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Lewis & Clark Trail News
Bringing the Trail to Life
April 18, 2026



John Montague took this spellbinding photograph of the interior of a Mandan lodge at the [Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site](#) in North Dakota. The photo was the overall winner of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance's first annual photo contest in 2021.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition spent the bitterly cold 1804-05 winter among the Mandan. The Mandan practiced horticulture and were hunters, but they were also a key part of the trading network with Europeans and Assiniboines, Blackfeet, Cree, Crows and Pawnees. It was here, among the Mandan, that Toussaint Charbonneau and Sacagawea and their baby joined the expedition.

[Find out about the Mandan](#)

Hasan Davis to speak at Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance Annual Gathering

Renowned first-person interpreter of York and nationally recognized speaker, Hasan Davis, will open this year's Annual Gathering with a compelling and thought-provoking presentation.

For more than 25 years, Davis has brought the story of York to life for audiences across the country, including his work with the National Park Service's Corps of Discovery during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. Another reason not to miss this year's Gathering.



2026 Annual Gathering - Great Falls

June 21 - 24

[Meeting](#) and [Hotel](#) Registration available now

Explore the updated [Meeting Guide](#)

Early Bird Rates End April 30

[Register Today](#)

Extend Your Stay

Great Falls offers far more than can be experienced in four days. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early or stay longer to explore the region including

- 36th Annual Lewis and Clark Festival, June 19–20
- Three-day [White Cliffs canoe trip](#), June 25 - 27
- Tower Rock and Gates of the Mountains Boat Trip (on your own)
- Grand opening Montana Historical Society Museum (Helena), June 26–27
- Fort Benton Summer Celebration, June 26–27

Pre- and Post- Tours

- Sulphur Springs Hike with John Jengo
- Lower Portage 1/2 day float trip
- Guided hike to Lewis and Clark Pass

Additional Details

- Silent Auction: Contact [Georgia Kline](#)
- Exhibitor, Authors: Contact [Kelly Paladino](#)

Annual Gathering Sponsors



Substack

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance's Substack publications—[Real Stories of the Lewis and Clark Trail](#) and [Undaunted Travel](#)—are now available to explore. Both are free to subscribe and feature engaging, well-researched storytelling from across the Trail.

Here are two of our latest featured stories, with many more available to explore on our Substack pages. Consider subscribing to one—or both—to stay connected and receive new stories as they're published.

“Very Hard”: Sacagawea’s Real Journey to the Pacific with Lewis and Clark

A closer look at the Shoshone teenage mother who nearly died on the trail, reunited with her brother, and learned to stand her ground—beyond the statues, stamp and coin

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Real Stories of the Lewis and Clark Trail



Across the United States, more statues honor Sacagawea than any other woman in America. She stands in bronze on courthouse lawns, in parks, and along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail—usually serene, pointing west, a child on her back, the very picture of calm endurance.

The young Shoshone mother has also been memorialized on a one dollar U.S. coin and a postage stamp. Indeed, she has become a national emblem of guidance and grit.... [read more](#)

The Ultimate Buddy Movie

Lewis and Clark at the Falls of the Ohio

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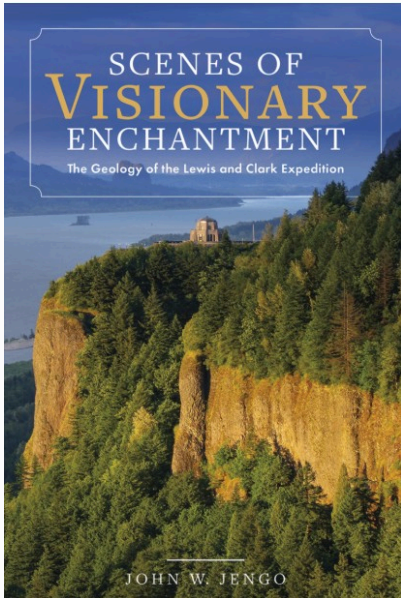
Undaunted Travel



Before there was an epic, there was a meetup.

Which is why the question “Where did the Lewis and Clark Expedition begin?” is such a wonderfully annoying one. Monticello? The White House? Pittsburgh? Louisville? Camp River-Dubois—the later, official “Point of Departure”? The answer depends on whether you mean ideas, paperwork, friendships, or boats. At the time, the nation still ended at the Mississippi River, and everything beyond it was an educated guess....[read more](#)

May 17



Join with the Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance on May 17 at 4 p.m. CDT for a compelling [Zoomcast](#) with geologist and LCTA member, John W. Jengo, author of a groundbreaking new study on Lewis and Clark Trail geology. Jengo's research affirms the accuracy and depth of the Expedition's geological observations.

