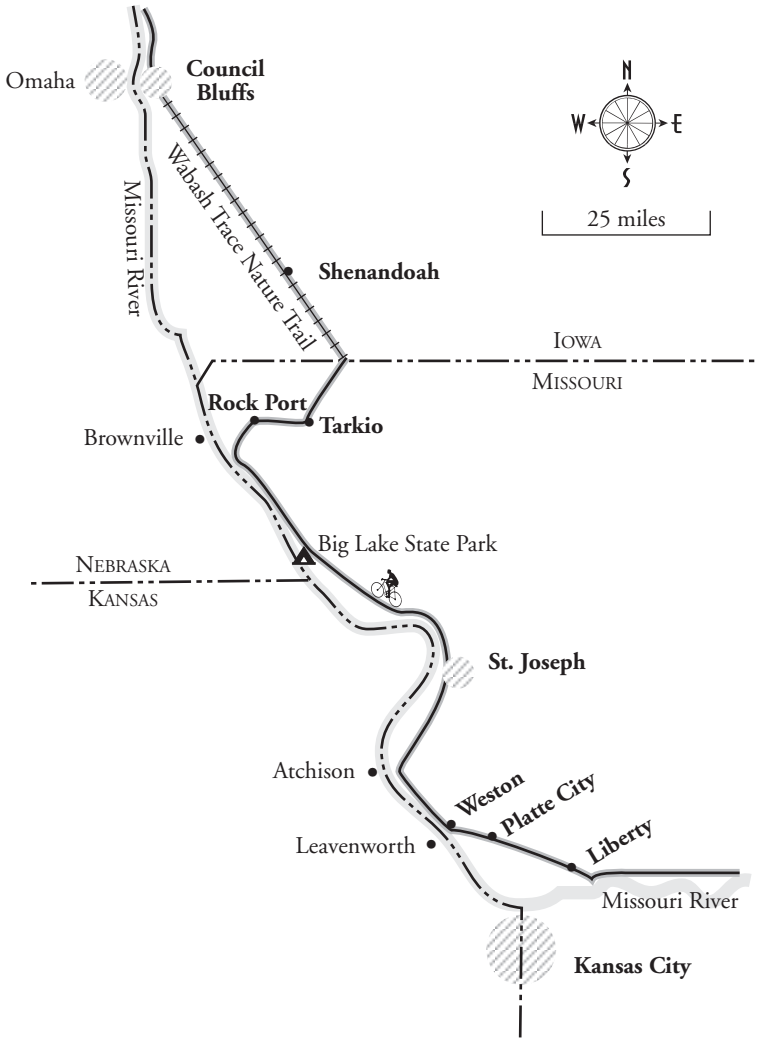




## C. TURNING NORTH

### LIBERTY, MO TO COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA



On the border of Missouri and Kansas, there are actually two cities: Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas. Our bicycle route avoids this large urban and industrial area by staying north through pleasant rural suburbs and the much more manageable towns of Liberty and Platte City. However, the route also passes conveniently by Kansas City International Airport for those wishing to join or leave the route here.

Although Kansas City is a major geographical milestone in our route today, where the river changes direction from westerly to northerly and the large Kansas River joins the Missouri River, it was not a significant milestone for Lewis and Clark. On June 26 *“we Killed a large rattle Snake, Sunning himself in the bank passed a bad Sand bar, where our tow rope broke twice, & with great exertions we rowed round it and Came to & Camped in the Point above the Kansas River. I observed a great number of Parrot queets this evening, our Party Killed Several 7 Deer today.”* Clark anticipated the future of this strategic location where *“the high lands Coms to the river Kansas on the upper Side at about a mile, full in view, and a butifull place for a fort, good landing place, the waters of the Kansas is verry disigreeably tasted to me.”*

Our bicycle route continues north along the eastern side of the Missouri River. The terrain alternates between gently rolling farmland and flat rich river bottom farmland up to St. Joseph—a bicycle-friendly, medium-size city with some hills and many services. This was the starting point for the Pony Express, and I recommend a visit to the excellent Pony Express Museum.

