

LEWIS and CLARK Expedition



Lemhi County, Idaho

RETRACE THE LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION THROUGH LEMHI COUNTY

August 12 to September 3, 1805

Appointed by President Thomas Jefferson, Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were charged with finding a navigable water route to the Pacific Coast. Departing Wood River, Illinois in May 1804, the expedition traveled for fifteen months to reach the headwaters of the Missouri River, then crossed the Continental Divide and entered the Lemhi Valley on August 12, 1805.

The Corps of Discovery faced many perils in this region. Stricken by limited provisions with winter fast approaching, the party transported mountains of canvas, wood and iron gear. After paddling the length of the Missouri River, the treacherous current of the Salmon River and the steep, crumbly surrounding mountains proved to be formidable obstacles.

Lewis with three men led an **Advance Party** over Lemhi Pass and encountered the Lemhi Shoshoni Nation. Convincing the Shoshoni that the small party posed no threat to their well being, they agreed to accompany Lewis' party back over the pass and to assist the main party.

Clark led the **Reconnaissance Party** into the valley to explore the feasibility of navigating the Salmon River. Faced with the strong possibility of drowning should their flimsy canoes be swept into the rocks by the swift current, the party made a critical decision changing the course of the expedition and opted for a somewhat less hazardous, but equally difficult dry-land route.

Encamped in Montana, Lewis sorted supplies necessary for the **Portage Party**, then joined Clark's party. Winter now only weeks away, the **Entire Expedition** grew anxious to get to the Pacific Coast.

Imagine the hardships faced by these explorers as they trekked through the Lemhi and Salmon River Valleys, and uncover places where you can retrace Lewis and Clarks steps in areas where little has changed since they were here.

Sacajawea Memorial Camp

0.2 mile, Motorway, (within Montana)   

1 Headwaters of the Missouri River, Lewis writes in his journal August 12, "...Here I halted... and rested myself. two miles below McNeal had exultingly stood with a foot on each side of this little rivulet and thanked his god that he had lived to bestride the mighty & heretofore deemed endless Missouri."

Lemhi Pass — Continental Divide

Mile 26.0, Motorway    

2 The Advance Party were the first white men to cross Lemhi Pass (7,339'), a Shoshoni Indian hunting trail, on August 12, 1805.

First Taste of the Columbia River

Mile 27.5, Motorway  

3 Lewis records their entry into Idaho "...I now descended the mountain about 3/4 of a mile which I found much steeper than on the opposite side, to a handsome bold running Creek of cold Clear water. here I first tasted the water of the great Columbia river..."

Lewis & Clark Trail Route

Mile 27.9, Motorway 

4 Captain Lewis, leading the Advance Party of three men, passed through this area August 12. Captain Clark with 11 men, Sacajawea and her husband Charbonneau, followed on August 19, 1805.

First Idaho Campsite

Trail Access at Mile 29.5, Motorway

Hike 0.75 Miles    

5 "...we found a sufficient quantity of dry willow brush for fuel, here we encamped for the night having traveled about 20 Miles."
— Lewis, August 12, 1805

First View — Valley Floor

Trail Access at Mile 29.5, Motorway  

6 On August 13, Lewis writes in his journal, "...a deep valley appeared to our left at the base of a high range of mountains which extended from S.E. to N.W. (Lemhi Range) having their sides better clad with pine timber than we had been accustomed to see the mountains and their tops were also partially covered with snow."

Clark Campsite

Trail Access at Mile 29.5, Motorway  

7 Captain Clark, with the Reconnaissance Party, headed for the Salmon River to make canoes. He camped on Pattee Creek on August 19, 1805.



"...passed over a second hill of a verry steep assent & thro a hilley Countrey for 8 miles and Encamped on a Small Stream."
— Clark

Motorway Tour Kiosk

Mile 3.7, Motorway  

8 This site welcomes you to Sacajawea's birthplace and serves as the jump-off point for the 39-mile loop road commemorating that expedition, this is the meeting place of two vastly different cultures which were to be forever changed.

