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**Lewis & Clark Trail News**  
*Bringing the Trail to Life*  
May 16, 2026



Rising abruptly above the winding Missouri River, the towering White Cliffs stunned the Corps of Discovery with a landscape unlike anything they had encountered before. Meriwether Lewis described the cliffs as “white as snow,” their sculpted spires, arches, and pinnacles shaped by wind and water over millions of years. Today, travelers who experience the White Cliffs can still sense the awe and isolation felt by the Expedition in 1805—a dramatic and remarkably unchanged landscape along the historic route westward.

## 2026 Annual Gathering - Great Falls

June 21 - 24

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

Explore the updated [Meeting Guide](#)

[Register Today](#)

# Pre and Post Annual Gathering Opportunities

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June 20 & 21

Join us at the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail  
Interpretive Center

Screening BIG MEDICINE, featuring Hasan Davis, as York  
Mary Jane Bradbury - The Life of Lucy Meriwether Lewis Marks  
John Fischer, Mercury, Lead, and other Artifacts  
Lewis & Clark Honor Guard, Living History  
and more!

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## Missouri River White Cliffs Float

June 25 - 27

3 Days with [Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures](#)

Guide: Mark Albers

This paddle adventure on the Wild and Scenic Upper Missouri River will be led by Mark Albers, a lifelong Missouri River traveler and retired Bureau of Land Management land manager for the Missouri Breaks.

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**Note:** the Sulfur Springs Hike, Morony Dam half day Float, and Lewis and Clark Pass Hike are at capacity and we are taking a waitlist

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### Annual Gathering Sponsors



## This Vast Enterprise

Craig Fehrman, acclaimed author of *Author in Chief*, delivers a fresh, deeply researched account of the Lewis and Clark expedition. *This Vast Enterprise* challenges familiar narratives, revealing both truth and distortion in the captains' story.



Drawing on new documents and Native perspectives, Fehrman highlights overlooked figures like John Ordway and Wolf Calf while reexamining Sacagawea, York, Jefferson, and Black Buffalo. Each chapter shifts perspective, emphasizing human complexity, political strategy, and cultural encounter.

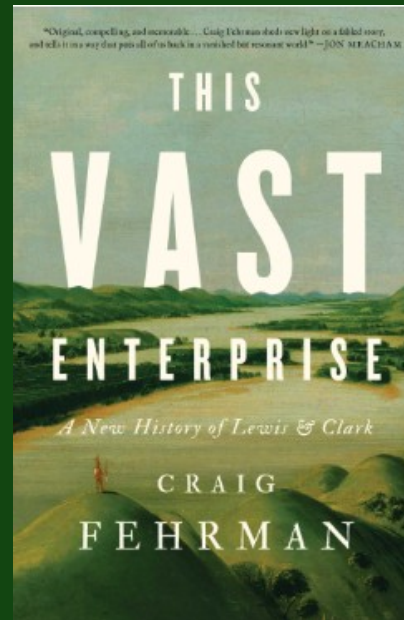
The result is a nuanced narrative showing the expedition's success as a collective effort—an expansive, federally backed mission shaped by diverse individuals and their sacrifices.

## Watch the LCTA Zoomcasts

[William Clark](#)  
[John Ordway](#)

“Do we really need another book about the Lewis and Clark expedition? Over the past two centuries, hundreds of titles have charted the journey. And yet, after reading “This Vast Enterprise,” by Craig Fehrman, my answer is an emphatic yes.” *New York Times*

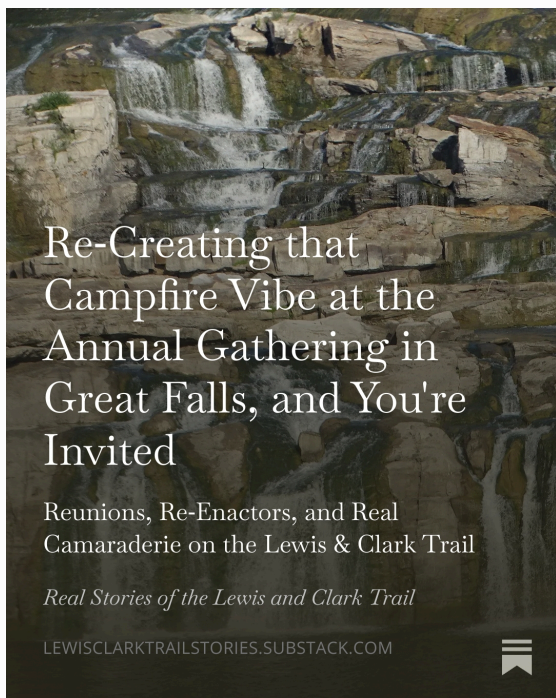
[Bookshop.org](#)



