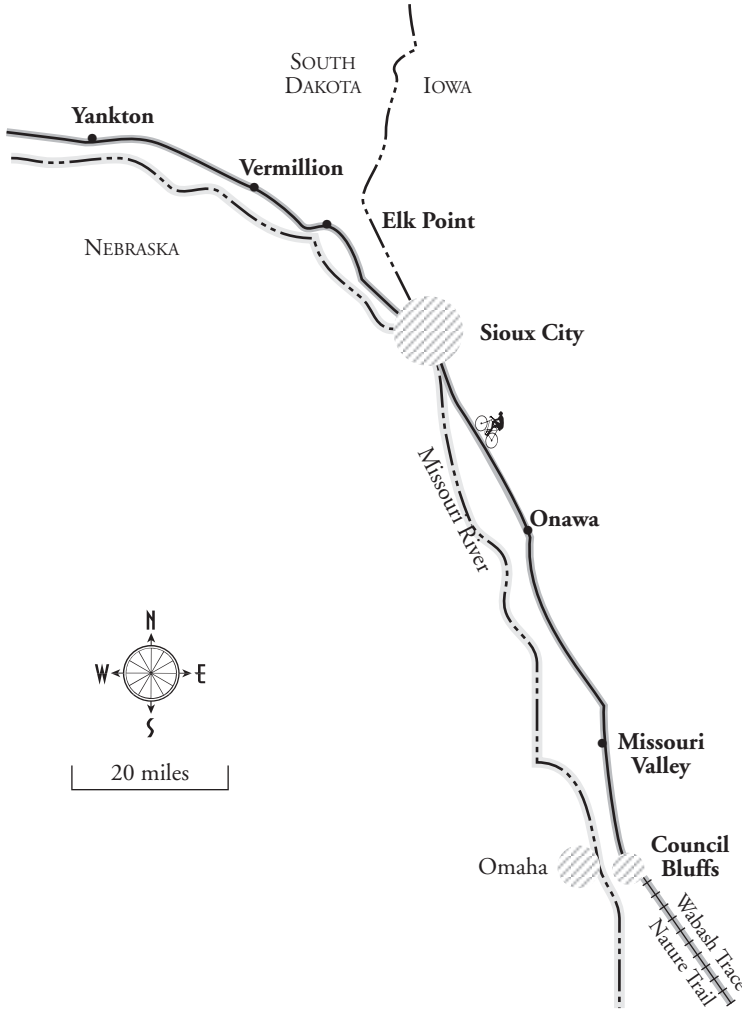




## D. BOTTOMLAND

### COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA TO YANKTON, SD



Although we've already seen flat bottomland along the river in Missouri, north of Council Bluffs there is an even wider and more extensive flood plain—mostly on the Iowa side. This provides relatively flat riding for 170 miles to Yankton. Savor the flat riding here and hope that the wind is blowing your way on these wide open spaces.

## IOWA VS NEBRASKA

The 110 miles between Council Bluffs and Sioux City can be ridden on either side of the river, but I prefer the Iowa side for several reasons. First, it is about ten miles shorter and flatter. There are some hills just north of Council Bluffs, but most of the route is along river bottomland. Second, camping is better in Iowa with two excellent state parks near Missouri Valley and Onawa. Third, motels are a little better in Iowa, with options evenly spaced in Missouri Valley and Onawa. Finally, traffic is a little lighter in Council Bluffs than Omaha, and you can avoid riding the bridge across the Missouri River between the two cities.

The Iowa side offers the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge and its natural and cultural history. In spring and fall migrations, half a million snow geese fill the air and feed here. There is also a permanent display of an 1860 sternwheeler and its artifacts found here in 1968. Near Onawa, Lewis and Clark State Park offers good camping on a lake that used to be an oxbow of the river. It also offers replicas of the keelboat and pirogues used by the Corps of Discovery.

However, there are some valid reasons for visiting Omaha and riding up the Nebraska side. The Omaha Airport is reasonably convenient for cyclists wanting to start or end a segment here. Omaha has a number of interesting attractions which are easily accessible to cyclists, like the Old Market, Union Station, Mormon Winter Quarters, and the Joslyn Art Museum. Boys Town and the Strategic Air Command Museum are interesting, but not easily accessible by bicycle.