If you have a special interest in military history and modern military bases, it is possible to detour seven miles across the river from Weston and visit Fort Leavenworth in Leavenworth, Kansas. Today it is a large army complex with a museum of western U.S. military history. From here you can either return to the Missouri side or ride 24 miles north on the hillier Kansas side to Atchison, a very pleasant town with a rich railroading history and many beautiful historic homes—including the home of Amelia Earhart, the aviation pioneer. From Atchison it is four flat miles east across the river to rejoin the main route south of St. Joseph.

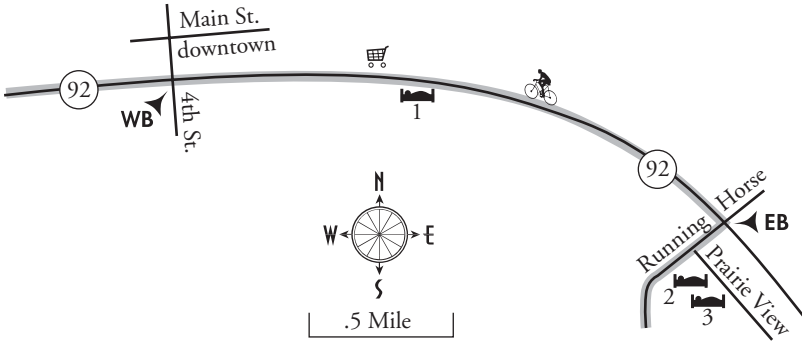
Leaving St. Joseph there are a few hills and then 72 miles of rich bottomland to Rock Port. The route heads northeast and inland here for 27 miles of hilly farm country to the tiny town of Blanchard on the Missouri-Iowa state line. Here our route picks up the Wabash Trace Nature Trail for 65 relatively flat and very scenic miles through beautiful hilly farmland into Council Bluffs.

This last stretch of hills is part of Iowa’s Loess (pronounced “luss”) Hills that run north and south along the western side of the state. This range of 200-foot hills was created by very fine soil similar to that found in parts of China and farther along our route in the Palouse of eastern Washington. This dirt was ground as fine as flour by the last glaciers 18,000 years ago, and then was blown by the wind into rounded hills.

## Platte City, MO

Population: 3,000

Platte City is a possible place to find a motel and restaurant, or to shop for food before continuing on to camp at Weston Bend State Park five miles farther west.



**Platte City, MO** — Zip: 64079

- 1) Comfort Inn (\$\$), 1200 Route 92, 800-228-5150
- 2) Super 8 Motel (\$\$), Prairie View Rd., 800-800-8000
- 3) AmericInn (\$\$), Prairie View Rd., 816-858-0200

## Weston, MO

Population: 1,600

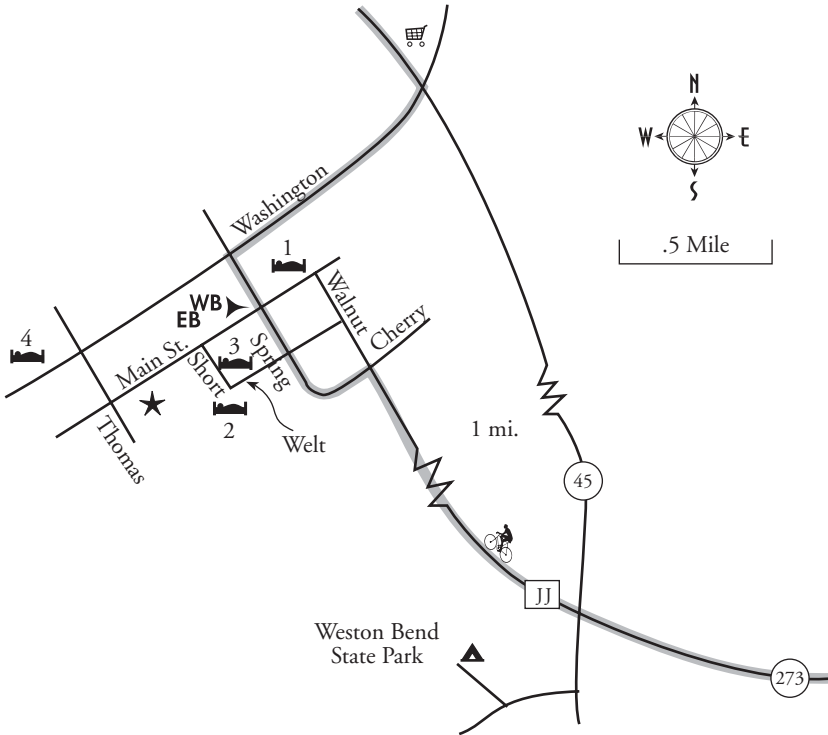
Weston was originally founded as a shipping port for the tobacco and hemp grown in the area. At one time Weston was the largest hemp port in the world, and it served many pioneers on the Oregon and California Trails. After Fort Leavenworth was built across the river, the town took advantage of its strategic location to sell both tobacco and liquor to the soldiers. The town died in the late 19th century after the Missouri River shifted its course westward, and then two large fires destroyed many buildings. In the last 30 years many people have worked successfully to bring Weston very much back to life.