## 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.

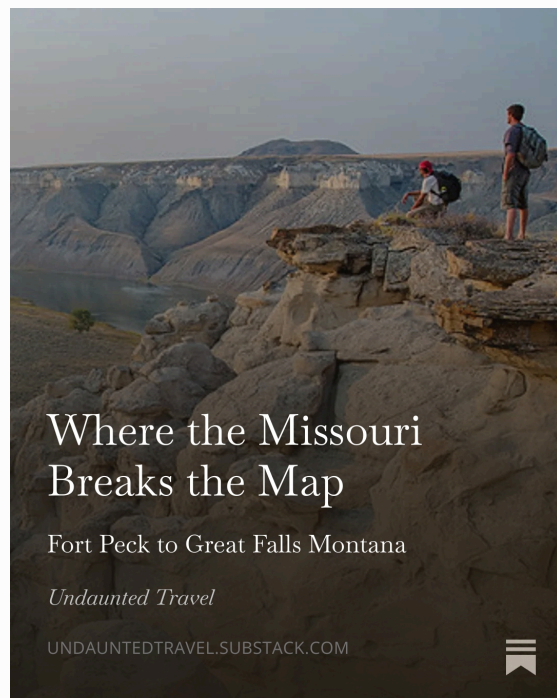


## Re-Creating that Campfire Vibe at the Annual Gathering in Great Falls, and You're Invited

Reunions, Re-Enactors, and Real  
Camaraderie on the Lewis & Clark Trail

*Real Stories of the Lewis and Clark Trail*

LEWISCLARKTRAILSTORIES.SUBSTACK.COM



## Where the Missouri Breaks the Map

Fort Peck to Great Falls Montana

*Undaunted Travel*

UNDAUNTEDTRAVEL.SUBSTACK.COM



### *Reunions, Re-Enactors, and Real Camaraderie on the Lewis & Clark Trail*

KS McClure

Have you ever meant to phone one of your friends, but keep putting it off? Life gets in the way, kids and grandkids need to get to basketball, another crisis at work or with your health—until one more weekend slips away. Sigh.

Having moved to Arizona some 20 years ago, with most of my family residing in the Midwest or East Coast, I've experienced far too many instances like that. Thank goodness that when I reconnect with friends or family, it seems like no time has passed—and it feels good.

This is how it felt when I attended last year's Lewis & Clark Alliance Annual Gathering in Kansas City. It had been awhile since I'd been active with the group. Okay, full disclosure, it had been since the Bicentennial— and that was in 2004-06. ...[read more](#)

In May of 1805, as the Missouri River pulled Meriwether Lewis and William Clark deeper into what they called “broken country”—mauvaises terres, the Bad Lands—the rules they had relied on began to change.

The river twisted through cliffs and coulees, forcing them to measure progress in fragments rather than miles. Around them, the land rose in jagged formations of sandstone and clay—“a thousand grotesque figures,” as Lewis described it—while Clark judged it a “desert” beyond settlement. Game was abundant—buffalo, elk, antelope—but so were grizzlies, violent storms, and a river increasingly difficult to navigate. Even the distant mountains misled them; what Lewis believed were the Rockies proved to be something else entirely. The landscape did not reveal itself easily.

More than two centuries later, that same uncertainty still defines this stretch of the West. ...[read more](#)

## July 4th Darby, Montana

Celebrate Independence Day where history happened at the Sacajawea Bronze Rest Park in Darby, Montana.

This special July 4th event will unveil a remarkable 4'x8' steel map tracing the Corps of Discovery's journey from Idaho across the Bitterroots and onto the Lolo Trail in September 1805.