Nebraska also offers Fort Atkinson State Park (in the town of Fort Calhoun) and its history. This is the spot where Lewis and Clark had their first big council with Indian chiefs, although the state park is mostly devoted to displaying and interpreting the fort built here in 1820 on the recommendation of Lewis and Clark. It was the first U.S. fort west of the Missouri, and was important in the early years of fur trade, river traffic, and Indian relations.

Up a 300-foot hill just above Decatur, Nebraska, is a memorial to Chief Blackbird, who died of smallpox along with 400 of his tribe four years before Lewis and Clark arrived. Although Blackbird was friendly to white traders, even though they brought the smallpox, he had a reputation of ruthlessly poisoning his personal enemies. On August 11 Lewis and Clark stopped to climb Blackbird Hill to pay their respects and enjoy the view.

It is also possible to cross the river back and forth to see things that are important to you. To visit Omaha (Nebraska) from Council Bluffs (Iowa) is about a 15-mile round trip of highway riding with a busy hilly bridge. To cross between Blair (Nebraska) and Missouri Valley (Iowa) is 10 flat miles with light traffic, and between Decatur (Nebraska) and Onawa (Iowa) is 8 flat miles with light traffic.

Although our bicycle route goes up the Iowa side, it's not hard to get a Nebraska map and follow Route 75 in Nebraska. The town description for Omaha includes a route to the airport and sources for more information about both Omaha and Nebraska.

The final 70 miles from Sioux City to Yankton is more flat bottomland with a nice break in the middle in Vermillion, home of the University of South Dakota, sitting on a treed bluff oasis above the bottomland.



*A different kind of cycling at Old Market, Omaha, NE*

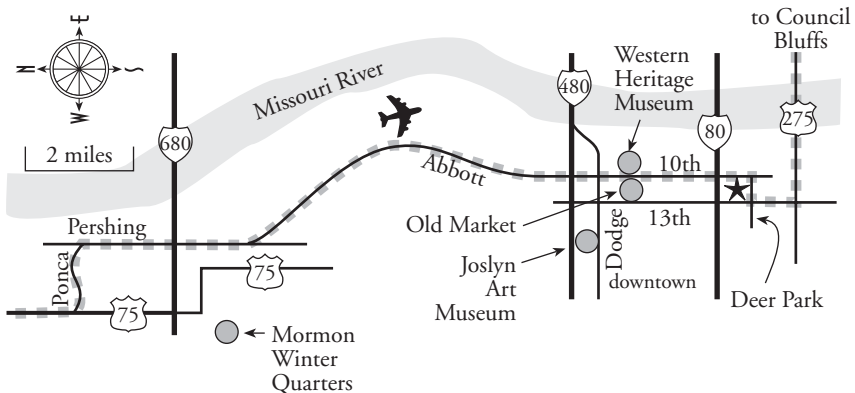
## Omaha, NE

Population: 355,000

Omaha is a *big* city on the west bank of the Missouri River opposite Council Bluffs. It has grown from a major river port and regional farm center to also become the financial, insurance, and telemarketing center for much of the Midwest.

The spur route to the airport passes directly by the Western Heritage Museum in the refurbished Union Pacific train station and the Old Market—several blocks of restaurants and shops in old warehouses. North of downtown is Eppley Airfield (Omaha's airport). Just a few blocks off the route is the Joslyn Art Museum—which houses an excellent collection of Western United States art by Bodmer and others, as well as a broad sampling of classical art in an art deco building. North of the airport is the Mormon Winter Quarters Museum and Cemetery, which commemorates their winter encampment here before they moved on to Salt Lake City. No matter what your religious convictions, you have to be impressed by their determination, as illustrated by the statue of the family travelling on to Utah pulling all their belongings in a handcart.

If you want to explore Omaha west of the river, be prepared for hills. Although there are several pleasant paved bike trails that follow river beds, they generally don't go where you want to go. If you have access to transportation, Boys Town is 12 miles west of downtown on Route 6, and the new SAC (Strategic Air Command) Museum is now 28 miles southwest on I-80.