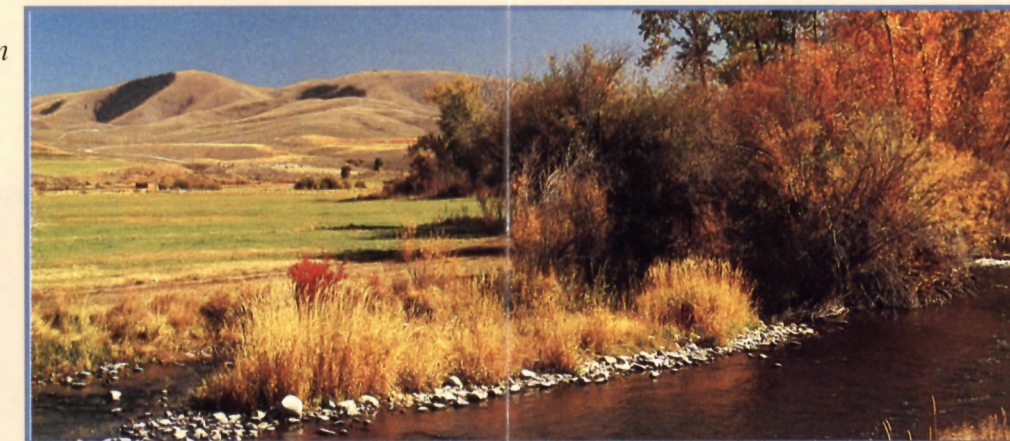
Meeting of Two Cultures

Mile 4.1- 0.2 miles on Alkali Flat Road   

9 Lewis describes the historic and dramatic meeting of the two cultures for the first time as he was approaching their encampment near Kenney Creek.

"...we had proceeded about four miles a wavy plain..."
—Lewis,
August 13, 1805

As Lewis' Advance Party traveled along the plain parallel to the river bottom he writes, "...we saw two women, a man and some dogs on an eminence immediately before us...two of them after a few minutes set down as if to wait our arrival we continued our usual pace...when we had arrived within half a mile of them I directed the party to halt and leaving my pack and rifle I took the flag which I unfurled and advanced singly toward them the women soon disappeared behind the hill, the man continued untill I arrived within a hundred yards of him and then likewise absconded." When Lewis surprised Shoshoni women later that day, he describes the encounter. "I now painted their tawny cheeks with some vermillion which with this nation is emblematic of peace." At a later meeting with about 60 warriors, he tells of the welcome, "...these men ... embraced me very affectionately ... by puting their left arm over you wright sholder clasping your back, while they apply their left cheek to yours..."



Near the Shoshoni village site on the Lemhi River.

Flag Unfurling Sign

Mile 115.8, State Highway 28, Tendoy 

10 Upon reaching Lemhi Pass, 12 miles east of here, Lewis unfurled the American flag for the first time west of the Rockies on August 13, 1805. Sparked by Lewis and Clark crossing the Continental Divide, westward expansion brought a great influx of explorers, missionaries, miners, and settlers and with them great changes for those people already here.

Upper Village I

Mile 120.5, State Highway 28, Look Northeast

11 August 13, Lewis and his advanced party arrived at this site after their dramatic meeting with the Shoshoni. Escorted by Chief Cameahwait and about 60 warriors, Lewis writes, "...on our arrival at their encampmen on the river...at the distance of 4 Ms. from where we had first met them they introduced us to a lodge made of willow brush and an old leather lodge which had been prepared for our reception by the young men..."

Please ask permission to cross private property.

Upper Village II

Mile 120.2, State Highway 28, Look North

12 August 20, Clark and the Reconnaissance Party reached this village. Sergeant Gass, an expedition member, chronicles, "We ... travelled ... to a village of the Indians on the bank ... At this place there are about 25 lodges made of willow bushes. They are the poorest and most miserable nation I ever beheld; having scarcely anything to subsist on, except berries and a few fish ... They have a great many fine horses, and nothing more; and on account of these (the horses) they are much harassed by other nations." Gass continues, "Here we procured a guide, (Old Toby) and left our interpreters to go on with the natives, and assist Captain Lewis and his party to bring on the baggage..."

