



LEARN SOMETHING NEW  
EACH WEEK ON OUR  
WORLD OF WONDER PAGES!

# THE LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION

WORLD OF WONDER  
Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology

## The expedition of 1804-1806

The purpose of the mission was to find a water route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and to make peaceful contact with the Native Americans. Lewis and Clark were also instructed to map new boundaries, lay claim to the Oregon regions and announce American sovereignty.

Also known as the Corps of Discovery Mission, the Lewis and Clark expedition strengthened the United States' early claims in Louisiana and Oregon. The explorers also provided vast amounts of knowledge regarding the people, land and wildlife of the West.



Meriwether Lewis  
1774-1809

William Clark  
1770-1838

## Some of the team

In 1801, President Thomas Jefferson chose Captain Meriwether Lewis to lead an exploratory expedition west to the Pacific. About 40 to 50 men were recruited. Most were soldiers, but some were hunters and traders.

**2nd Lt. William Clark:** An old army friend of Lewis', Clark had military, cartography (mapmaking) and wilderness experience.

**York:** An enslaved man brought by Clark. Native Americans who had never seen a Black man before called York "Big Medicine" because he was such a large, strong man.

**Charles Floyd:** The only Corps of Discovery man to die on the expedition.

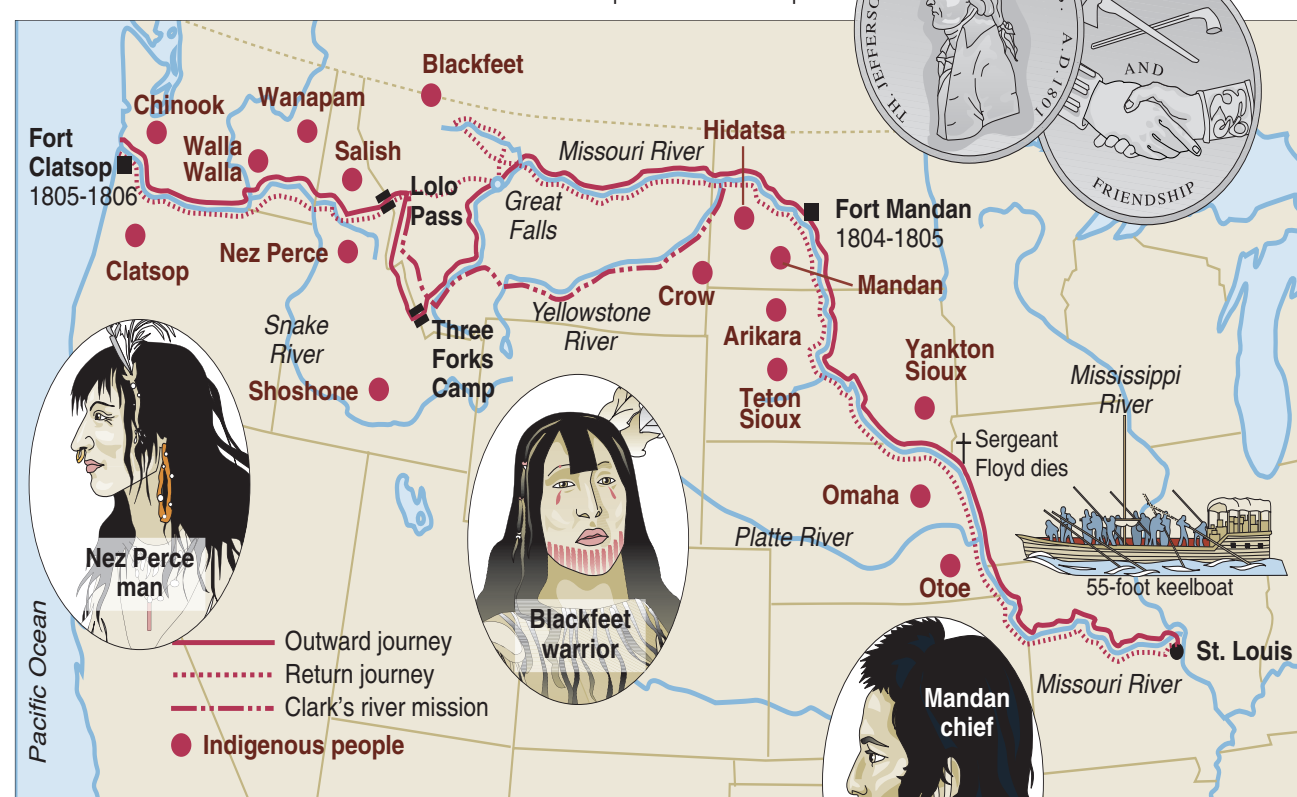
**John Ordway:** A sergeant who wrote in his journal every day.