**Omaha, NE** — Zip: 68106

★ **Greater Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau:** 6800 Mercy Rd., (10th St., just south of I-80), Omaha, NE 68106-2627, 800-332-1819; [www.visitomaha.com](http://www.visitomaha.com)

**Nebraska Office of Tourism,** 700 S 16th St., Lincoln, NE 68509, 800-228-4307; [www.visitnebraska.org](http://www.visitnebraska.org)

## Missouri Valley, IA

Population: 3,000

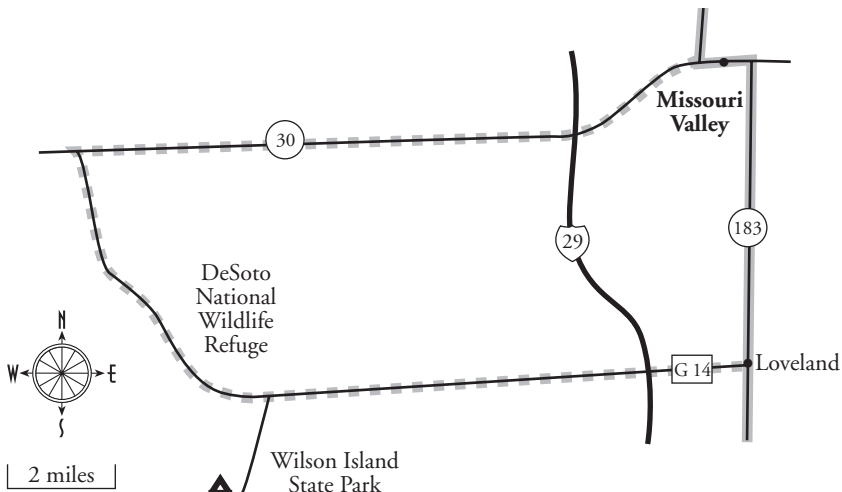
Missouri Valley grew as an agricultural center after the Union Pacific Railroad came through in 1871. In the early 1900s the Lincoln Highway was established as the first transcontinental highway, and today Route 30 marks this historic route through town. The town is also on the crossroads of I-29 and Route 183, part of today's Loess Hills Scenic Byway.

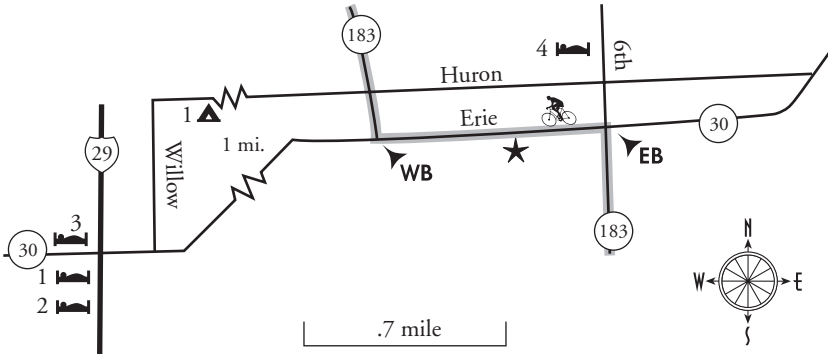


*Varied architecture on Main Street, Missouri Valley, IA*

You can find motels and restaurants out by the I-29 interchange, as well as a B&B and several restaurants within walking distance in the downtown area. The map below shows a pleasant detour through the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge and Wilson Island State Park.

Although it's seven miles off the route, Wilson Island offers very pleasant camping, and it's all flat. The refuge is most famous for the spring and fall migrations of ducks and geese, as well as a museum of relics recovered from the steamboat Bertrand. To summarize distances, camping at Wilson Island adds 15 miles, and completing the loop through DeSoto Refuge adds an extra 5 miles.





### Missouri Valley, IA — Zip: 51555

★ **Missouri Valley Chamber of Commerce:** 400 E Erie, 712-642-2553, [www.missourivalley.com](http://www.missourivalley.com), [chambermv@aol.com](mailto:chambermv@aol.com)

- 🏠 1) Super 8 Motel (\$\$), 800-800-8000
  - 2) Rath Travelers Inn (\$\$), 712-642-2723
  - 3) Days Inn (\$\$), 712-642-4003
  - 4) White House B&B (\$\$), 217 N 5th, 888-204-6873
- ▲ 1) Missouri Valley City Park, restrooms, no showers
  - 2) Wilson Island Recreation Area, 7 flat mi. west of Route 183 just above Loveland, near river, grass, shade, showers, 712-642-2069