Wayside Sign

Mile 120.0, State Highway 28

13 Stone monument commemorating the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Famed Interpreter

Mile 120.5, State Highway 28, North 0.5 Mile

14 Metal plaque celebrating the birthplace of Sacajawea, the Shoshoni woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark Expedition on their expedition.

Sacajawea Monument

Mile 122.5, State Highway 28

15 Sacajawea returned to her homeland in the Lemhi Valley in 1805 as a member of the Lewis and Clark party. She was reunited with her family after being abducted by an Assiniboiné war party and served as liaison between her people and the expedition.

Withington Creek Camp

MP 125.9, State Highway 28

16 Clark with an Indian guide crossed over the Lemhi River and camped at Withington Creek. Sergeant Gass recalls "... Captain Clarke ... proceeded ... about 8 miles and encamped on a fine spring. five of the Indians came and stayed with us during the night."

Fish Weir Village

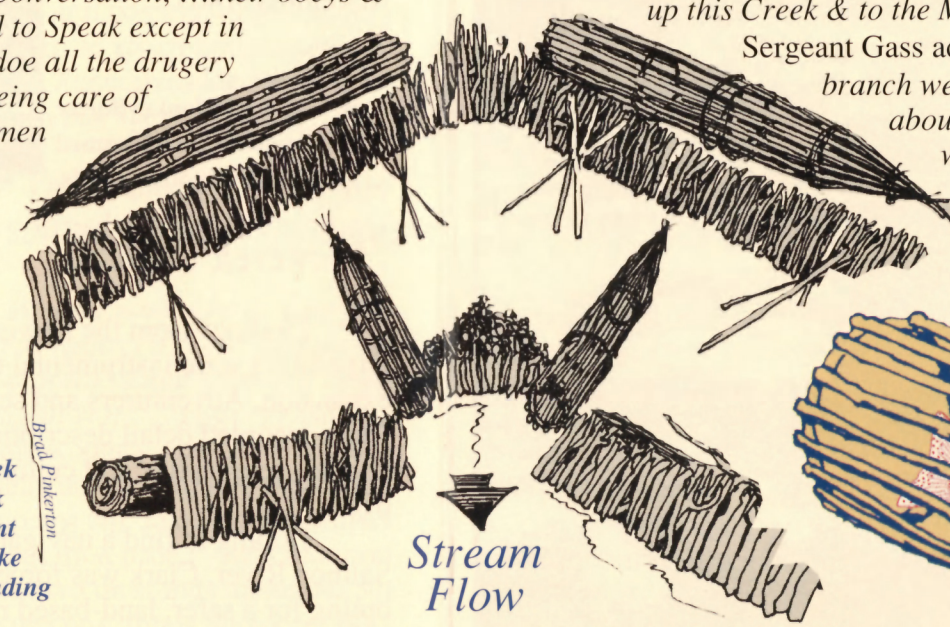
Mile 131.4, State Highway 28

17 Site of a fish weir across the Lemhi River where the Shoshoni were able to trap enough Salmon for their subsistence and provide the expedition with as much broiled and dried salmon as they could eat, as well as dried chokecherries.

Clark stopped here the 21st. and writes, "... Those Indians are mild in their disposition appear Sincere in their friendship, puntial, and decided kind with what they have, to Spare ... The women are held more Sacred ... and appear to have an equal Share in all Conversation, ... their boeys & Girls are also admited to Speak except in Councils, the women doe all the drugery except fishing and takeing care of the horses, which the men apr. to take upon themselves."

"... I went to see the place those people take the fish, a wear (weir) across the creek in which there is stuk baskets set in different derections so as to take the fish either descending or assending..."

