

On the Subject of Trails

Historic Trails provide powerful and provocative stories that cannot be captured by articles, books, or broadcast documentaries. Along with historic places, they are symbols and evidence of our shared heritage. They educate us about the people and events, places and landscapes of the American past ~ and about the aspirations and actions that produced those tangible survivors.

Trails have been around as long as there were critters to make them. Trail blazing in the wilderness occurs in many different ways: Migrating herds were probably the first. Then came humans of whatever continent on foot, and later trailing various conveyances. In the case of Native Americans, these were travois which were pulled originally by dogs and later horses.

Next (at least in North America) came European settlers, following these same trails because the reason they existed in the first place was the accessibility to water. If the water had disappeared over the years, so did the trails.

We still have trails today, but one needs to make an effort to find them. Most, of course, are languishing under miles of pavement and blacktop, city parking lots and skyscrapers, acres of suburbia - you get the picture.



Out here in the West however, away from the scattered metropolises representing “American progress”, the dry air and lack of population have preserved sections of some of the most iconic trails in the world. Ironically many interstate highways follow along the original route of the Oregon Trail. But to see real trail ruts you must go off-roading. That’s what we do whenever possible on our Vanishing Trails Expeditions. Following these trails helps us understand who we are, where we have been, and how we as a society might approach the future.

At Shebby Lee Tours we have spent decades helping to interpret these trails for our participants. We provide recommended reading lists prior to departure and all tours are led by professional tour director/historians to lend insights to the sights.

If you too are fascinated by trails, please join us on the trail in the coming season!