#### Special Events

Gospel Sing, 4th weekend in June  
Harrison County Fair, 4th weekend in July

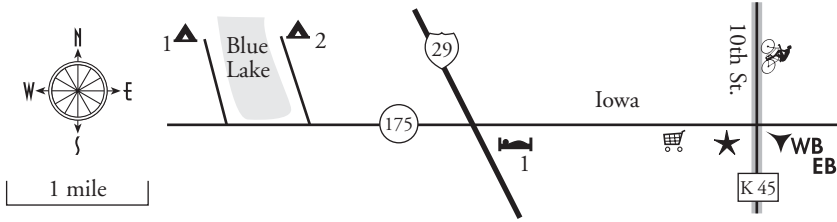
**Special Attractions:** DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, Box 114, Missouri Valley, IA, 51555, 712-642-4121

## Onawa, IA

Population: 3,000

Originally an agricultural center in the middle of a corn and soybean area, Onawa is now the county seat of Monona County, and many people are employed in government and services. “Onawa” means “wide awake,” and “monona” means “beautiful valley” in the local Omaha Indian dialect.

In this century Onawa has gained some fame as the home of the Eskimo Pie. It is also proud of having the widest main street in the United States, which is used to host car shows and promote a welcoming environment. There are several restaurants, good food shopping, a motel out by the I-29 interchange, and two campgrounds on Blue Lake—a former oxbow in the Missouri River.



### Onawa, IA — Zip: 51040

- ★ **Onawa Chamber of Commerce**  
1009 Iowa Ave., 712-423-1801, [www.onawa.com](http://www.onawa.com), [chamber@onawa.com](mailto:chamber@onawa.com)
- 🏠 **Super 8 Motel (\$\$)**, Route 175 and I-29, 712-423-2101
- ▲ 1) **Lewis and Clark State Park**, 4 flat mi. west on Route 175, replica keelboat and pirogues, swimming, showers, 712-423-2829
- 2) **Onawa Blue Lake KOA**, 4 flat mi. west on Route 175, pool, showers, laundry, convenience store, 800-562-4182

### Special Events

- Lewis and Clark Festival, 2nd weekend in June (keelboat display, muzzle-loader shoot, quilt show, etc.)
- Graffiti Night, 3rd Saturday in June (music, car show)
- Car Show, 3rd Saturday in August
- Monona County Fair, July



*Widest Main Street in America, Onawa, IA*

## Sioux City, IA, So. Sioux City, NE, N. Sioux City, SD

Populations: 85,000 — 9,700 — 2,000

Sioux City is located in Iowa, on the north bank of the Missouri River, sandwiched between the Sioux and Floyd rivers. It is also the intersection of three states; and all these rivers, bridges, railroads, and boundaries make bicycle travel somewhat complicated. It is also potentially confusing, because there are actually three cities in three states—Sioux City, Iowa; South Sioux City, Nebraska; and North Sioux City, South Dakota (actually located west of Sioux City). This is a relatively large metropolitan area with lots of traffic and lots of services spread out over a wide geographic area. However, by using the map below with a little thought and planning, it can be a very pleasant place with easy riding.

This is an ideal resting point for bicycle tourers, and most will want to stop either in South Sioux City, Nebraska—one mile from downtown on the south side of the Missouri River—or North Sioux City, South Dakota—about six miles north and west of downtown Sioux City. It is possible to breeze through the edge of downtown Sioux City on a pleasant bike path along the Missouri River. Fortunately, the excellent Sergeant Floyd Visitor Center and Riverboat Museum are located right on this bike path.

South Sioux City, Nebraska, is both a self-contained town of 9,700 and an appendage of Sioux City, Iowa. There is good camping right on the river, good food shopping, several motels, and many restaurants. Although it's possible to get around town by walking, traffic is light and you will probably want to use your bicycle. An easy half-mile ride across a sidewalk on the Veteran's Bridge on Dakota Ave. takes you to a bike path along the north side of the river.



*Our bike route along the Big Sioux River, Sioux City, IA*

The bike path runs east along the river through Gateway Park, with a connector into downtown Sioux City, Iowa. Our route follows the bike path west through Larsen Park to the Sergeant Floyd Visitor Center and Riverboat Museum. It continues four miles farther west—running between I-29 and the river to provide scenic riding and a pleasant relief from traffic. After a stretch along the Big Sioux River, ride through Riverside Park and return to the highway.

The other good option for spending the night is in North Sioux City, South Dakota, about six miles west of Sioux City. Near I-29 is a KOA campground, several motels listed below, and several restaurants. There is food shopping between Riverside Park and this area.