—Clark, August 21, 1805



"... water was conducted to this basket, which was so narrow at it's lower extremity that the fish when once in could not turn itself about, and were taken out by untying the small ends of the longitudinal willows, which formed the hull of the basket."

—Lewis, August 21, 1805

Forks of Louis's River

Mile 306.0, US Highway 93

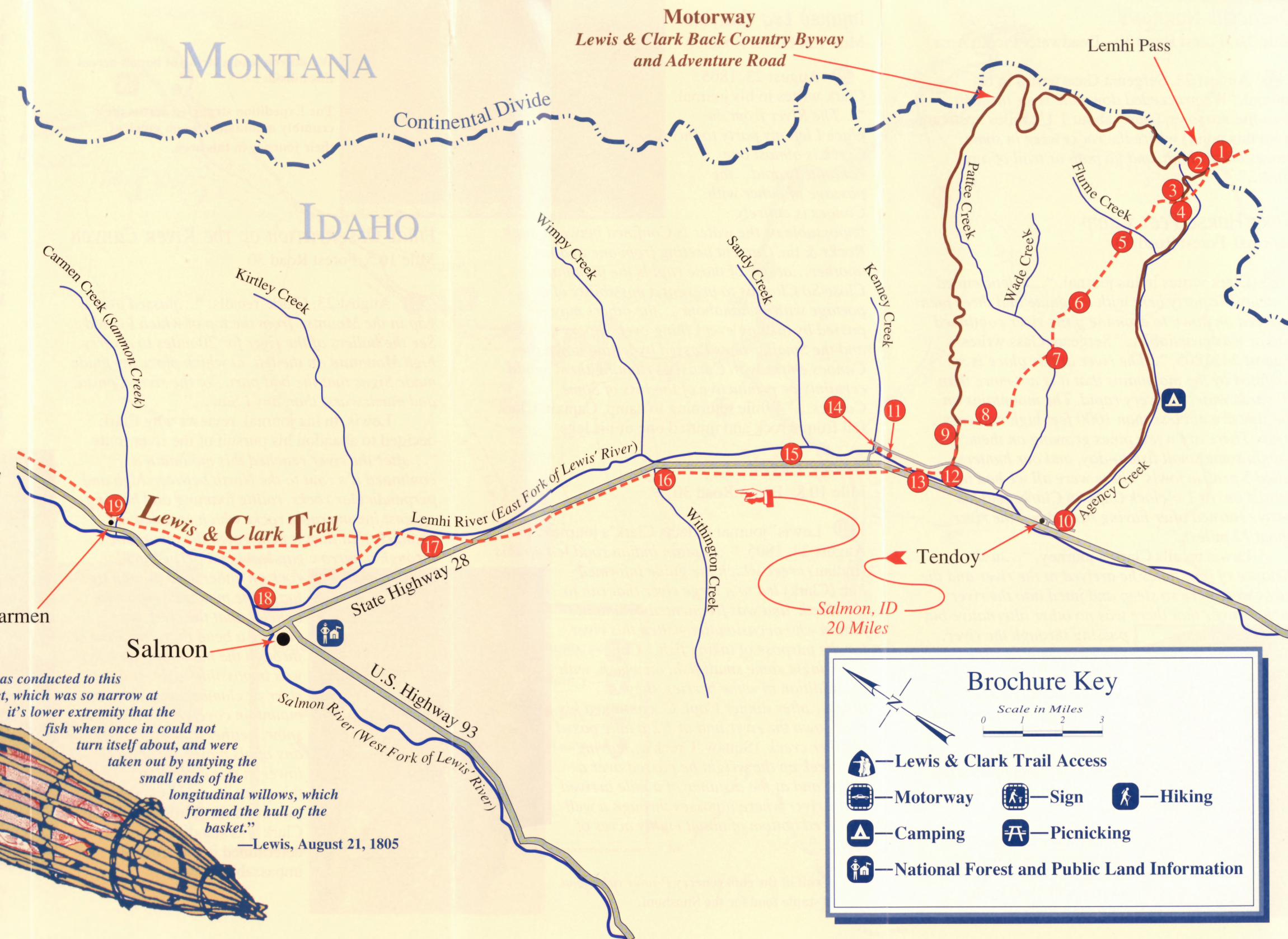
18 Later at Tower Bluffs Clark reflects, "... I shall in justice to Capt. Lewis who was the first white man ever on this fork of the Columbia Call this Louis's river." How do you spell Lewis? Clark apparently forgets. His description continues, "... The Westerley fork of the Columbia River (the Salmon River) is double the Size of the Easterley fork (Lemhi River) & below those forks the river is ... 100 yards wide, it is verry rapid & Sholey water Clear but little timber." Clark goes on, "the forks of this river is famous as a gig fishery and is much resorted to by the Natives."