**George Shannon:** A private who was just 17 years old when the journey began. An excellent hunter, he had a tendency to get lost — once for 16 days.

**George Drulliard:** This interpreter was also the most skilled of the hunters on the team.

**Sacagawea:** The presence of Sacagawea and her baby suggested to the Native Peoples that the explorers were peaceful.

**Seaman** (sometimes Scannon or Scammon): Lewis' Newfoundland dog often helped out by hunting up small game.



## 1803 Planning

In January, President Thomas Jefferson secretly asks Congress to approve the expedition. In May, the Louisiana Purchase is signed in Paris. In June, Jefferson sends detailed instructions to Lewis. By July, Lewis is in Pittsburgh making final plans. Lewis loads a keelboat (a large, flat-bottomed river barge) and heads for St. Louis. By December, the team is gathered, and they meet with fur traders to learn as much as they can about the West.

## 1804 First leg

In May, the expedition heads up the Missouri River. In August, the team meets with the Missouri and Otoe tribes. Deserter Moses Reed is court-martialed, and Sergeant Floyd dies of a ruptured appendix. In September, the Teton Sioux people refuse to let the explorers pass; the situation is resolved peacefully. In October, the group meets the Mandan and Hidatsa people in present-day North Dakota. They decide to winter in the area. In November, work begins on Fort Mandan, near the Mandan village. Shortly after that, the team is joined by Toussaint Charbonneau and his wife Sacagawea, who offer their services as interpreters.

## 1805 Onward

In February, Sacagawea gives birth to a baby boy. In early April, the keelboat is sent back to St. Louis with maps and reports, and the group heads up the Missouri River in smaller canoes. They shoot their first grizzly bear. In June, they are forced to portage (carry their boats over land) around the Great Falls. By the end of July, they reach Three Forks in present-day Montana. In August, Sacagawea is reunited with her Shoshone people. In September, the team crosses the Bitterroot Range of the Rocky Mountains. On Nov. 14, Lewis and a small group of men are the first to reach the Pacific Ocean. By December, they have built Fort Clatsop and settle in for the winter.

## 1806 Heading home

The expedition heads back east in March. A month later they reach the Bitterroot Mountains but are delayed by snow. In late July, Clark and his men explore the Yellowstone River while Lewis and his party explore Maria's River. In August, Lewis is accidentally shot by one of his men. On Sept. 23, the expedition arrives back in St. Louis, where they are greeted with much fanfare.



SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; <https://en.wikipedia.org>; <https://www.britannica.com>; <https://lewis-clark.org>; <https://www.nps.gov>; <https://www.ducksters.com>; <https://www.pbs.org>

© 2025 Triefeldt Studios, Inc.  
Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

LEARN ABOUT NAVIGATION IN THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF WORLD OF WONDER

CASA GRANDE  
**Dispatch**  
Serving Pinal County For More Than A Century  
Newspapers in Education

OUR WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION PAGE CAN BE A FUN LEARNING TOOL FOR YOUR KIDS. CHECK BACK EACH TUESDAY FOR A NEW, EXCITING TOPIC!

CASA GRANDE  
**Dispatch**  
TO SUBSCRIBE:  
(520) 423-8685