Drawing on extensive fieldwork and analysis of historic journals and scientific reports, he brings fresh insight to the landscape, science, and legacy of the Corps of Discovery.

Don't miss this engaging [presentation](#) that bridges early 19th-century science with modern geological understanding.

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The Discovery Expedition of St. Charles Video Series

The Journey Begins

Discovery Expedition of the St. Charles

Lewis & Clark Educational Film Series
PILOT EPISODE

The Discovery Expedition of St. Charles has released a compelling 13 part [YouTube video series](#) that brings the opening chapter of the Lewis & Clark Expedition to life. These short films vividly portray key moments from the Expedition's earliest days, offering an accessible and engaging introduction for newcomers and enthusiasts alike.

Each episode combines storytelling and historical interpretation to illuminate the people, places, and decisions that shaped the journey west. Whether you're discovering the story for the first time or deepening your knowledge, this series provides a valuable window into the Expedition's beginnings.

Explore the [full series](#) and learn more at LewisandClarkBoathouse.org.

Montana Heritage Center Opens in Helena



The [Montana Historical Society](#) opened the new [Montana Heritage Center](#) on Dec. 2, 2025. The 165,000-square-foot facility combines the renovated Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building, the former museum core, and a new 70,000-square-foot expansion.

Exhibits include the Homeland Gallery, Charles M. Russell Gallery, and Changing Gallery, along with outdoor features such as an amphitheater, habitats trail, and the Sovereign Nations East Entrance Arbor. The center was developed in close collaboration with representatives from Montana's Indigenous nations to ensure accurate and respectful interpretation.

Admission is free, and the center is open daily. Additional amenities include event spaces and Norm's Café, operated by Helena-based bakery The Dive.

After attending the LCTA Annual Gathering, make sure you make time to attend the June 26-27 grand opening of the Montana Historical Society Museum in Helena.



LCTA Photo Contest

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance 2026 Photo Contest is now open to submit your fantastic photos for judging and winners to be included in our annual calendar.

[Enter the Contest](#)



Golden Pea © 2005 Matt Lavin. Permission via the Creative Commons ShareAlike License.

Day by Day Radio Episodes

During the night, a [beaver](#) is caught in two different traps, and an argument over ownership ensues. The entire [Charbonneau](#) family joins [Clark](#) on shore while the [enlisted men](#) struggle to move [the boats](#) against strong headwinds. Later, [Lewis](#) takes a turn walking the shore where he observes [bison](#) wool and the golden pea. Camp is below present Williston, North Dakota.

[April 18, 1805](#)

Listen to the full library of [Day by Day broadcasts](#)

Originally aired by [Yellowstone Public Radio](#) during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial observance. These 627 radio episodes parallel the expedition dates starting May 14, 1804, and ending September 25, 1806. They are narrated by Hal Hansen, scripted by Whit Hansen and Ed Jacobson, and produced by Leni Holliman.

Of Interest

[Preservation](#)

[Gear Swap](#)

[KC Historic Trails](#)

[American Hiking](#)

Grants

[Archer Foundation](#)

[Montana Conservation](#)

[Leach Foundation \(ND\)](#)

[Miller Foundation \(OR\)](#)

