



Lewis and Clark in Nez Perce Country

The *Nimiipuu* or Nez Perce people have always lived here. When the Lewis and Clark Expedition ventured into this country in the fall of 1805 they encountered a society tied closely to the land. A land of plenty, a sacred land of rivers, canyons, prairies, mountains. Home.

Imagine the questions that must have been asked as these strangers walked out onto the camas fields of the Weippe Prairie: Who are they? What do they want? Should we fight? Should we help? Why? Why not?

A respected Nez Perce elder, *Wetxuuwiis* (Wet-



k'hoo-wees), responded to these questions. Captured by the Blackfeet as a young girl, she went east and became acquainted with white fur traders that treated her with kindness. Her memories compelled her to speak, urging that the band do no harm to these strangers.

The Nez Perce ultimately provided assistance to the Expedition in the form of food, horses, directions, and guides in the fall of 1805 and again in the spring of 1806. A formal relationship was established between nations.

Explore these places. Learn their stories. Treat them with care. They are Home.

Spalding Visitor Center Spalding, Idaho

In the fall of 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition began the final leg of their journey to the Pacific. They put in their canoes into the Clearwater River and floated down to the confluence with the Snake. They passed the location of the visitor center and noted an empty Nez Perce lodge at the mouth of Lapwai Creek.

The visitor center at Spalding has information on the Lewis and Clark Trail and a museum exhibit that features artifacts

and displays that relate to Nez Perce history and culture.

The Visitor Center is open daily from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm; Memorial Day to Labor Day, until 5:30 pm and is ten miles east of Lewiston, Idaho on U.S. Highway 95. For more information, visit the park's web site at www.nps.gov/nepe or call (208) 843-7001

Weippe Prairie Weippe, Idaho

Long before Lewis and Clark arrived, this prairie was a traditional gathering place for the Nez Perce. Families would come to this area to dig for camas bulbs, an important staple in the Nez Perce diet.

On September 20, 1805 William Clark, accompanied by a small party of hunters, came onto the Weippe Prairie after ten arduous days in the Bitterroot Mountains. The first Nez Perce that the party encountered were three small

boys. Following this encounter, they met with a Nez Perce headman known to the Expedition as Twisted Hair to gather information on what lay ahead.

There are two pullouts. The first is outside of the town of Weippe. The approximate location where Clark entered the prairie is off of Highway 11 approximately 3 miles southeast of the town of Weippe. Follow the signs or ask for directions at the Weippe Discovery Center.

Canoe Camp Orofino, Idaho

From September 26 until October 7, 1805 the expedition made the transition from land to water at the Canoe Camp site.

Guided by Twisted Hair, Lewis and Clark set up camp at the mouth of the north fork of the Clearwater River. With some assistance from the Nez Perce, the

Corps of Discovery built five dugout canoes for the trip down the river to the Pacific Ocean.

Canoe Camp is located 2.5 miles west of Orofino, Idaho on U.S. Highway 12 and has outdoor exhibits, restrooms, and picnic tables.

Long Camp
Kamiah, Idaho

After a winter at Fort Clatsop, the expedition was eager to return home. When Lewis and Clark returned to Nez Perce country, the Bitterroot Mountains were still cloaked in snow.

assistance in return for food and made many observations on the plants and animals of the area. After a month, the expedition broke camp in June to head east.

From May 14 to June 10, 1806, Lewis and Clark set up a camp near the present town of Kamiah and waited for the snow to melt. Expedition members were guests of the Nez Perce in the interim. The expedition provided medical

Today, the site of Long Camp is occupied by a saw mill. *It is private property and not accessible.* A pullout with a sign is located just outside of Kamiah off Highway 12.

Lolo Pass and Trail
Lolo Idaho/Montana

When the Nez Perce traveled east to western Montana, they took the route to the buffalo; today known as the Lolo Trail.

Visitors can retrace the route that Lewis and Clark took in 1805 and 1806 on U.S. Highway 12 over Lolo Pass or on Forest Road 500.

Forest Road 500 is narrow, rocky, and steep, therefore, the U.S. Forest Service recommends:

High clearance vehicles with tough tires and extra gasoline. Sedans are not recommended.

Towing trailers and driving Recreational Vehicles are not advised.

For more information, contact Clearwater National Forest at (208) 476-4541 or on the web at www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater and follow the links for Lewis and Clark.

The visitor center at Lolo Pass is open Thursday through Monday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (Pacific Time). Call (208) 942-1234 for more information. The rest area is open twenty-four hours a day.

Big Hole National Battlefield
Wisdom, Montana

On July 3, 1806 at Travelers Rest near Missoula, Montana, Lewis and Clark split the expedition into two groups.

On July 6, Clark's group camped at Trail Creek, a few miles west of the Battlefield. The next day they crossed into the Big Hole valley and continued to a campsite near present day Jackson.

A year earlier, the expedition crossed Lemhi Pass, forty-five miles to the west of the battlefield, making contact with the Shoshones.

The park is located ten miles west of Wisdom, on Montana Route 43. Call (406) 689-3155 for more information or on the web at www.nps.gov/biho.

Lewis and Clark Resources

For more information on the Lewis and Clark expedition, we recommend the following books and web sites:

Roy Appleman, *Lewis and Clark's Transcontinental Exploration, 1804-06.*

Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage.*

Gary Moulton, ed., *An American Epic of Discovery: The Lewis and Clark Journals.*

James Ronda, *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians.*