

Wagons Ho!

Oregon Trail Experience opens inside Baker Heritage Museum

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

BAKER CITY — Explore local history and learn about the Oregon Trail at a new exhibit opening at the Baker Heritage Museum, 2480 Grove St.

The Oregon Trail Experience is a project by the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The center, 5 miles east of Baker City, is closed for several years for renovations to make it more energy efficient. (The trails below the center remain open to visitors.)

To maintain a presence for locals and tourists, the BLM negotiated a contract with Baker County to lease space inside the Baker Heritage Museum.

"The main priority is to stay relevant in the community while we're closed," said Sarah Sherman, project manager for NHOTIC.

A "soft opening" of the Oregon Trail Experience is planned for Memorial Day weekend. The Baker Heritage Museum is open Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. Admission is \$9 adults, \$8 seniors, \$5 ages 6-12 and free for ages 5 and younger.

The grand opening of the Oregon Trail exhibit is planned for Friday, June 3, 4-6 p.m. in conjunction with First Friday.

The BLM's Bobby Reis designed the exhibit, which had to provide information within a smaller footprint. NHOTIC's exhibit space is about 16,000 square feet. The leased space is 4,499 square feet.

"It's a huge scale down," Sherman said. "It's a challenge. I think they did a great job."

The first part of the exhibit is just inside the museum's front door, in the Leo Adler Room. This will serve as an introduction to Oregon Trail history — when it happened, who came west, why they made this decision and the obstacles along the way (rivers, accidents, violence and disease).

Panels also outline early efforts to preserve the Oregon Trail, the BLM's role in this pres-



Lisa Britton/Go! Magazine

The National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center has packed the wagons and moved west into Baker City to set up an exhibit at the Baker Heritage Museum. The Interpretive Center is closed for renovations.

ervation and the creation of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.

The exhibit continues upstairs, in the museum's ballroom,

with a full-size wagon and information about what the pioneers packed for their journey west.

Although NHOTIC's lease began at the start of 2022,

construction of the new exhibit has been affected by shipping delays of materials.

"Just like everyone else," Sherman said.

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