The free Sergeant Floyd Visitor Center and Riverboat Museum is housed in an old landlocked riverboat, and is definitely worth a visit. It has a number of exhibits on the Lewis and Clark expedition, as well as life on the river. Blair Chicoine, who recently died from leukemia, had a shop on board where he made wonderful boat models. His model of the Lewis and Clark keelboat helped me understand this boat much better than all the descriptions, sketches, and replicas I have seen. Having grown up on a farm in the Missouri River bottomland nearby, he knew a lot about back roads, the shifting course of the river over the last 200 years, and the Lewis and Clark expedition's campsites in this area.



*Sergeant Floyd Museum and Welcome Center*

Sioux City is also known as the place where Sergeant Floyd died—the only man to die on the expedition. Death was probably caused by a burst appendix, which probably would have resulted in death even in a major city with good medical facilities and doctors. On August 20 Clark wrote, *“I am Dull & heavy been up the greater Part of last night with Serjt. Floyd, who . . . expired with a great deel of composure, having Said to me before his death that he was going away and wished me to write a letter—we Buried him to the top of a high round hill over looking the river & Countrey for a great distance Situated just below a Small river without a name to which we name & call Floyds river, the Bluffs Serjts. Floyds Bluff.”*

Although the grave had to be moved twice as the river changed course and ate away at the bluff, today there is a tall obelisk on a nearby bluff on the east bank of the river just south of the city. The roads to the monument are quite dangerous for cyclists, because they have curbs, no shoulders, and carry lots of traffic. It's best to honor Floyd and enjoy this visible memorial from a distance.

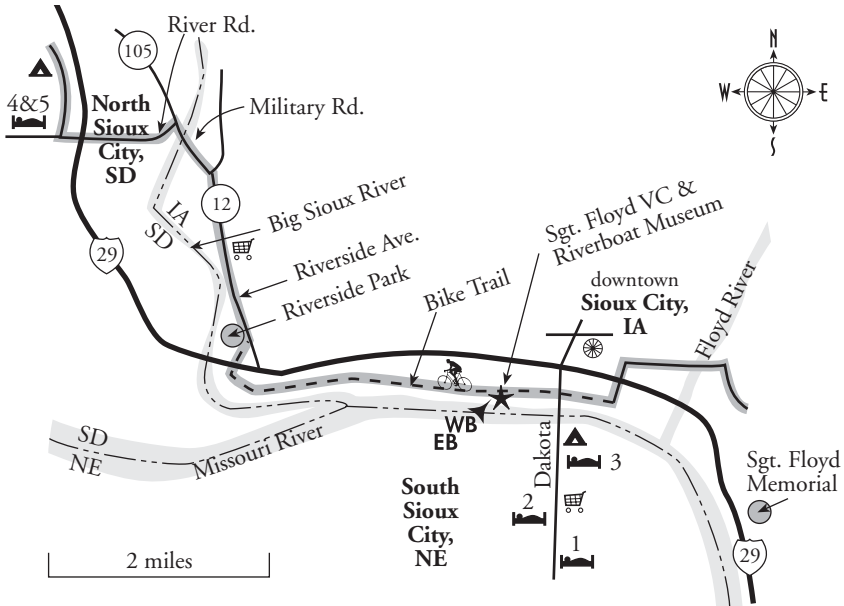


*Lewis & Clark Keelboat*



*Red Pirogue*

*Models by Blair Chicoine,  
Sergeant Floyd Museum, Sioux  
City, IA*



**Sioux City, IA** — Zip: 51102, **South Sioux City, NE** — Zip: 68776  
**North Sioux City** — Zip: 57049



- ★ **Sioux City Convention and Visitors Bureau:** 801 4th St., 800-593-2228; [www.sioux-city.org](http://www.sioux-city.org)
- ★ **Sergeant Floyd Welcome Center and Riverboat Museum,** Larsen Park, on north side of Missouri River bike path just west of Veteran's Bridge
- 🏠 The Visitors Bureau lists 27 hotels and motels in the tri-city area. Below are five that are convenient to the Trail:
  - South Sioux City**
  - 1) Econo Lodge, 4402 Dakota, 402-494-4114
  - 2) Ramada, 2829 Dakota, 800-962-2545
  - 3) Travel Lodge, 400 Dakota, 402-494-3046
  - North Sioux City**
  - 4) Comfort Inn, Streeter Dr., 605-232-3366
  - 5) Super 8, Streeter Dr., 605-232-4716
- ▲ **South Sioux City**  
 Scenic Park CG, 6th and E St.: pleasant and convenient camping on the river across from downtown Sioux City; good grass, shade, little privacy, and satisfactory restrooms and showers
- 🌀 **North Sioux City:** KOA, 601 Streeter Dr., 605-232-4519
- 🌀 Albrecht Cycle Shop, 200 5th St., Sioux City, IA, 712-258-6050