It is now a very pleasant small town that is part “real” and part restored for tourists. The blend works well. There are several good restaurants, B&Bs, and interesting shops in restored historic buildings; but the town is not at all overrun with tourists. The Weston Café serves a great breakfast to both visitors and local working people. Just east of town is the McCormick Distillery, which claims to be the oldest distillery in the country (disputed by Jack Daniels!). If you want to taste their bourbon, you can buy some at their downtown store.

When Lewis and Clark camped near Weston on the night of June 30, 1804, *“one of the Sentinals challenged either a man or Beast, which run off, all prepared for action.”* Keep in mind that this was a military expedition venturing into unknown Indian territory. On a lighter note, *“Turkeys are plenty on the Shore, G. Drewyer inform that he Saw PueCanns (pecan) Trees great quantities of raspuries and grapes.”*



Main Street, Weston, MO



### Weston, MO — Zip: 64098

- ★ **Weston Development Company:** 502 Main, 816-640-2909, [www.ci.weston.mo.us](http://www.ci.weston.mo.us)
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources** (State Parks), Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102, 800-334-6946
- 🏠 1) Benner House (\$\$-\$\$\$), 645 Main, 816-640-2616; <http://ci.weston.mo.us>; restored 1898 gothic home; quiet downtown location; pool and hot tub; queen beds and private baths; full breakfast; reduced weekday rates; reservations recommended.
- 2) Inn at Weston Landing (\$\$), Short and Welt, 816-640-5788
- 3) Hatchery B&B (\$\$), 618 Short, 816-640-5700
- 4) Lemon Tree B&B (\$\$), 407 Washington, 816-386-5367
- ▲ 1) Weston Bend State Park, on Route 45 one mi. south of Route JJ and 273, about 3.5 hilly mi. east of town, good grass/shade/privacy, clean restroom with showers and laundry
- 2) Lewis and Clark State Park, 13 mi. north on Route 45 on Sugar Lake (old oxbow from Missouri River), flat, good grass and shade, less privacy, covered

picnic pavilion, swimming and boating, clean restroom with showers and laundry

Lewis and Clark passed the site of this state park on Independence Day, July 4, 1804. They “*ussered in the day by a discharge of one shot from our Bow piece, proceeded on, passed the mouth of a Bayeau lading from a large Lake on the Starboard Side.*”

## St. Joseph, MO

Population: 72,000

St. Joseph was founded as an Indian trading post on the bluffs above the Missouri River by Joseph Robidoux 20 years after the Lewis and Clark expedition. Although it is best known as the starting point for the Pony Express, it was also a very large and prosperous trading port, manufacturing center, and staging point for many westward pioneers. It was considered as the possible eastern terminus for the first transcontinental railroad, but questions about slavery and stability led Lincoln to choose Council Bluffs instead. Unlike Weston, St. Joseph has changed and adapted over the years and continued to grow as a regional business center.

Since the city is mostly a “low-rise” city, traffic is not bad for bicycles, except for the downtown area and the modern mall area on the Belt Highway. However, this also means the city is pretty spread out, and you will need your bicycle to get around. Our bicycle route through town meanders a bit to try to avoid traffic and unnecessary hills.