The map uniquely identifies the location of the historic Salish meeting at Ross Hole—immortalized in Charles M. Russell's famous painting displayed in the Montana State Capitol. Featuring journal locations, flora, fauna, and historic imagery, the installation brings the Lewis and Clark journals vividly to life.



Join us in commemorating America's birthday where Clark and Sacagawea camped on July 4, 1806.

## CNN Series *This Land* to Feature Descendant Voices



A major new television series exploring the expansion of the United States will soon bring renewed national attention to the story and legacy of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. CNN Original Series [This Land](#) premieres Sunday, June 7, with two episodes airing weekly at 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. ET/PT.

Timed to coincide with America's 250th anniversary, the six-part series examines pivotal moments that shaped the nation's growth across the continent, including the Louisiana Purchase and the Corps of Discovery expedition. Through interviews with descendants of historical figures, the program connects the past to the present in a deeply personal way.



*Dustina Abrahamson, Matt Nelson, Willow Abrahamson*

Of special interest to members and supporters of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance is the participation of [Dustina Abrahamson](#) and [Willow Abrahamson](#), descendants of [Sacajawea](#), the young Lemhi Shoshone girl whose knowledge, diplomacy, and guidance proved invaluable to the success of the Expedition, alongside [Matt Nelson](#), a direct descendant of Expedition co-commander [William Clark](#). Their appearances provide a powerful living connection to the people whose lives and experiences helped shape the story and legacy of the Corps of Discovery.

The series promises to explore not only the achievements of exploration and expansion, but also the lasting impacts these events had on Indigenous communities, migration, politics, and the development of the United States.

Trail enthusiasts, historians, and anyone interested in the enduring legacy of Lewis and Clark are encouraged to watch this important national production. Episodes will also stream on CNN digital platforms beginning June 8.

[Watch the Trailer](#)

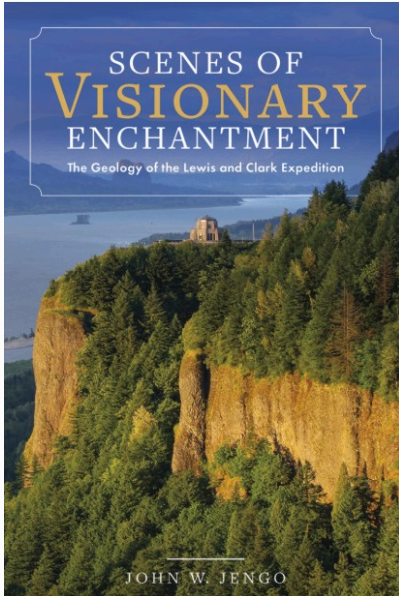
## 2026 Photo Contest

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. John Jengo captured this dramatic rattlesnake image in 2021.

[Enter the Contest](#)



## John Jengo Zoomcast 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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## Who Done It? Expedition Unknown

[Expedition Unknown](#) hosted by Josh Gates on the Discovery Channel focuses on legendary mysteries. Tune in at 9 p.m. EDT for the May 20 episode featuring LCTA members Drs. David and Marti Peck where they will explore the mystery around the death of Meriwether Lewis.



Some say his 1809 death was suicide; others, murder.

His death occurred during the night at the remote Grinder's Stand on the Natchez Trace in Tennessee as he was traveling from St. Louis to Washington, D.C. His death was violent—two gunshot wounds, one to the head and one to the abdomen. That much is seldom undisputed. Everything else is contested.

The Pecks are authors of a groundbreaking 2021 book, [So Hard to Die](#), the most analytical work ever done about Lewis' death. David is also the author of the 2011 [Or Perish in the Attempt](#), a book that ingeniously combines the remarkable adventures of Lewis and Clark with the health challenges faced by expedition members during their lengthy journey.

The Pecks' career backgrounds, David as a retired emergency room physician and Marti as a clinical psychologist, have given them insights into Lewis' death that other authors haven't had.

[Read the February 2022 Article in We Proceeded On](#)

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## Historic St. Charles



Derived from an original photo © 2021 by Robert Heacock. Used by permission.

## Day by Day Radio Episodes

The [boats](#) set out early, pass the coal beds of Charbonier Bluff, and reach [St. Charles](#), an early French settlement on the Missouri River. Many citizens come out to see the event and socialization commences.