## Elk Point, SD

Population: 1,400

Elk Point is a small town with a motel, town park with camping, several restaurants, and a grocery store. Near here the Corps of Discovery elected Patrick Gass as a sergeant to replace Sergeant Floyd. It was four days later when Lewis first used the term “corps of volunteers for North Western Discovery” in his orders.

Zip: 57025

-  Home Towne Inn (\$), I-29 interchange, 605-356-2667
-  Town Park, near high school south of Main, grass, shade, satisfactory restrooms with showers

## Vermillion, SD

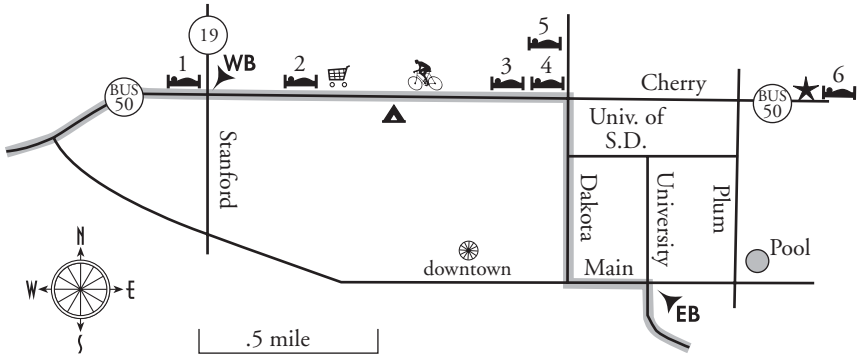
Population: 10,000

Located on a relatively lush, tree-covered bluff above the small Vermillion River (Wase Wakpala, or “red stream” in the Sioux language), Vermillion is a very pleasant oasis in the middle of the flat Missouri River bottomland farm country. It is also the home of the University of South Dakota.

Six miles north of town is Spirit Mound—which the Indians told Lewis and Clark was inhabited by fierce people eighteen inches tall with large heads. The explorers could not resist visiting this site, but found only great views of the prairie. Today it is on private property and difficult to visit.

Vermillion can be a very pleasant stopping point for bicycle tourers, although it’s tough competing with both Sioux City and Yankton in either direction. A basic Lion’s Club campground is located across the street from a huge food supermarket. There are also several motels in town, which sometimes fill up for special events at the university. Finally, there is the typical wide variety of restaurants you would expect in a college town. You’ll want your bicycle to get around in this flat, spread out, low-traffic town.

In addition to the university, Vermillion has some interesting attractions. The Shrine to Music contains a collection of 6,000 rare and antique musical instruments from all over the world. The Austin-Whittemore House is a modest Italian Villa style home filled with Victorian furniture appropriate to the late 19th century.



**Vermillion, SD — Zip: 57069**

★ **Vermillion Area Chamber of Commerce:** 906 E Cherry, 800-809-2071, [www.vermillionsouthdakota.com](http://www.vermillionsouthdakota.com)

- 1) Budget Host Tomahawk (\$), 1313 W Cherry, 800-283-4678
- 2) Comfort Inn (\$\$), 701 W Cherry, 800-228-5150
- 3) Lamplighter (\$), 112 E Cherry, 605-624-4451
- 4) Coyote (\$), 702 N Dakota, 605-624-2616
- 5) Travelodge (\$\$), 912 N Dakota, 605-624-2824
- 6) Super 8 (\$\$), 1208 E Cherry, 605-624-8005

▲ **Lion's Club Campground,** Cherry at Princeton, good grass, shade, little privacy, satisfactory restroom, showers available at town pool a few blocks away (see map)

⊙ **Bike Plus,** 28 Center, 605-624-6200

## Yankton, SD

Population: 14,000

Yankton was the capital of the original Dakota Territory before it was split into two states. Today it is the seat of Yankton County and a regional center with many services. There are still many attractive Victorian buildings around the downtown area. During the warm months it is a gateway to the recreational areas of nearby Lewis and Clark Lake, and it can be crowded with fishermen and other vacationers on weekends and holidays.

