

# NEWS RELEASE u.s. department of the interior National Park Service

For Immediate Release

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## “Cultural Encounters” Special Event at Fort Union

Fort Union National Monument, a unit of the National Park Service, announces its annual “Cultural Encounters” weekend, July 18 and 19 from 9am to 4pm. "An annual tradition at the Monument, this event will be extra special this year as park entrance fees will be waived during the entire weekend," states Superintendent Marie Sauter. “This is a great opportunity to plan a 'staycation' locally and enjoy our new offerings on fort history, and topics of local, regional and national interest." The two-day event will include a nature walk across the prairie, historical presentations, living history cannon and small arms demonstrations, and activities by living history groups from the New Mexico and Colorado Volunteers, and the Artillery Company of New Mexico. Feature presentations for the weekend event will include talks by Judy Martin, Dr. Irene Blea, and Dr. Bob Mallin. Judy A. Martin is employed with the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department, Traditional Culture Program. Ms. Martin will discuss the Navajo perspective of the Long Walk and how the Navajo people lived before their expulsion. Dr. Irene Blea, a native New Mexican with a Ph.D. in Sociology, will review how the Santa Fe Trail helped shape cultural diversity in New Mexico . Dr. Bob Mallin will talk about Civil War Medicine and Surgery.

Fort Union Staff will also be hosting a 2 mile prairie hike on both days starting at nine o'clock in the morning. Park guides will take visitors into the prairie and along the Santa Fe Trail . The hike focuses on the natural environment of Fort Union and what travelers faced when navigating the Santa Fe Trail . It is recommended that visitors wear sturdy walking shoes, bring hat, snacks and water.

As part of the weekend activities, visitors will have an opportunity to take self-guided tours of Fort Union . Food and beverage services will be available both days. To assist in our tough economic times, the National Park Service is also waiving entrance fees for this weekend. In addition to free entrance, all bookstore sales items will be reduced 20% off throughout the weekend.

Fort Union (1851-1891) was the largest frontier military post and supply center of the southwest. The National Park Service preserves and protects the Fort Union adobe ruins and the ruts of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail. To visit the monument, take Exit 366 off I-25 at Watrous, NM, onto State Hwy. 161, 8 miles. Entrance fees will be waived on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of July. Park hours are 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. For more information, you may contact Fort Union National Monument at (505) 425-8025 or visit the park website at [www.nps.gov/foun](http://www.nps.gov/foun).