I consider the Pony Express Museum a “must see” attraction. The displays and interpretations of this short-lived—but exciting and romantic—venture are very well done. A visitor center is around the corner from the Pony Express Museum, and it’s easy to stop in here to figure out what other attractions you might like to visit.

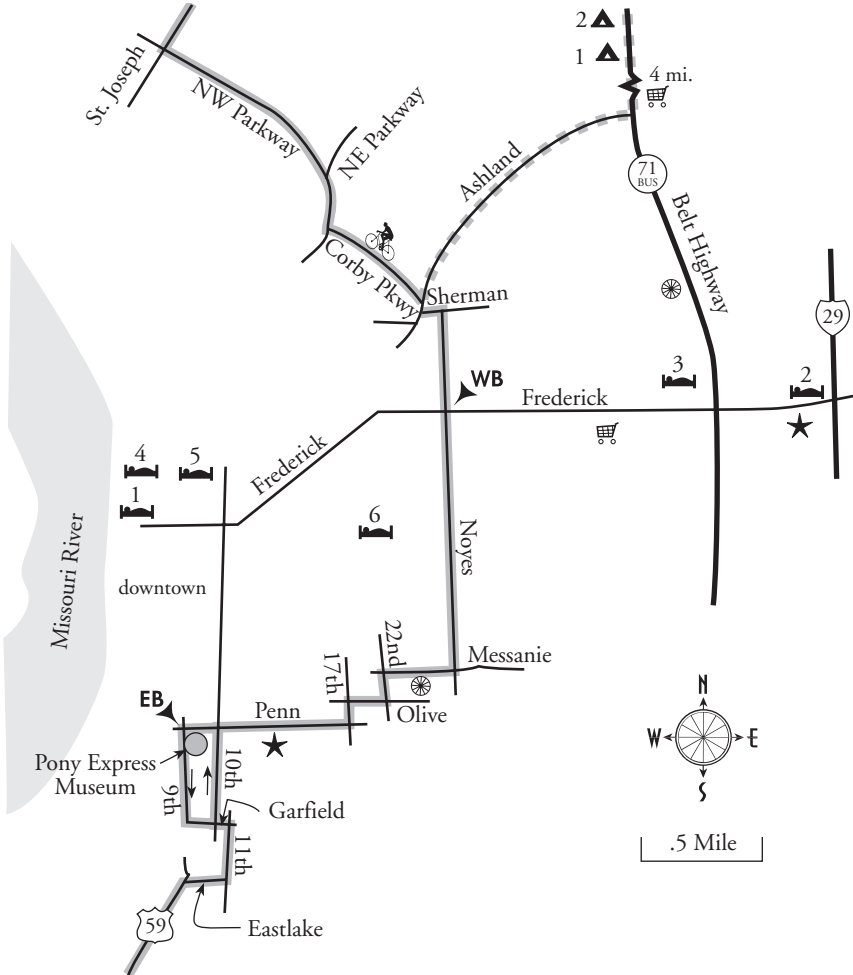
The Jesse James home, where the famous bank robber was shot and killed by one of his gang members, and several other museums are nearby. The Stetson hat factory and outlet store are located a couple of miles east of downtown if you are interested in western style and protection from the elements.

If you still crave more riding, St. Joseph’s Parkway offers 26 miles of very pleasant hilly riding through a series of inter-connecting parks and greenways in a semicircle around the city.



*Historic mansions on Hall Street, St. Joseph, MO*

St. Joseph offers several B&Bs in historic mansions and a wide variety of restaurants spread around the city. Most of the motels are either downtown or clustered along with franchise restaurants near the intersection of I-29 and Frederick Blvd. two miles east of downtown. Camping is available at two private campgrounds six miles north of Frederick Blvd., and you should do your food shopping before you head out there.



