



Lewis & Clark Trail News
Bringing the Trail to Life
September 6, 2025



Gates of the Mountains

Janeen Key's *Gates of the Mountains* photograph—one of the winners of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance's 2025 photo contest—was taken not only out of love for the beauty of that special area of the Missouri River in Montana, but also for her love of the story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

"The thing I found most intriguing about my scene in the Gates of the Mountains was knowing that Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery had been at that very site and wondering what thoughts went through their minds as they viewed the majesty of the mountain range surrounding them," Janeen says. "This had to have been one of the most awe-inspiring moments for them as they made their way to the Pacific."

[Read about Meriwether Lewis's impression of the Gates of the Mountains](#)

A retired registered nurse, Janeen became interested in the Lewis and Clark story years ago when she read Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage*. The interest led to a visit to Lewis and Clark sites in Idaho and Montana, "the most

amazing trip I've ever experienced," she recalls.

When she was with a group visiting an area near Dillon, Montana, she stood on a boulder where Lewis had once stood. "I was so overcome with emotion that I had to leave the group I was with and excuse myself, Janeen says. "Meriwether Lewis was a true hero in my eyes, as was Clark and all those in the Corps."

Janeen's photo was one of 14 winning photos that will be published in the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance's 2026 calendar. The calendar is for sale for \$20 as a fundraiser for LCTA programs. [Order yours now.](#)

Grant Deadline is September 30th



There's still time to apply for a Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance grant! Applications are due at the end of this month, and award decisions will be shared by year's end. Grants of up to \$10,000 are available. If your organization would like to be considered, start your application [here](#).

[Grant Application](#)

Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance [Annual Gathering](#)

Kansas City, Missouri
September 14 - 17



A keelboat, re-enactors, great speakers, newbies, and a Chautauqua. You can't afford to miss the opportunity to see so much Lewis & Clark in one place.

It's not too late to [REGISTER](#) and attend

Trading Up



What would you trade for a five-day wilderness horse packing adventure for two people into the Beartooth Wilderness of Montana?

Jefferson River Chapter president Thomas J. Elpel initiated a "conservation trade-up challenge" with the goal of trading a book for land for a campsite for the public along the Jefferson River Canoe Trail.

"I heard about a guy who traded up a red paperclip for a house and a woman who traded up a bobby pin for a house, and I wondered if a trade-up challenge might be a good way to acquire land for a campsite," Elpel said.

Chapter members previously raised funds and purchased three properties for public campsites. "Fundraising for conservation work is a challenge in the best of times," Elpel said, "and we've seen riverfront property values double, triple, and quadruple over the last few years, nearly pricing us out of the market."

As an author, Elpel thought it seemed logical to initiate the trade-up challenge with a book, offering *Five Months on the Missouri River*, his Lewis and Clark-themed travelogue about paddling a dugout canoe from Montana to St. Louis with five men and a dog. Elpel won the Writer's Digest 2020 First Place Award for Nonfiction for the book.

Elpel launched the trade-up challenge in 2022, trading the \$36 book for a \$460

Women Rising Wild retreat with wolves in Colorado. He then traded that retreat for a \$1,150 Coming Home retreat in Oregon and later traded that retreat for a \$1,750 five-night AirBnB stay at Sage Mountain Center near Whitehall, Montana. The AirBnB stay was traded for a handcrafted cedar strip canoe valued at \$2,500, which was traded for a whole processed Angus beef valued at \$4,000.

"Each trade has given a significant jump in value," Elpel said, "yet, it takes some effort to find each new trade partner."

In the most recent trade, Elpel swapped the whole beef for a wilderness pack trip with Ralph Johnson of Specimen Creek Outfitters in Jardine, Montana, valued at \$5,000. He is now looking to trade the pack trip for something of even greater value. He is donating a signed copy of his book with every trade.

"I don't know how long this will take," Elpel said, "but I hope to trade up towards something valuable enough to trade or sell for land for a public campsite." Elpel hopes the trade-up challenge will become a viable new tool for conservation work.

"Deep-pocketed donors are few and far between", Elpel said, "but everyone has something to trade. Small trades can lead to big trades, and every swap supports the final goal of conserving land."

Properties purchased by the Jefferson River Chapter are protected from development and open to the public for fishing access, mushroom hunting, bird-watching, and overnight camping for paddlers. "Many people just like to walk their dog along the river," Elpel said.

For more information, visit the Trade-up Challenge at <https://elpel.info>, and Jefferson River Chapter at <https://jeffersonriver.org>.

Of Interest

[Native Chef LLC](#)

[Klamath River Paddle](#)

[Wyandot Women Warriors](#)

[Program Internship](#)

[Race to the Dome](#)

[Lavina S. Marmaduke](#)

[American Prairie](#)

Grants

[MT Agritourism](#)

[Brown-Forman \(KY\)](#)

[Rapoport Foundation](#)

[Haile Foundation](#)

[Wildhorse Fdn. \(WA, OR\)](#)

[FNBO](#)

[ArtsMidwest](#)

Alliance

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[Expedition Timeline](#)

[Tent of Many Voices](#)

Play Lewis & Clark Trivia



It's common knowledge today that the name of Meriwether Lewis's dog was Seaman. However, due to a transcription error in the expedition journals two centuries ago, the dog was believed to have a different name—that is, until 1984 when noted historian Donald Jackson conducted a study of Lewis and Clark place names in Montana and discovered Seaman was actually the dog's real name.