Still in [St. Louis](#), [Lewis](#) authorizes [Amos Stoddard](#), the commandant of [Upper Louisiana Territory](#), to act as his agent concerning any Indian delegations and [engagés](#) sent to St. Louis.

From Washington City, the Secretary of War [Henry Dearborn](#) asks Capt. [Amos Stoddard](#) to continue as Civil Commandant of Upper Louisiana.

[May 16, 1804](#)

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

[National Trails Day](#)

[Ohio Riverway](#)

[Yellowstone Country](#)

[Great Burn Conservation](#)

## Grants

[Care Capacity](#)

[Quadratrec](#)

[National Trust](#)

[Oregon Culture](#)

## Alliance

[Photo Contest](#)

[Virtual Reality](#)

[Join LCTA](#)

[Support LCTA](#)

## Play Lewis & Clark Trivia



Photo by [Kristopher K. Townsend](#). Published in [Discover Lewis & Clark](#).

Here's a trivia question with a double toughie twist: On May 16, 1804, the expedition reached St. Charles, an early French settlement on the Missouri River. Many citizens came out to see their arrival. The socialization and fun commenced. The citizens held a ball for the explorers. The next day, May 17, the jovial atmosphere dissolved due to which two events listed below:

- A) Three privates faced court-martial for behaving in an unbecoming manner.
- B) The townspeople asked the explorers to leave St. Charles due to the wreckage of furniture and other misbehavior the previous night.
- C) Meriwether Lewis showed up from his stay in St. Louis, and he was furious because he missed the previous night's jovialities.
- D) Some visiting Kickapoos told William Clark that the Sauk and Osage are at war, something he and Lewis had been trying to prevent.

Submit your chosen two events by clicking on this link:

[Submit your answer](#)

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 trivia question in the last *Trail News* asked about why William Clark was so concerned about the weather that he wrote about it in his journal before the explorers launched their boats from Camp River Dubois to head up the Missouri River. The answer: The river's water level determined whether the boats could safely launch. If hard rain fell, the river's level could easily rise and hamper the departure.

Six readers answered correctly. When more than one reader provides the correct answer, a drawing is done. Mike Strodman was the winner.

[What happened on May 17, 1804? Find out...](#)

## Pacific Northwest Trail Stewardship May 18

Join us for our next Meetup event on May 18 at 8 a.m. at the Megler Rest Area on Highway 101 (just east of the Astoria Bridge). We'll kick off the morning with muffins and juice while we organize the day's activities.

From there, we'll head to the shoreline near Knappton Cove to walk the beach, pick up trash, and learn about the Corps of Discovery's challenging, rain-soaked stay in November of 1805.

**LEWIS & CLARK TRAIL CLEANUP MEETUP**

**MAY 18 • 8:00 AM**  
MEGLER REST AREA  
Highway 101  
(just east of the Astoria Bridge)

Muffins & juice provided to start the day!

**THE PLAN:**

- KNAPPTON COVE**  
Walk the shoreline, pick up trash, and learn about the Corps of Discovery's wet, rainy stay in November of 1805.
- IF TIME & WEATHER ALLOW: CHINOOK PARK**  
Continue trail cleanup just east of Chinook, Washington.

**WHAT TO BRING:**

- Weather-appropriate clothing
- Sturdy shoes & work gloves
- Trash picker (if you have one)
- Hearty lunch
- Washington State Parks Discovery Pass

**WE'LL PROVIDE:**

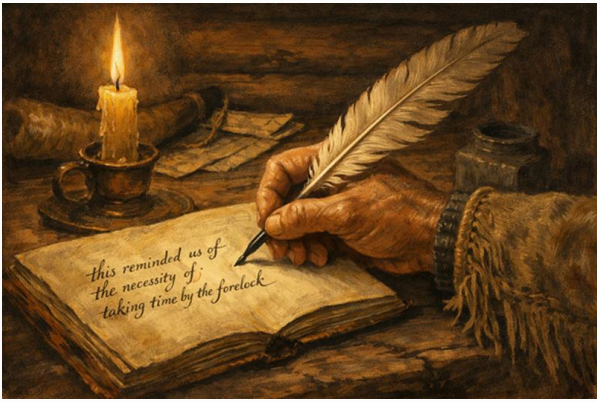
- Muffins
- Juice
- Water
- Cookies

GUIDED BY JIM SAYCE • TRASH BAGS PROVIDED

If time and weather allow, we'll continue our efforts at Chinook Park, just east of Chinook, Washington, to further clean up along the Trail. Sponsored by the Washington Chapter of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance

[Details](#)

## “Take time by the forelock”



Now there’s a phrase most folks today have never used or heard. But Meriwether Lewis was familiar with it. He penned it in his journal on Jan. 3, 1806.

