10 Unpaved/Paved
ridespot.org/rides/255013



Rules of the Road

Wear a helmet when you ride.

You will be riding on roads near and on open ranchland. Keep an eye open for a truck or some cows. If a cow is in the road, slow down, take a photo.

In low-light or dark conditions ride with front and rear bike lights.

Do not expect cars to stop for you.

Wave and be friendly to people you encounter on your ride.

Ride with the flow of traffic and stay single file on sections of paved roads.

Ride in control at all times. Proceed at a safe speed that permits you to react to unexpected circumstances.

Do not ride on the sidewalks.

Tips to be Safe

Your bike should be in top working order before you begin your ride.

Free your mind, let your legs follow. Do all your thinking before you start your gravel ride. Once your cranks start to turn, go with the flow.

Be able to fix a flat and broken chain on the roadside... if not, ride with a friend who can do it for you.

Remember sunscreen, bike gloves, multi-tool, and eye protection.

Pack appropriate clothing for your gravel ride. Reference Climate, pg. 4 Fair-weather riding is a luxury. Those who ride in foul weather are badass.

Responsibility

You will be riding in remote areas with little to no contact with other humans. You need to be self sufficient on your ride. Proper food and hydration to complete your ride in a fun and safe way is your responsibility. Please carry at least one liter of water and a 200+ calorie snack per each 20 miles of your gravel ride.

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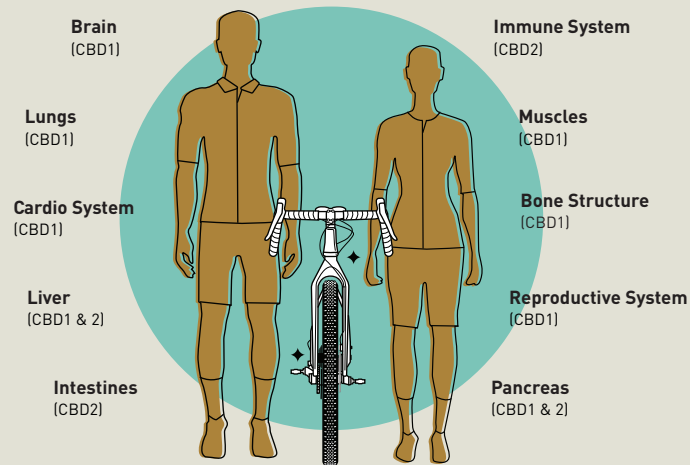
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- Help Alcohol and Nicotine Addiction



The Santa Fe Trail Celebrates 200 Years - 1821 to 2021

Traveling Western Routes

The origin of the Trinidad/Las Animas County road network began with the founding of the Santa Fe Trail in 1821. The route between Independence, Missouri, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, was the first trail to open up the west, eventually bringing travelers via stagecoach, railroad, automobile, and now bicycle. Industries such as cattle ranching, coal mining, and oil and gas all arrived. Each brought roads that served infrastructure and community needs. This is why today we boast over 1,600 miles of county roads, with the vast majority unpaved.

Above: Ranch life is a big part of this area. Several generations have owned and worked family land. When traveling on the county roads, you can set your imagination free to imagine life back in the 1820's. Off in the distance Fishers Peak helps wayfinding.

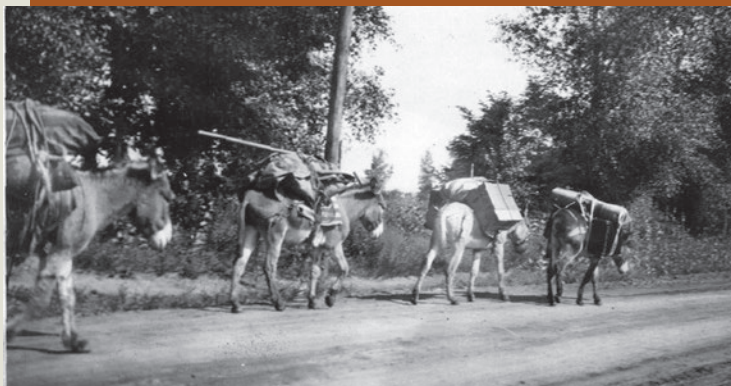
Photos: Stephen Beneski



Deep wagon tracks from the Santa Fe Trail leave a permanent mark from the 1820's when thousands of pioneers moved west.



The Santa Fe Trail was the nation's first commercial highway. The Sunflower Valley Tour route rolls right through SFT history.



Burros on Parade
Photo: A.R. Mitchell Museum

According to scholars, unlike the Oregon Trail, the Santa Fe Trail didn't carry as many immigrants. The trail was hazardous because of drought, heat, flash floods, high winds, blizzards, extreme cold, and Native American resistance. Tribes encountered in the Trinidad area included the Comanche, Apache, and the Utes. This all contributes to cyclists having years worth of stories to discover while pedaling the roads of Trinidad-Las Animas County.

Stagecoach Lines

On March 3, 1847, the 29th Congress authorized the transport of mail on the mountain branch of the Santa Fe Trail. The first stagecoaches via Bent's Old Fort ran through the site of Trinidad shortly thereafter. Communication between the U.S. and Mexico at Santa Fe was very limited and slow (2-3 months). Early stagecoaches had a capacity of 13 passengers. Depending on road conditions a stage would likely be pulled by 2 to 6 horses.