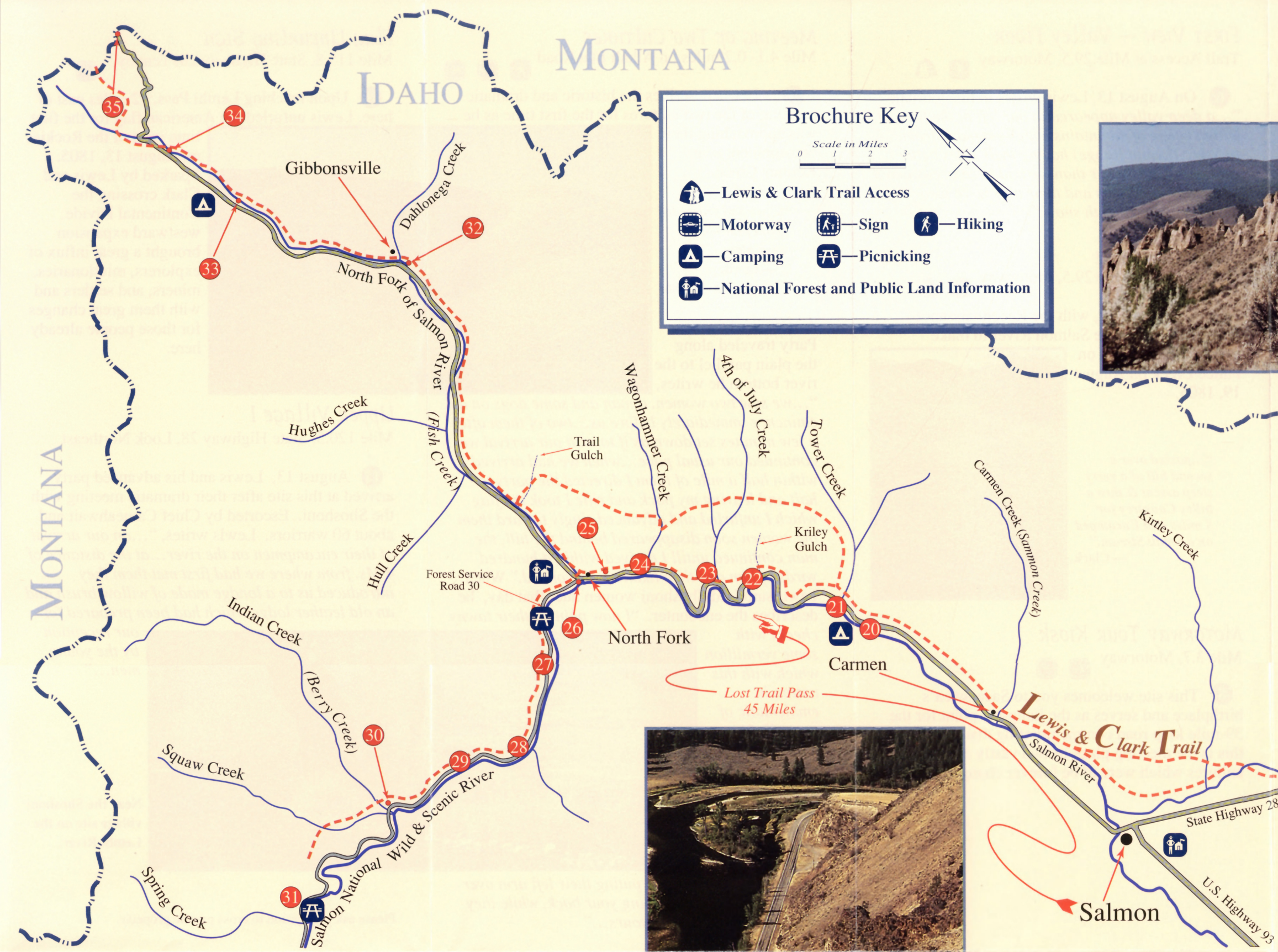
Sammon Creek

Mile 309.9, US Highway 93

19 Clark in his August 21, 1805 journal entry describes Sammon Creek (now known as Carmen Creek), "... Passed a large Creek which fall in on the right Side 6 miles below the forks a road passed up this Creek & to the Missouri."

Sergeant Gass adds, "In this branch we shot a salmon about 6 pounds weight."

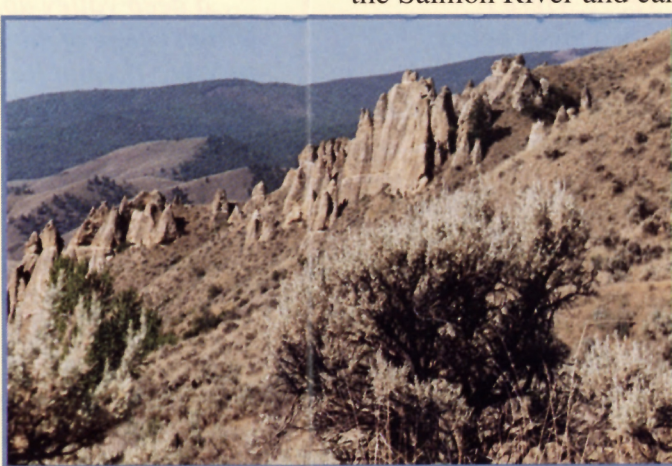




The Bluff

Mile 315.1, US Highway 93

20 On August 21, Clark and party first reached the Salmon River and camped near this spot by the bluff near the mouth of Tower Creek. "...*This Clift is of a redish brown Colour: the rocks which fall from it is a dark flint tinged with that Colour. Some Gullies of white Sand Stone and Sand fine & white as Snow...*"



Geological formations about two miles up Tower Creek Road on private property.

Tower Creek-Pirimids

Mile 315.7, US Highway 93

21 On August 31 the Expedition travelled up Tower Creek. Clark wrote, "...*We proceeded on the road on which I had decended as far as the 1st run below & left the road...& Encamped in Some old lodjes at the place the road leaves the Creek and ascends the high Country...passed remarkable rock resembling pirimids on the Left side.*"

Four Mountain Spur Crossing

Mile 319.1, US Highway 93

22 Encountering rugged terrain, Lewis serves as scribe for Clark's account of the ordeal: "*we set out early and passed ... the points of four mountains which were high steep and rocky. the mountains are so steep that it is almost incredible to mention that horses had passed them. our road in many places lay over the sharp fragments of rocks which had fall from the mountains and lay in confused heaps for miles together; yet notwithstanding our horsed traveled barefoot over them as fast as we could*" Notice the mountain spurs to the north and south.

Gibbonsville

Mile 337.2, US Highway 93

32 Clark writes, September 2, 1805, "...*Crossed a large fork from the right and one from the left; and at 8 mile left the roade on which we were pursuing and which leads over to the Missouri (Dahlonega Creek); and proseeded up a West fork...thro' thickets in which we were obliged to Cut a road, over rockey hill Sides where our horses were in pitial danger of Slipping to Ther certain destruction...*"

Deep Creek

Mile 341.3, US Highway 93

33 September 2, Lewis and Clark proceeded with much difficulty up the North Fork. Some authorities believe this may have been the most difficult terrain encountered by the expedition. They camped on the west side of the river in this vicinity.