### St. Joseph, MO — Zip: 64502

★ **St. Joseph Convention and Visitors Bureau:** 109 S 4th, seasonal offices on Penn and near I-29 interchange, 800-785-0360, [www.stjomo.com](http://www.stjomo.com), [cvb@stjomo.com](mailto:cvb@stjomo.com)

🏠 1) Holiday Inn (\$\$), 102 S 3rd, 800-824-7402

2) Motel 6 (\$), 4021 Frederick, 816-232-2311

- 3) Budget Motor Inn (\$), 1328 Belt Hwy., 816-233-3146
  - 4) Schuster Mansion B&B (\$\$), 703 Hall, 816-233-6017
  - 5) Shakespeare Chateau B&B (\$\$), 809 Hall, 816-232-2667
  - 6) Harding House B&B (\$\$), 219 N 20th, 816-232-7020
- ▲ 1) Walnut Grove Campground (816-233-1974) is located 0.2 mi. down a gravel road off the Belt Highway near I-29. Sites are somewhat hilly, but there is some grass, shade, and privacy. Restrooms are old but clean.
- 2) AOK Campground (816-324-4263) is located 0.4 mi. down a gravel road off the Belt Highway. The tenting area next to a pond is level, grassy, and open with some shade and some covered picnic tables. Restrooms are satisfactory, and there is a small pool.
- ⊗ 1) Bicycles by Savarino, 2402 Messanie, 816-364-1488
- 2) Ride Bicycles, 2320 N Belt Highway, 816-233-1718

### ROUTE NORTH (WESTBOUND) FROM ST. JOSEPH

You should be aware that the recommended route north (westbound) has four miles of moderate dirt road with eight little nuisance hills of about 50 vertical feet each. I had no trouble riding this road on my touring bike with 35c tires. There is no food shopping for 40 miles, so you should stock up on whatever you need before leaving St. Joseph. The good news is that there is NO traffic, only a few hills near St. Joseph, and beautiful quiet riding along the flat bottomland near the river.



*One of eight "little nuisance hills" on scenic dirt road north of St. Joseph, MO*

If you really hate dirt roads, or if you are camping north of town and don't want to double back, the alternative is to ride north on Business 71 through Savannah and west on Route 59 through Oregon to rejoin the main route in Forest City. This alternate route includes 20 miles of four-lane divided highway, with traffic varying from heavy near St. Joseph to light in Oregon, and 2.6 miles on Interstate 29 with big dirty shoulders and very fast (but light) traffic. The advantages of this

alternate route are paved roads and good food shopping in Savannah. Also, if you're camping, you're already six miles into this route and only have 39 miles to Big Lake State Park.



**Big Lake State Park**, Big Lake Village, MO 64437, 660-442-5432, (800-334-6946 for state reservation system)

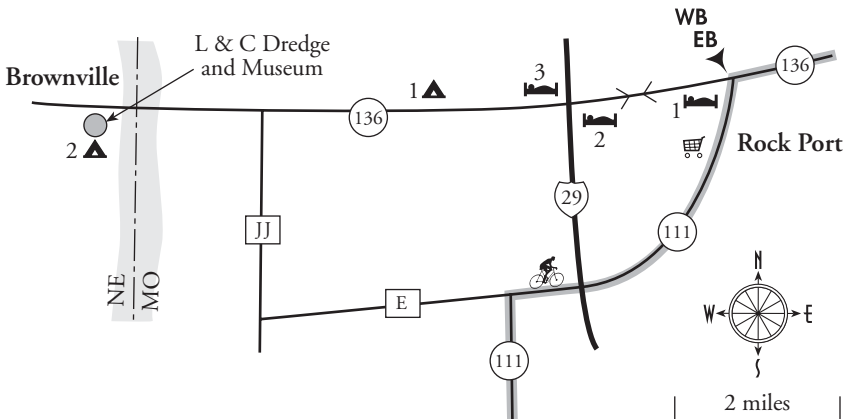
This large flat park has grass and shady trees next to a lake which used to be an oxbow in the Missouri River. Camping, boating, and fishing are very popular, and there is a separate swimming pool. The unusual thing about this park is that it also offers motel rooms, suites, and cabins at reasonable prices. There is a camp store that sells some groceries and a dining lodge that offers buffet meals. The catch is that this park is very popular for family weekends and reunions, and reservations are required—well in advance if you want a room or cabin.