Lewis perhaps did not know (or maybe he did) that the phrase dates back to ancient Rome and Greece. It came from the personification of Kairos, the god of the *opportune moment*—the

critical instant when you must take action or miss the opportunity. The way to do that with a person, for example, is to grab the person’s forelock of hair as he or she approaches—you know, that bunch of hair right above the forehead—because, if the person passes by, you’ve missed the opportunity.

The term entered English during the Renaissance, in the 1500s. Edmund Spenser, considered the Prince of Poets during Queen Elizabeth’s reign, used it in an epic poem, *The Faerie Queene* (published in 1590): “*The joyous time wil not be staid, Unlesse she doe him by the forelock take.*”

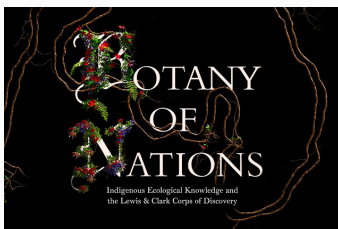
Lewis used the term in a much different manner. This was when the expedition was at Fort Clatsop for the 1805-06 winter, and food was low. Lewis stated that three expedition members returned after a long and unsuccessful hunting trip far from the fort. They had killed only one deer and “a few fowls,” barely enough to feed them. “...this reminded us of the necessity of taking time by the forelock and keep out several parties while we have yet a little meat...”

### Share the Adventure!

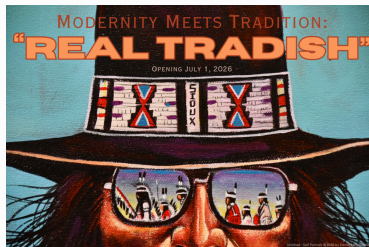


Help us expand the community by sharing the newsletter with your network. Simply provide this [sign-up link](#) to friends, family, and fellow Trail enthusiasts.

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



[Botany of Nations](#)  
Philadelphia, PA  
Ongoing Exhibit



[Akta Lakota](#)  
Chamberlain, SD  
Ongoing Exhibit



[Living History](#)  
Fort Atkinson, NE  
June 6 - 7

## Volunteer Vacations on the Lolo Trail



## Claim Your Spot Before It's Gone

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.

Register

[Musselshell Meadows](#) June 17 - 20

[Snowbank Camp](#) July 9 - 12

## 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

Last week, I had the opportunity to represent the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance at the Oregon Heritage Conference. The conference brought together leaders from across the cultural heritage field, including historic preservation, museums, archives, libraries, Main Street organizations, archaeology, Tribal programs, genealogy, public history, and local, state, and federal agencies.

It was an important opportunity to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance within conversations many heritage organizations are facing today: how do we connect modern audiences to historic places in meaningful and lasting ways?

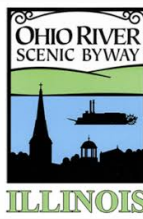
My presentation, *Meeting People Where the Story Lives: Reimagining the Lewis & Clark Trail for Today's Heritage Traveler*, explored how people increasingly discover history through travel, digital exploration, outdoor recreation, and immersive place-based experiences.

Through the Lewis & Clark Trail Experience, the LCTA is working to meet audiences where they already are—connecting communities, landscapes, and stories across the length of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

The conversation reinforced that heritage tourism is about far more than visitation. It is about building enduring relationships between people and place while ensuring these nationally significant stories remain visible, relevant, and accessible for future generations.

**Richard Hunt**

**Our Corporate and Travel Sponsors**



TRAVEL

ALLIANCE

EDUCATION



[lewisandclark.org](http://lewisandclark.org)



Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation | PO Box 3434 | Great Falls, MT 59403 US

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