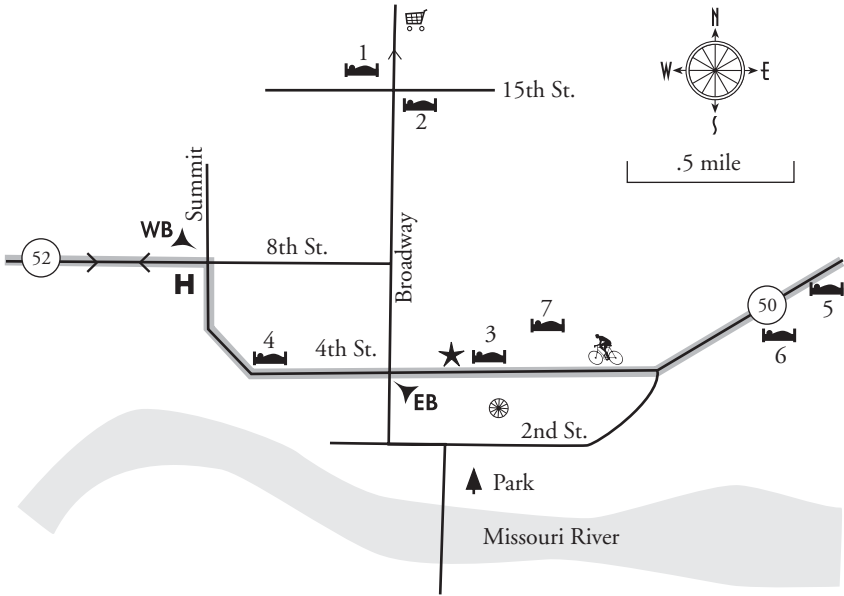
There is a wide variety of lodging, restaurants, and stores, as well as excellent camping at Lewis and Clark Lake five miles west of town. The best camping areas are Midway Unit and Gavins Point Unit, located directly on the lake just west of the dam, marina, and restaurant. However, availability may be better at the unit below the dam, which is still a very pleasant campground without the view. A bike trail starts just east of the dam, climbs the dam, winds several miles along the lake through the various campgrounds, and ends directly on our route west towards Springfield.

There is a visitor center with wonderful views located on a hill overlooking the south side of the Gavins Point Dam. It has displays of both the history of the area and the modern building of the dam and power plant. This is the first of many dams and lakes created by the Army Corps of Engineers to “tame” the Missouri River for flood control, electricity, and recreation.

The visitor center is near Calumet Bluff, where the Corps of Discovery camped for four days on August 28–31, 1804, and had a friendly meeting with the Yankton Sioux. One reason this encounter went so well was the expedition’s new translator, Pierre Dorion, whom they had picked up farther down river as he was returning from a trading trip. Dorion had a Sioux wife and lots of experience with the local people, who had caused problems with earlier groups of white traders.



*Beach and camping on Lewis & Clark Lake, Yankton, SD*



mile 662

**Yankton, SD — Zip: 57078**

★ **Chamber of Commerce:** 218 W 4th St., 605-665-3636  
[www.yanktonsd.com](http://www.yanktonsd.com)

- 🏠 1) Colonial Inn (\$), 1509 Broadway, 605-665-3647
- 🏠 2) Broadway Inn (\$), 1210 Broadway, 800-665-7805
- 🏠 3) Star-Brite Inn (\$), 412 E 4th St., 605-665-7856
- 🏠 4) Star-Lite Inn (\$), 500 Park St., 605-665-7828
- 🏠 5) Best Western Kelly Inn (\$\$), 1609 E Hwy. 50, 800-635-3559
- 🏠 6) Super 8 Motel (\$\$), 1705 E Hwy. 50, 800-800-8000
- 🏠 7) Mulberry Inn B&B (\$\$), 512 Mulberry, 605-665-7116

▲ Lewis and Clark Lake, 5 mi. west on Hwy. 52, several beautiful units on lake above dam and below dam, 402-667-7873

🛒 Ace Hardware and Bike Shop, 3rd and Douglas, 605-665-2813

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

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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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