[What was the dog's incorrect name before Seaman?](#)

The winner of this trivia contest will receive a copy of *Wind Hard from the West: The Lewis and Clark Expedition on the Snake and Columbia Rivers* by the late Robert Heacock, the author, and Kris Townsend, photographer. It's an excellent book that locates Lewis and Clark campsites and has tremendous artwork.

Chris Heuple was the winner of our last newsletter's trivia contest. Chris correctly answered "Sacagawea" to the question, "Who was the famous Native American lady who once stayed at Fort Osage?" Sacagawea and Charbonneau joined Manuel Lisa's Missouri Fur Company on a western trading expedition in 1811. The group spent the night of April 25 at Fort Osage.

The Oceti Sakowin



[Teacher Resources](#)

Educators in any state would benefit from learning more about the tribes often referred to as Lakota/Dakota (or simply Sioux). As we know, Lewis and Clark met with the Yankton in August and the Tetonwan in September 1804.

And of course, although not part of the Oceti Sakowin, they later met with the Arikara in October 1804. All three were notable meetings with tribal nations in what is now South Dakota.



Watch

[Down the Columbia..."Ocean in View"](#)

Follow the Corps of Discovery on its dramatic descent down the mighty Columbia River in the fall of 1805. After more than a year of grueling travel through uncharted lands, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark finally catch sight of the broad waters leading to the Pacific Ocean — marking one of the most celebrated moments of their expedition.



Watch

[Only Six Days of Sun](#)

The Lewis and Clark Expedition reported very little sunshine during their 106-day winter stay at Fort Clatsop in 1805-1806, with records indicating only six days of actual sun despite many days without rain, and a period of over two weeks of nearly constant rain. The expedition suffered from the incessant wet, cold, and illnesses during this time, experiencing a consistent, uncomfortable climate typical of the region's temperate rainforest.

BIG MEDICINE YORK OUTDOORS

September 12, Hohenwald, Tennessee

September 17, Kansas City, Missouri

September 27, Richland, Washington

September 28, Missoula, Montana

September 30, St. Charles, Missouri

October 9, Billings, Montana

October 10, Kansas City, Kansas

October 14, Great Falls, Montana

October 15, Troy, Idaho

October 16, Lewiston, Idaho

October 22, Portland, Oregon

October 25, Pendleton, Oregon

November 1, Newburgh, Indiana

November 19, Marietta, OH

December 4, Helena, Montana



New screenings being added - check the [Events Calendar](#) for updates

Share the Adventure!



Help us expand the community by sharing the newsletter with your network. Simply provide this [sign-up link](#) to friends, family, and fellow Trail enthusiasts.



[Pendleton Roundup](#)

Pendleton, OR
September 10 - 13



[Junior Ranger Program](#)

Falls of the Ohio
September 13



[Lewis & Clark Reunion](#)

Nebraska City, NE
September 19 - 21



The Last Word

The popular Beatles song “With a Little Help from My Friends” seems wholly appropriate for successes achieved by the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance in encouraging public interest in the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Our friends—our partners—range from the National Park Service and Native American tribal organizations to, among others, American Byways and the Lewis & Clark Discovery Expedition of St. Charles, Mo.

One of our closest partners is an Omaha, Neb., marketing firm, [J. Greg Smith \(JGS\)](#), that for the last half-century has raised funding and designed programs for government tourism agencies and trail systems to inspire people to visit more of America.

For the 4,900-mile Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, JGS developed a series of colorful brochures that focus on different trail segments. With the inspiring tagline of “Go Adventuring!”, the brochures are the ones you see in table stands in hotels, restaurants, and other public locations. These printed materials are key marketing tools designed to excite people about discovering more information online and experiencing the trail themselves.

JGS has collaborated for years with LCTA’s national office, as well as our

regional and chapter offices, to publish and promote printed auto tour brochures featuring the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. More recently, our relationship with the company has focused on marketing LCTA to state tourism departments and corporate sponsorships to help support our work. This has resulted in supporting partnerships from the State of Kentucky and the Ohio River Scenic Byway-Southern Illinois.

JGS has a storied history that began with the work of J. Greg Smith, who in the 1970s founded an advertising agency that collaborated with state tourism departments in Montana, Nebraska, Wyoming, and the Dakotas to promote tourism by highlighting the heritage of the Old West. The successful effort increased the length of stays that tourists remained in a state.

J. Greg Smith, who passed away in 2023 at age 95, was known for creating the popular slogan, "Nebraska...the Good Life." He was instrumental in the development of the National Arbor Day Foundation and the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument in Kearney, Neb. As friends and family members will attest, he was a visionary who based his life on the premise, "Wouldn't it be great if..."

The company is now run by his sons—Greg and Jeff Smith—who have continued their father's legacy of promoting historical heritage travel, cultural tourism and "Wouldn't it be great if.... Among JGS's clients are the National Park Service, the Oregon-California Trails Association in promoting the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails, the Butterfield Overland Trail, and the Southern Trails, and other tourist organizations in 26 states.

"Our role is to introduce the Lewis and Clark trail to visitor groups, families of all ages and people who want day trips, weekend getaways or longer vacations," Greg said. "Our ultimate goal is to help the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance be successful in expanding its membership, trail stewardship and educational efforts through public awareness, travel brochures and digital access."

The indirect financial benefits for lodging, dining, transportation, and recreation are substantial. In Montana, for instance, the tourism industry generated more than \$3.7 billion in 2023, a significant portion of which is believed to have come through Lewis and Clark-related tourism.

Richard Hunt



DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM



Our Network of Online Resources



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