It was near here on July 12, 1804, that Captains Lewis and Clark held a court martial for Alexander Willard, who was accused of lying down and falling asleep while on guard duty the night before. This may seem like a natural thing to do and a minor crime, but the military considered this very significant—punishable by death. After all, the lives of the whole party depend on the sentinel. Willard got off lucky with 25 lashes each evening for four days, and once again all the men were reminded of the seriousness of their mission and the need for discipline.

## Rock Port, MO

Population: 1,500

Rock Port is a possible place to find a motel and restaurant, and to shop for food before continuing on to camp along the Wabash Trace or at the KOA just west of the I-29 interchange. There are restaurants both downtown and on Route 136 near I-29.



**Rock Port, MO** — Zip: 64482

- 1) White Rock Motel (\$), 660-744-5363
- 2) Rock Port Inn (\$\$), 660-744-6282
- 3) Oak Grove Inn (\$\$), 660-744-5357
- ▲ 1) KOA, 660-744-5485

## Brownville, NE

Population: 150

Although it requires an additional 14 miles (45 vs. 31) between Big Lake and Rock Port, and probably an extra day to enjoy the attractions, a visit to this delightful town will be worth it for many people. In 1956 a group of local residents set out to preserve this historic small river town, and they have done an admirable job. It now includes a historical museum which is open afternoons, the Brownville Village Theatre (402-825-4121) that offers weekend summer performances, the Belle of Brownville river cruise boat (402-825-6441), and the Captain Meriwether Lewis—a 269-foot river dredge boat that operated on the river from 1932 to 1969 and is now a museum of early life on the river.

The town was originally founded in 1854, 40 years after Lewis and Clark came up the river. It was a major steamboat landing and river crossing, with as many as ten steamboats stopping each day. The bridge across the Missouri River was completed in 1939 and was quite advanced for its time. In 1857 the Brownville Medical College was established here, and the main building can still be seen as the Methodist church. Today there are several other historic buildings to enjoy.

If you are thinking of staying overnight, there are two restaurants in town and a primitive campground near the bridge. See Rock Port for more camping, lodging, and restaurants five to eight miles east—and on our route. More information about the town can be obtained from the Brownville Historical Society, Box 1, (402-825-6001), and the Brownville fine Arts Association, Box 4, (402-825-3331).

Zip: 68321

- ▲ 2) Brownville State Recreation Area, primitive camping near Route 136 bridge in Brownville, rough grass, shade, pit toilet, no water

*Captain Meriwether Lewis Museum of Missouri River History, located in a restored 269-foot Corps of Engineers side-wheeler dredge, Brownville, NE*



## Tarkio, MO

Population: 2,200

Tarkio is a possible overnight stop in the middle of hilly farming country, with a motel, medium supermarket, and small restaurants.

Zip: 64491

🏠 Big T Motel (\$), 816-736-4174

## Shenandoah, IA

Population: 6,000

Shenandoah is a regional farm center and a good stopping place on the Wabash Trace Nature Trail. It has three motels and several restaurants in a flat town almost small enough to walk around. There are also two places to camp and good food shopping, and there may be more accommodations as the town gradually builds up its tourist business for the Wabash Trace. Shenandoah also claims some national fame as the home of the Everly Brothers.

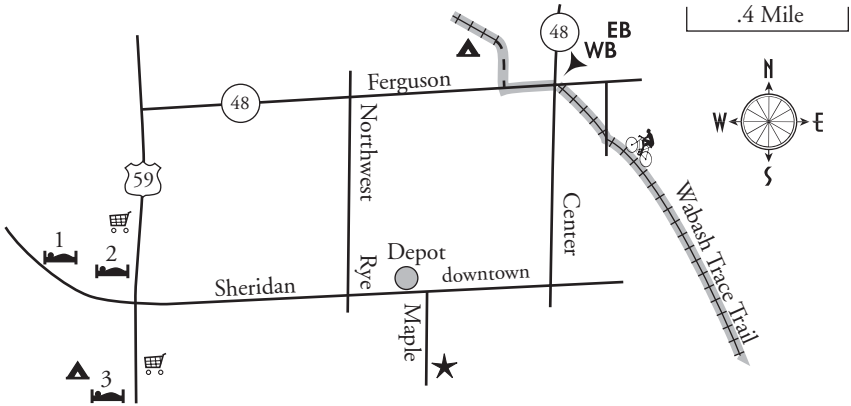
The Wabash Trace is a 63-mile rail trail running from Blanchard on the Missouri state line northwest to Council Bluffs. It is surfaced with hard packed crushed limestone and is good riding for all but thin racing tires. If the southern section is muddy after a lot of rain, it's easy to ride to Shenandoah on nearby county roads that are laid out in a square grid. The quality of the Trail improves as it ages and you pedal closer to the population centers near Council Bluffs.

