Westport Landing  Kansas City, Missouri

There are many places along the Santa Fe National Historic Trail (SFNHT) to enjoy a hike, ride a bicycle or a horse, have a picnic, or just enjoy the view. Because the terrain, climate, and vegetation along the SFNHT are so varied, it is hard to pick “one favorite hike”. So I’m going to highlight just a few of the possibilities.

One area that provides the opportunity to experience multiple National Historic Trails is Westport Landing, Kansas City, Missouri. Nine wayside exhibits were installed at Westport Landing, also known as Town of Kansas, during a dedication ceremony held in September 2012. A panoramic view of the Missouri River from an overlook makes it easy to imagine the historic scene that would have taken place here during Trail days. Via steps, or an elevator, you can descend to the improved trail and continue to
enjoy the interpretation, as well as hiking and/or biking. Included is interpretation of Lewis and Clark who used the waters of the Missouri as they journeyed on their epic adventure. This is a fairly easy hike, and allows the visitor to leave the activity of the city behind and enjoy the riverside.
A few miles away from Westport is another opportunity for hiking on both a short, easy hike with new interpretive waysides, or a more traditional hike through the wooded pathways on the Blue River Parkway Trail. Located in south Kansas City, Missouri, the trail is used by not only hikers, but also Mountain bikers, horses, trail runners and nature lovers. An added feature to this area is the newly constructed “Red Bridge” with several interpretive wayside exhibits that can be enjoyed on a very easy hike along both sides of the bridge. Along the way, you will be able to view the old “Red Bridge”, as well as beautiful swales left behind by the many wagons heading to Santa Fe, Oregon and California.
A Few Places to Hike the Santa Fe Trail

Exhibits/hiking area on new Red Bridge

Hiking the Swales in Minor Park
A visit to the Cimarron National Grassland, near Elkhart, KS will provide you with an expansive vista of the plains, as well as an opportunity to experience the Trail far away from populated areas. There are 23 miles of Santa Fe Trail on the Grassland which is the largest section on public land. A companion trail, 19 miles in length is available for a variety of non-motorized travel (horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking) and limestone posts mark the original trail route. Well-preserved ruts are visible along many segments of the Trail.
Point of Rocks

Sierra Vista to Timpas, southwest of La Junta, Colorado

Southwest of La Junta, CO, SFNHT travelers note the changing horizon from plains to mountains. Historically, it was a major milestone on their journey. One of their guiding landmarks was the distant Spanish Peaks, which came into view along this section of the trail.
A short walk up the side of a bluff will give you a commanding view of the Rocky Mountains and surrounding prairie. Hikers and horseback riders can follow a 3-mile section of the SFNHT from Sierra Vista to Timpas Picnic Area.
Fort Marcy, Santa Fe, NM

For those visiting Santa Fe, a short hike will provide not only an opportunity for some exercise, but will provide an outstanding view of Santa Fe and the area. Heading north from the Plaza, one can follow the steps and trail to the Fort Marcy park. Several new interpretive wayside exhibits have been installed to let the visitor know more about Fort Marcy, why the location was chosen and the historical significance of the site to the nearby city of Santa Fe. A nice hike with a beautiful view – a must for everyone who visits Santa Fe.