Alliance

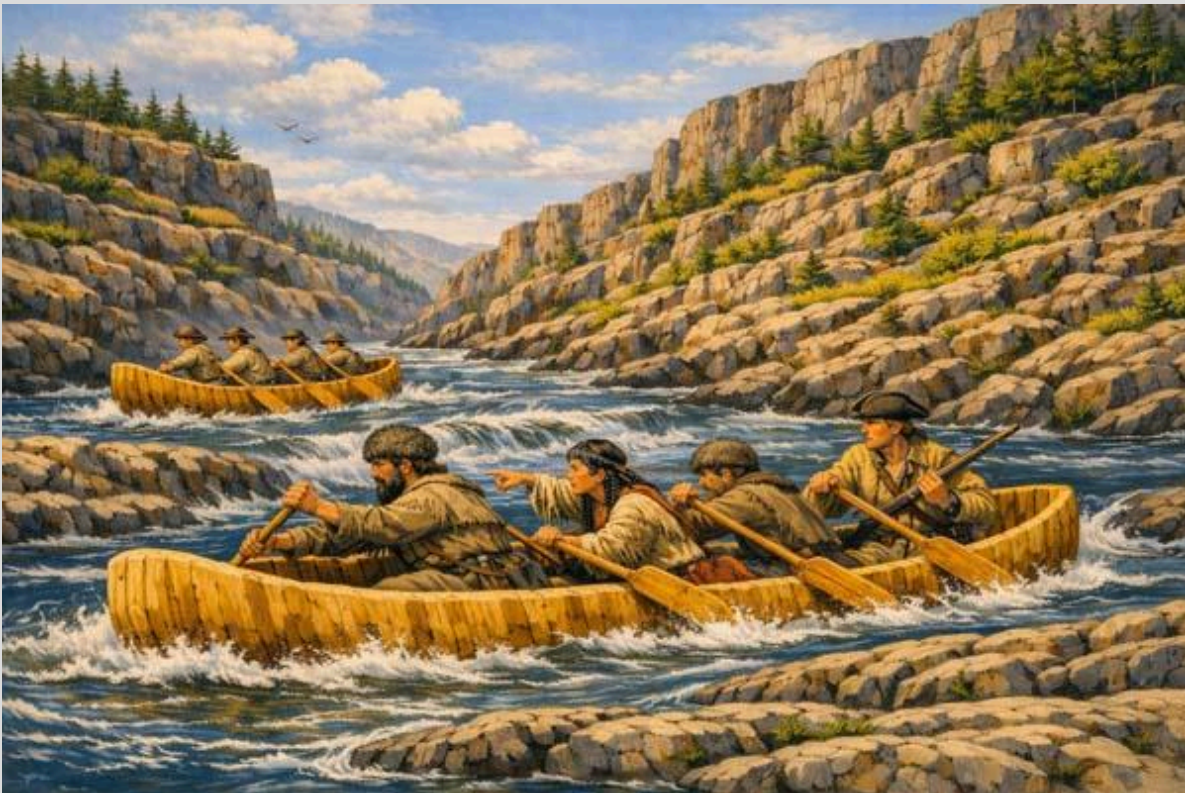
[Photo Contest](#)

[Virtual Reality](#)

[Join LCTA](#)

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Play Lewis & Clark Trivia



You are indeed a Lewis and Clark aficionado if you correctly answer this trivia question.

On [April 18, 1806](#), as the expedition was headed up the Columbia River on its return to St. Louis, what did the explorers do with their two large dugout canoes at Fort Rock before continuing toward the [Long Narrows](#) of the Columbia?

- A) Repaired the canoes for upstream travel.
- B) Cached them for another journey.
- C) Set them free on the Columbia River.
- D) Traded them to local natives.
- E) Cut the canoes up for firewood.

The explorers had carved out the two dugouts from pine logs during their winter stay at Fort Clatsop. The expedition left Fort Clatsop with several canoes, but sold, abandoned or destroyed smaller canoes as they moved up the river. But they kept the two large dugouts because they were sturdy and could carry more cargo. At Fort Rock—near today's The Dalles, Oregon—they decided the big dugouts could not be hauled through the Long Narrows.

The winner of this trivia game will be emailed a list of Lewis and Clark books to choose one book for the prize. All books are used but in good condition.

The answer to the last Trail News trivia game was grizzly bear. The explorers stated that the bears were extremely hard to kill because they could be wounded by multiple musket balls yet kept charging. Fifteen readers answered correctly. When more than one reader provides the correct answer, a drawing is done. Dale Burningham was the winner.

[Read the journal entries for April 18, 1806](#)

Words of the Expedition



Quawmash

In a detailed 1,700-word journal entry on [June 11, 1806](#), Meriwether Lewis wrote the word “quamash” to describe camas, a blue-flowered, bulb-bearing plant native to the Pacific Northwest and Northern Rockies.

When Lewis made the *quawmash* journal entry, the expedition was among the Nez Perce on the Weippe Prairie, waiting for the snow to melt on the high ridges of the Bitterroot Range in the Rockies. The explorers were on their way back to St. Louis.

Lewis wanted to understand the plant because the bulb was central to the diet, trade and hospitality of local natives. He examined the plant with the loving eye of a farmer, with the curiosity of an herbalist like his own mother. His description stated the size of the edible bulb ranges “from the size of a nutmeg to that of a hens egg and most commonly of an intermediate size or about as large as an onion of one years growth from the seed.”