This trail was originally used as a pioneer and military road. In 1878 tracks were laid by the Council Bluffs and St. Louis Railway, which was later acquired by the Wabash Railroad. It is amazing how they found an almost level route through the Loess Hills of western Iowa. The trail provides wonderful quiet views of rich rolling farmland and small towns.



*Depot Restaurant and  
Wabash Trace Nature  
Trail Headquarters,  
Shenandoah, IA*

Wabash Trace headquarters is located in the Depot Restaurant in the middle of downtown. This local institution is owned and operated by Bill Hillman, the force behind the Wabash Trace; and you can get good meals in this historic restoration from early morning until late at night.



**Shenandoah, IA — Zip: 51601**

- ★ **Shenandoah Chamber and Industry Association:** 301 Maple, 712-246-3455
- 🏠 1) Country Inn (\$\$), Sheridan and Route 59, 712-246-1550
- 2) Days Inn (\$\$), Route 59 and Sheridan, 712-246-5733
- 3) Fifty Niner Motel (\$), Route 59 and Nishna, 712-246-2925
- ▲ 1) Fifty Niner CG, Route 59 and Nishna, 712-246-2925
- 2) City Park, Ferguson and Wabash Trace, 712-246-3409

*Cycling on the Wabash Trace Nature Trail, Iowa*



## Council Bluffs, IA

Population: 55,000

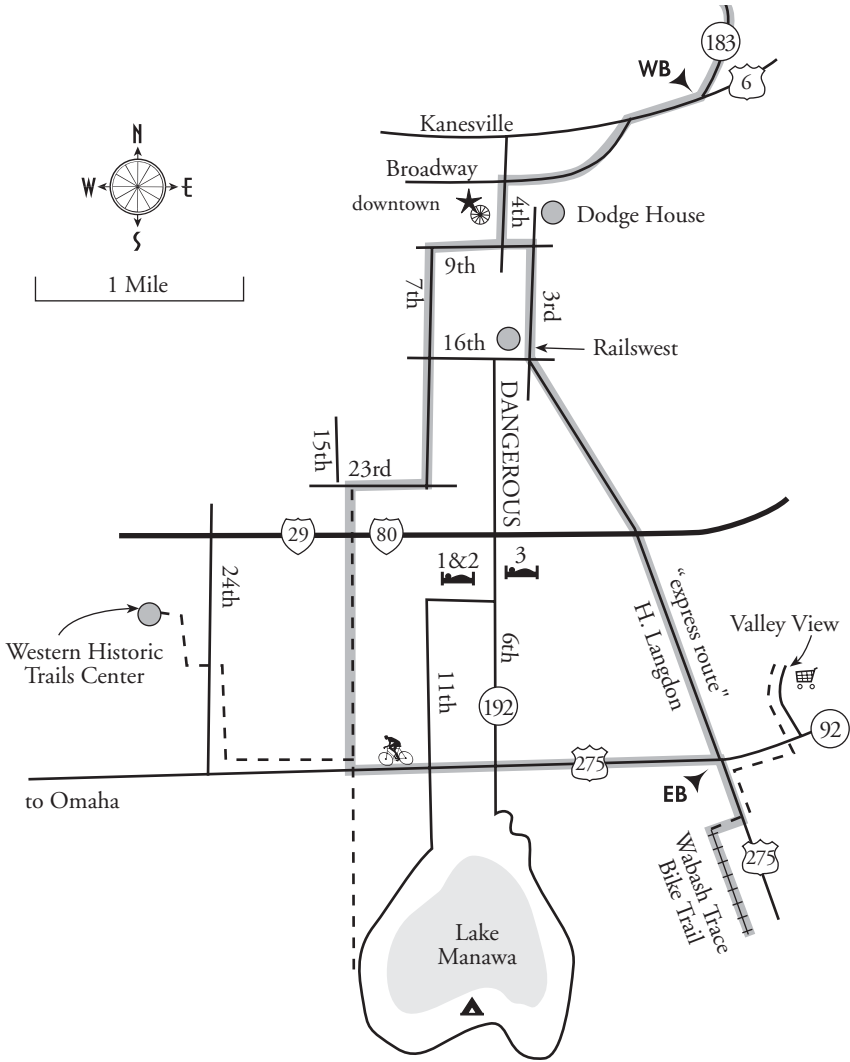
Although Council Bluffs sometimes feels like a poor relation of Omaha across the river, it has everything a bicycle tourer needs and a number of things to recommend it. Lake Manawa offers pleasant lakeside camping just south of town. There is a wide selection of motels, mostly located near exits of the two major interstate highways. There are many restaurants, which tend to be spread out around the downtown area or clustered near the motels around the interstate exits. The city is too spread out for walking; you need your bicycle to get around. Traffic can be heavy in some areas, so the recommended bicycle route appears somewhat indirect on the city map. Sixth Street (Route 192) may look appealing as a direct north-south route, however it is very busy; and the elevated section north of I-29 is very fast, narrow, dirty, and dangerous for bicycles.