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Stage drivers changed horses, or mules, about ten or twelve times in 24 hours, and normally traveled 8 to 10 miles an hour. Today, riding the dirt roads of Trinidad-Las Animas County is the closest experience to what early travelers saw on the Santa Fe Trail.

Cattle Drives

The first cattle were driven from Texas into Colorado in 1859. The really large herds arrived after the Civil War. One of the best known cattle trails was the Goodnight-Loving Trail, established in 1864 when Oliver Loving drove to Las Vegas, New Mexico Territory, and crossed at Raton Pass, then to Trinidad, crossed the Arkansas River near Pueblo, and near Denver sold the cattle to John W. Iliff. Cattle drives led to farms and ranches springing up after the Homestead Act of 1866. The roads made to reach them now offer cyclists a chance to follow trails forged by cowboys who roamed the Trinidad-Las Animas County outback.

Coal Mining

Coal mining in southern Colorado started around 1864. The earliest mines were at Starkville and Engleville near Trinidad. Between 1887 and 1893 new mines were opened at Sopris, Berwind, Hastings, Forbes Canyon, Peerless, and Brodhead. Deposits along the Purgatoire River were made accessible by the railroad, and mines then opened at Primero, Tercio, and other sites. All coal mines are now closed. The last was the Golden Eagle mine, located 28 miles west of Trinidad, which closed on April 19, 1996. It was owned and operated by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation (C.F. & I.). Today, many of these mining roads offer cyclists miles of dirt to explore.

GG



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A.R. Mitchell Museum of Western Art

Famed Trinidad western artist Arthur Roy Mitchell was a man ahead of his time. After moving to New York City to study at the *Grand Central School of Art*, Mitchell established himself as a commercial artist and painter. Cowboys were his main subject, but he also painted scenes of rural life and western landscape. Once Mitchell returned to Trinidad, he took on the role of historian and preservationist by establishing the Trinidad Historic District. His admiration for fine art, adventure, and western culture endures. His sister, Ethel "Tot" Erickson, laid the groundwork for opening the museum in his honor. Today it is home to over 350 paintings and illustrations by Mitchell and his contemporaries, and also a collection of early Hispanic traditional and religious art, along with Native American pottery, blankets, rugs, clothing and artifacts he collected. 2021 marks the 40th Anniversary of the museum.



Mitchell: 1975 at the age of 86



Visit, and you'll never look at the surrounding landscape the same when pedaling the gravel of Trinidad-Las Animas County.

Photos Courtesy: A.R. Mitchell Museum

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Healthy River Cycles

Over the last decade the *Purgatoire Watershed Partnership*, in collaboration with *Trout Unlimited*, has worked to improve the water quality and land management issues in the Purgatoire River watershed, which has headwaters starting in the Sangre de Cristo Culebra range of western Las Animas County and flows 196 miles east to the confluence with the Arkansas River.

Together they are actively engaging local youth through water education, increasing recreational opportunities, and enhancing river health and wildlife habitat along the river as it winds through downtown Trinidad. An example of this work includes creating access to fishing along the Purgatoire River Walk trail. It's a great opportunity for those seeking bike fishing experiences. If you're interested in learning



Traveling with minimal fishing gear to the river on either a bike tour or ride, bikefishing is a great way to add to the cycling experience.
Photo: Swift Industries



No bad days bikefishing. You spend time on the river and saddle in the same day.
Photo: Swift Industries

more or getting involved, please join *Purgatoire Watershed Partnership* and *Trout Unlimited* volunteers for a Bags & Brews river cleanup on the first Saturday of every month.

purgatoirepartners.org & tu.org



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TRINIDAD / LAS ANIMAS COUNTY
GRAVEL ADVENTURE FIELD GUIDE

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GRAVEL ADVENTURE FIELD GUIDE

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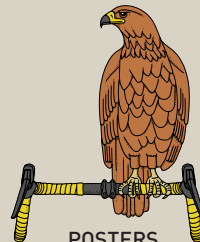


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Registration and Route Information at:
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Saturday June 5, 2021

- Noche Sucia -

Saturday August 22, 2021

- Mitch's Roundup -

Saturday September 4, 2021

Registration and Route Information at:
[FarQuarterGravel.com](#)

GRAVEL ADVENTURE FIELD GUIDE

Trinidad / Las Animas County

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Tobie DePauw

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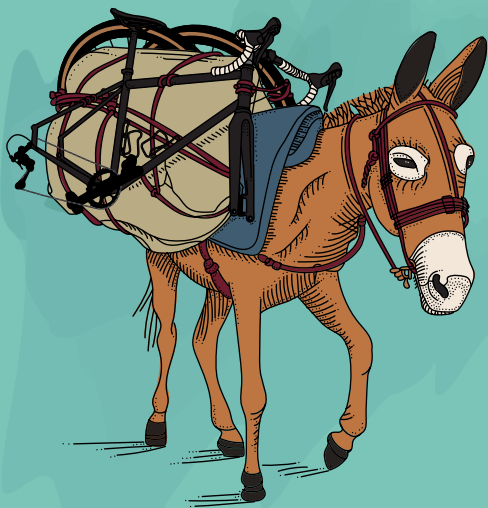
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Warning: Riding a bike in a remote area can be dangerous.

This book serves as an overview guide to explore Trinidad/Las Animas County. Be prepared to enter remote areas with little to NO cell service! Be familiar with GPS. Always ride within your own limits. We are not responsible if you crash, flat, or get lost. Be safe. Be prepared. Ride with a friend. Ride at you own risk.



GRAVEL ADVENTURE FIELD GUIDE
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