[Learn about camas](#)

Share the Adventure!

Help us expand the community by sharing the newsletter with your network. Simply

See all the events on the [LCTE Events Calendar](#)



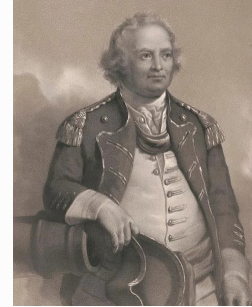
[Earth Day Cleanup](#)

Columbia, MO
April 22



[Lost Monuments](#)

Seaside, OR
April 30



[Washington's Generals](#)

Greenville, OH
May 9

Volunteer Vacations on the Lolo Trail

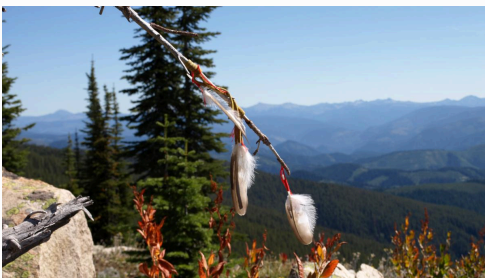
Enjoy an unique immersive voluntourism experience that combines meaningful trail work with rich interpretation, cultural engagement, and backcountry exploration. This is more than a work trip. Your experience will include: Guided hikes to historic campsites, Interpretation from subject matter experts, Evening campfire programs featuring, Nez Perce tribal representatives, Lewis & Clark historians and Forest Service experts

These fully outfitted, multi-day voluntourism experience invites participants to contribute directly in the preservation and accessibility of the Lewis and Clark and Nez Perce National Historic Trails.

Volunteers will assist with essential trail stewardship activities, including sign maintenance and corridor clearing, helping ensure safe and meaningful access for future visitors. All work takes place along the historic Lolo Trail Corridor—the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the 1877 Flight of the Nez Perce.

Limited to 12 participants per event (age 16+). Three nights camping, two days working, the \$100 registration includes outfitter provided tents, cots, eight meals, worksite transportation, equipment and interpretive campfires.

Here's how to sign up for the events:



Snowbank Camp, Lolo Motorway



Musselshell Meadows

July 9 - 12

[Register](#)

June 17 - 20

[Register](#)

Where on the Trail?

Our newest fun feature invites you to guess the location along the Trail.

[Answer](#)

This aerial photo was taken by aviator and photographer Jim Wark, who began retracing the Lewis and Clark Trail by air in 1999. Many of his photos are featured in articles on our educational website, Discover Lewis & Clark.

[More about Jim and his photos.](#)

[Discover Lewis and Clark](#)



The Last Word

There are moments when it's worth pausing—not to slow down, but to take stock of momentum. The Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance is in one of those moments.

Across the Trail, the energy is tangible. New partnerships are taking shape, connecting communities, cultural institutions, and public lands in ways that feel both strategic and organic. Our digital platforms continue to expand their reach, introducing thousands of new people to the Trail—many encountering this story, and this landscape, for the first time.

Our programs are doing exactly what they were designed to do: turning awareness into engagement. We're not just telling stories—we're helping people find their way onto the Trail itself, whether physically or virtually. That matters.

At the same time, we are investing in how people discover and experience the Trail in entirely new ways. Our Substack is creating a steady, thoughtful connection with a growing audience. The 2026 Summer of VR project is pushing interpretation into immersive territory, meeting new audiences where they are. On the ground, efforts like the Lolo Trail Volunteer Vacation—and the growing momentum of Oregon Chapter meet-ups—are translating interest into community, stewardship, and shared experience. Taken together, these initiatives point toward a future state where the Trail is not only more visible, but more accessible, participatory, and relevant than ever before.

This progress reflects a shared commitment across the Alliance—members, partners, chapters, and supporters each contributing in meaningful ways. It is

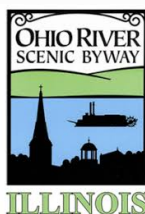
this collective effort that continues to strengthen the organization and expand what is possible.

Now is the time to lean in. Join a chapter, attend a meet-up, share the Trail with someone new, or find your own way to experience it. However you engage, your participation helps carry this work forward—and ensures the Trail remains a living, evolving part of our national story.

What comes next is up to all of us.

Richard Hunt

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