Although Lewis and Clark camped at present day Long's Landing (south of Lake Manawa) for five days looking for Indians, they actually had their first "council" with the Otos and Missouris several days later about 20 miles upriver on the "bluffs" near present day Fort Calhoun. Today's city of Council Bluffs was settled as Kanesville in 1846 by Mormons travelling west to escape religious persecution. The name was changed to Council Bluffs in 1853, and the town was thriving before Omaha was settled.

I consider the new Western Historic Trails Center a "must see" in the southwest edge of the city along the Missouri River. It features very good displays and interpretations of the Lewis and Clark, Mormon, Oregon, and California Trails. The Lewis and Clark Monument and Scenic Overlook just north of town provides a great view of the river and Omaha, but it's up a steep hill. Railroad fans might like the Railswest Museum, HO Model Display, and Railroad Transportation Museum. The General Dodge House is a beautiful restoration of the home of Grenville Dodge—Civil War General, friend of Lincoln, and surveyor for the first transcontinental railroad.

### Council Bluffs, IA — Zip: 51502

- ★ **Council Bluffs Convention and Visitor's Center:** 7 N 6th St., 800-228-6878, [www.councilbluffsia.com](http://www.councilbluffsia.com)
- 🏠 The Visitor's Center lists 19 motels and 2 B&Bs. A small sample of convenient locations is listed here:
  - 1) Motel 6 (\$\$), 6th St. south of I-80, 800-466-8356
  - 2) Econo Lodge (\$\$), 6th St. south of I-80, 800-229-5150
  - 3) Settle Inn (\$\$), 500 S 30th Ave., 888-980-5555
- ▲ Lake Manawa State Park, South Shore Drive, (south on 6th St.), 712-366-0220
- 🌀 Endless Trail, 506 S Main, 712-322-9760



Modern and historic obstacles on the Missouri River, behind the Western Historic Trails Center, Council Bluffs, IA



## **Bicycle Guide to the Lewis & Clark Trail**

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### **Disclaimers**

The author and publisher of this book, and the government agencies on whose roads you bicycle, are not responsible for your riding habits, bicycle condition, and any accidents which might occur while following this route. They urge users of this Guide to wear a certified bicycle helmet, wear highly visible clothing, use reflectors and lights, obey all traffic laws, watch for pedestrians and motorists, and generally use good common sense and courtesy.

Road and trail conditions change. The routes suggested in this book may be altered due to road and trail maintenance, changes in state and local roads, and road and trail surface conditions. Surface conditions of roads and trails may change due to weather, construction, and other local factors. Every effort has been made to provide accurate information in this book at the time of publication.

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ISBN 0-9704027-0-8

Design and Composition by Lyn Rodger, Deerfoot Studios.

Cover design by Lyn Rodger, Deerfoot Studios.