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As Tucson continues its 250th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Presidio, we're highlighting voices that bring the city's full history to life. This month, we chatted with Mauro Trejo, founder of Trejo's Tucson Walking Tours, who shares how his tours delve deeper into Tucson's layered past. Plus, discover what's happening around town at the link below.

[What's New in Tucson](#)



Meet Historian Mauro Trejo

In August, Tucson marked a major milestone: the 250th anniversary of the Presidio San Agustín del Tucsón. Founded in 1775, the Spanish military fort signaled the

beginning of Spanish settlement in the region. It served as both a defensive stronghold and a tool of colonial control. Today, it stands not as a garrison, but as a museum, where visitors can walk within the location of the original walls and experience the roots of Tucson's modern-day story.

But for Mauro Trejo, founder of Trejo's Tucson Walking Tours, the presidio is only one chapter in a far more complex narrative. For the past decade, Trejo has walked Tucson's streets with a mission: to reshape how people understand the city's past.

"I just heard the kind of story that was being told about the city, which wasn't a very... inclusive version of history," he said.

The dominant narrative, he said, tended to focus on European settlers while sidelining the contributions of the many other communities that shaped Tucson's culture and infrastructure.

"I hardly ever heard anything... about the Mexican American community, the Chinese American community, the African American community – that also made this city," Trejo said.

Determined to shift the lens, he launched his own tours: not to correct history, but to widen it.

"There's so much more depth, and there's so much more nuance to our history," he said. "It's beautiful, and it can be ugly, too – but the real story is way better than anything you can make up."

Among the many overlooked groups Trejo brings to light is one often vilified or erased altogether: the Apache.

"You don't hear much about the Apache in Tucson," he said. "They don't have a reservation or a casino here, so they get left out... They've been here longer than the Spaniards – and yet they're still erased."

Though the Hohokam and, later, the Tohono O'odham are recognized as the earliest known inhabitants of the Tucson area – and were eventually joined by the Sonoran-rooted Pascua Yaqui – the Apache also played a vital, if often overlooked, role in shaping the region's history. Their contributions extended well beyond warfare, influencing everything from agriculture and architecture to the survival strategies that defined frontier life. In fact, Trejo points to the fact that from the 1790s to the 1840s, the Apache helped defend the presidio and settlement itself.

"They dominated this area for 250 years," he said. "And once you see it, you can't unsee it."



Trejo's passion for Tucson's story is rooted in his own. His family has lived in the region since the 1780s, when his ancestors, members of the Spanish military, began settling in the area. More of his ancestors arrived in the 1860s, amid political upheaval in northern Mexico.

Some of Trejo's earliest memories are of driving around town with his grandfather, who worked most of his life on southern Arizona ranches owned by the Ronstadt family.

"I spent a lot of time with my grandfather," Trejo said. "When I was a kid... I would work with him pulling weeds, and he'd point out where everything used to be and what Tucson was like. I grew up hearing stories from him, and that sparked my interest in history from a very young age."

That early curiosity led him to volunteer as a docent at the Tucson Presidio Museum nearly 15 years ago. His early work at the Presidio Museum laid the foundation for what would become a much larger endeavor. What began as volunteer tours soon evolved into a full-fledged company, driven by a growing demand for history that reflects the city's true diversity.

Since then, his work has continued well beyond the sidewalks.

Trejo now serves on several local boards, including the Tucson Presidio Trust, which oversees both the Presidio Museum and the Fort Lowell Museum, a U.S. Army post that operated from 1873 to 1891. He's also a board member of the Anza Trail Foundation, which supports the preservation and public education of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, following the route Spanish explorers took to establish early settlements in California. Additionally, Trejo serves as a commissioner on the Tucson Pima County Historical Commission and is a Member-at-Large of the board of Los Descendientes de Tucson, the group that runs the Mexican-American Heritage and History Museum located in the historic Sosa-Carrillo House. The adobe home, one of the oldest 19th-century residences still standing downtown, offers a personal glimpse into Tucson's Mexican American roots.



As new records, discoveries, and perspectives emerge, Trejo is among the first to learn about them, which keeps him open to evolving his understanding.

“It’s almost like an epiphany,” he said. “You think you’re the expert, then you realize, ‘I really don’t know anything.’ We’re all on this journey of learning.”

Trejo’s Tucson Walking Tours now offers four distinct experiences. The Downtown History Tour introduces visitors to Tucson’s foundational landmarks, while the Barrio Viejo Tour explores one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods, which is currently seeking landmark designation on the National Register of Historic Places. The Santa Cruz River and Mission Garden Tour connects people to Tucson’s agricultural past, and the Death After Dark tour takes a darker turn, telling stories of infamous crimes and deaths that shaped the city’s folklore.

For those looking to go even deeper, Trejo offers customizable tours tailored to specific interests or neighborhoods. And this fall, in conjunction with the Tucson Presidio

Trust, he'll guide a brand-new tour focused on Fort Lowell.

Though he's walked Tucson's streets countless times, Trejo said the work never feels repetitive. Every tour is a chance to challenge assumptions, surface hidden histories, and make space for voices too often left out.

"I realize there's something unique, something special about life here in the Borderlands," he said, "in this unique confluence of cultures... Our history, our roots, for a lot of us, they go south. They don't go east."



Trejo's Top 5:

1. Mission Garden: A living agricultural museum and a personal favorite for its solitude, Trejo sometimes acts as a docent here.

2. Mi Nidito Restaurant: Famous in-part for its visit from former President Bill Clinton, Mi Nidito serves up some of the most authentic Sonoran-style Mexican food in Tucson.

3. Sweetwater Wetlands Park: A hidden gem for birdwatching and desert serenity. Trejo loves it for its quiet beauty and connection to Tucson's natural landscape.

4. Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum: Part zoo, botanical garden, natural history museum, aquarium and art gallery, this spot is Trejo's go-to recommendation for anyone wanting to understand the richness of life in the Sonoran Desert.

5. El Minuto Café: Tucked into the heart of Barrio Viejo, this longtime family-owned local favorite reminds Trejo of his grandmother's cooking.



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