As Toby warned of the fury of Pine Creek Rapids and unrelenting current below, Clark decided to abandon this route.

Fourth of July Creek

Mile 321.0, US Highway 93

23 Looking south, you can see the descent from the mountain spur is an easy route compared to the northern spur. Faced with the proposition of swimming the river, the Reconnaissance Party climbed out of the canyon again over the difficult route you can see. Clark writes in his journal August 22, 1805, "...*it is incrediable to describe the rocks in maney places loose & sliped from those mountains and is a (Solid) bed of rugid loose white and dark brown loose rock for miles.*"

Wagonhammer Springs

Mile 324.4, US Highway 93

24 The trail Lewis and Clark took can be reached by walking approximately two miles up Wagonhammer Creek to the mouth of Thompson Gulch; follow marked trail to left. The trail is marked from that point to its return to the North



Vista from the Lewis and Clark Trail, looking down Trail Gulch.

Lewis and Clark-Last Ascent

Mile 345.5, US Highway 93

34 Seeking a route through Idaho's mountain barrier, the Entire Expedition left the canyon and climbed a high ridge reaching the Bitterroot Valley on September 4. Without a trail, Toby, their Shoshoni guide, led them along a difficult ridgetop divide over high peaks, which are visible to the north.

Lost Trail Pass

Mile 351.1, US Highway 93

35 The Lewis and Clark expedition likely lost the trail to this pass. They camped two miles west of here the night of September 3.

From here, the Lewis and Clark Expedition proceeded down the Bitterroot River Valley, back into Idaho and finally down the Columbia River. They reached the Pacific Ocean November, 1805.



Red Monkeyflower Mimulus lewisii named for Captain Lewis.

...Forever Changed

Findings from the Lewis and Clark Expedition were instrumental to westward expansion. Adventurers and scientists, Lewis and Clark recorded detail descriptions of the plant, animal, geographic, and cultural elements of their trip.

Hoping to find a navigable route down the Salmon River, Clark was forced to retrace his steps opting for a safer, land-based route after viewing the "River of No Return." Although not "entirely impassable", the Salmon River, to this day, provides adventure to modern-day explorers.

Salmon River Reconnaissance Sign

Mile 326.2, US Highway 93

25 Hoping for a navigable route to the Pacific, Clark explored the first few miles of the rugged Salmon River Canyon below here (North Fork) late in August. His small advance party camped near this location.

Fish Creek Village

Mile 326.4, US Highway 93

26 Fish Creek, now known as the North Fork of the Salmon River, was the site of an Shoshoni village which is described by Clark in his journal for August 22, 1805. "...*Several families of Indians were encamped and had Several Scaffolds of fish & buries drying we allarmed them very much as they knew nothing of a white man being in their Countrey, and at the time we approached their lodges which was in a thick place of bushes— my guides were behind.— They offered every thing they possessed (which was verry littl) to us. Some run off and hid in the bushes..I gave a few Small articles to those fritened people which added verry much to their pasification...*"

"I Saw to day [a] ... wood pecker ... which fed on Pine burs its bill and tale white the wings black every other part of a light brown, and about the Size of a robin."
—Clark
August 22, 1805



Clark's Nutcracker Nucifraga columbiana

For More Information on the Lewis and Clark Trail in Lemhi County, contact:

Salmon-Challis National Forest
RR2, Box 600
Highway 93 South
Salmon, Idaho 83467
(208) 756-5100

Bureau of Land Management
Salmon Field Office
RR2, Box 610
Highway 93 South
Salmon, Idaho 83467
(208) 756-5400

For additional information on Idaho call:
(800) VISIT - ID

Special thanks to:
River of No Return Interpretive Association
P.O. Box 661
Salmon, Idaho 83467

Quotes taken from:
The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition
July 28 - November 1, 1805
Gary E. Moulton, Editor
University of Nebraska Press, 1988

Photo's courtesy of:
Wilmer J. Rigby, Hadley Roberts, Elias Williams,
Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management

Fish Weir Graphic courtesy of: Brad Pinkerton

Dreadful Narrows

Mile 3.6, Forest Road 30 - Deadwater Picnic Area

27 August 23, Sergeant Gass writes in his journal, "*We proceeded down the river through dreadful narrows, (starts about 1 1/2 miles upstream from this point) where the rocks were in some places breast high, and no path or trail of any kind...*"

Sore Horse Feet Camp

Mile 6.0, Forest Road 30

28 Clark writes in his journal, "...*I deturmined to delay the party here with my guide and three men proceed on down to examine if the river continued bad or was practiable...*" Sergeant Gass writes August 24, 1805, "...*The river at this place is so confined by the mountains that it is not more than 20 yards wide, and very rapid. The mountains on the side are not less than 1000 feet high and very steep. There are a few pines growing on them. We caught some small fish to-day, and our hunters killed 5 prairie fowls. These were all we had to subsist on. At 1 o'clock Captain Clarke and his party returned after having been down the river about 12 miles...*"

Lewis recalls Clark's journey, "...*at the distance of four miles he arrived at the river and the rocks were here so steep and juted into the river such manner that there was no other alternative but passing through the river, this he attempted with success tho' water was so deep for a short distance as to swim the horses and was very rapid; he continued his rout one mile along the edge of the river under this steep Clift to a little bottom...*"



As the canyon narrowed, so did their options. Along with their horses, they were forced into the water here by the shear rock walls.

Injured Leg Canyon

Mile 7.3, Forest Road 30

29 August 23, 1805. Clark writes in his journal, "...*The River from the place I left my party to this Creek is almost one continued rapid...the passage of either with Canoes is entirely impossible as the water is Confined between hugh Rocks & the Current beeting from one against another...at one of those rapids the mountains Close So Clost as to prevent a possibility of a portage with great labour ...the others may be passed by takeing every thing over Slipery rocks, and the Smaller ones Passed by letting down the Canoes empty with Cords, as running them would certainly be productive of the loss of Some Canoes...*" While returning to camp, Captain Clark fell from a rock and injured one of his legs.

Berry Creek

Mile 10.8, Forest Road 30

30 Lewis' journal reflects Clark's journey: August 23, 1805, "...*a plain indian road led up this (Indian) creek which the guide informed him (Clark) led to a large river that ran to the North, and was frequented by another nation who occasionally visited this river for the purpose of taking fish...Cap. C...caught some small fish, on which, with the addition of some berries, they dined...after dinner Capt. C. continued his rout down the river and at 1/2 a mile passed another creek (Squaw Creek)...leaving the creek on the wright he passed over a ridge, and at the distance of a mile arrived at the river where it passes through a well timbered bottom of about eighty acres of land...*"

Fruit of the chokecherry Prunus virginiana, a staple food for the Shoshoni.



Would you lead a string of horses across this hillside?

The Expedition struggled across these crumbly mountainsides on much of their journey in this area.

Final Observation of the River Canyon

Mile 16.5, Forest Road 30

31 August 23, Clark recalls, "...*passed over a gap in the Mounts. from the top of which I could See the hollers of the river for 20 miles to a verry high Mountain on the left, at which place my guide made Signs that the bad part...of the river Comsd. and much worst than any I Saw...*"

Lewis, in his journal, reviews why Clark decided to abandon his pursuit of the river route "...*after the river reached this mountain it continued it's rout to the North between high and perpendicular rocks, roling foaming and beating against innumerable rocks which crouded it's channel; that then it penetrated the mountain through a narrow gap leaving a perpendicular rock on either side as high as the top of the mountain which he beheld. that the river here making a bend they could not see through the mountain, and as it was impossible to decend the river or clamber over that vast mountain covered with eternal snow, neither himself (Toby) nor any of his nation had ever been lower in this direction...*" From this point, one can see the ridge (about 1 mile northeast), where Clark was standing when he determined it was truly an impassable canyon.

