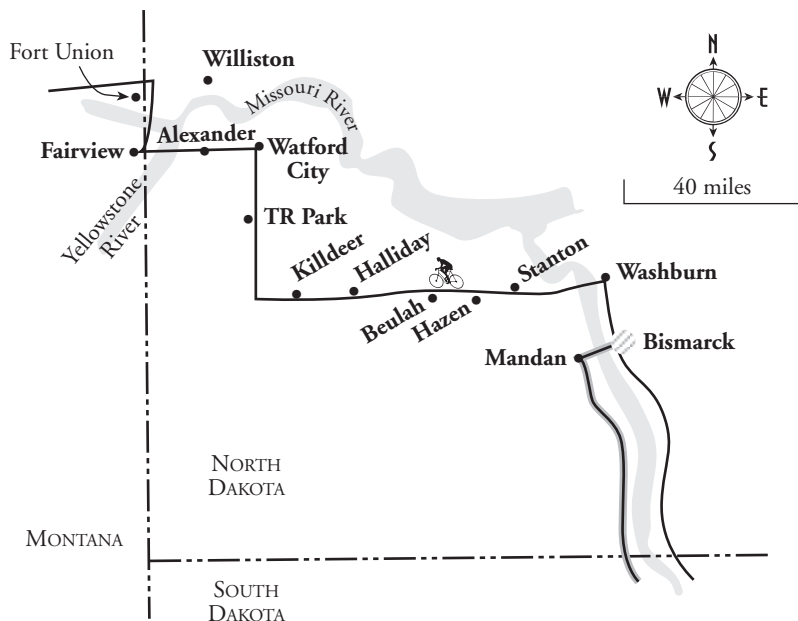




F. ACROSS THE NORTH DAKOTA PRAIRIE

BISMARCK, ND TO FAIRVIEW, MT



From Bismarck the Lewis & Clark Trail runs 40 miles north along the Missouri River to Washburn. Gentle hills provide beautiful vistas of the river and prairie. Although Bismarck, with its airport and broad array of services, is the logical transition point in today's journey, Washburn was a much truer geographical and historical transition point for Lewis and Clark. Washburn is near the actual site of the Mandan villages—the farthest point reached by white men in 1804 and the place where the Corps of Discovery stopped and hunkered down for the winter of 1804–1805. It is also the place where the Missouri River turns west, and our bicycle route leaves the river to head west across the North Dakota prairie.

On the eve of their departure from Fort Mandan, Lewis was in one of his thoughtful moods as he pondered the journey ahead. *“Our vessels consisted of six small canoes, and two large perogues. This little fleet altho’ not quite so respectable as those of Columbus or Capt. Cook were still viewed by us with as much pleasure as those deservedly famed adventureres ever beheld theirs; and I dare say with quite as much anxiety for their safety and preservation. we were now about to penetrate a country at least two thousand miles in width, on which the foot of civilized man had never trodden; the good or evil it had in store for us was for experiment yet to determine, and these little vessells contained every article by which we were to expect to subsist or defend ourselves.*”

however as this the state of mind in which we are, generally gives the colouring to events, when the imagination is suffered to wander into futurity, the picture which now presented itself to me was a most pleasing one. entertaining as I do, the most confident hope of succeeding in a voyage which had formed a darling project of mine for the last ten years, I could but esteem this moment of my departure as among the most happy of my life. The party are in excellent health and spirits, zealously attached to the enterprise, and anxious to proceed; not a whisper of murmur or discontent to be heard among them, but all act in unison, and with the most perfect harmony.”

Early settlers came to this region because farmland was cheap, and today agriculture is still the leading industry in the state. Although the land is drier and colder as you head farther north and west, it's still good for both grazing animals and growing wheat. Only 2% of the land is covered with forest.

The dams on the Missouri River have provided additional power and water for irrigation to make this such a rich agricultural area. North Dakota ranks first in the country in production of barley, durum spring wheat, dry edible beans, oats, and sunflowers, and it ranks among the top four states in production of all wheat, navy beans, potatoes, sugar beets, and honey.



Friendly hay bales along the North Dakota highway

During the 20th century modern pioneers have come for energy, and this area of western North Dakota has produced a lot of soft coal and oil shale. Even though soft coal produces significant pollution and strip mining has been unpopular with environmentalists, mining has flourished here in an area of low population density and low per capita income. Deep wells also tap vast resources of oil and natural gas.

Much of North Dakota's character has been formed by its challenging climate and relative isolation. Far from the modulating forces of either ocean, temperatures vary from extremely hot in the summer to extremely cold in the winter. Long distances from population centers has made it a poor location for manufacturing. All this has produced hardy and hard-working people. Although per capita income is low, the divorce rate is also very low, and the percentage of families with two parents is very high.

Heading west across North Dakota on Route 200, rolling hills become more pronounced as you approach the Killdeer Mountains. It can be a long way between services here, but people are correspondingly more friendly and helpful; and traffic

is light. Heading north on Route 85 you'll ride through more wide open and hilly prairie, which is stunningly interrupted by the Little Missouri River and the beautiful open gashes it has created known as the Badlands. What was "bad" for early settlers who wanted to graze animals and build farms is "good" for modern tourists who want fantastic scenery. The North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park offers lots of this scenery for those able to camp and carry food supplies to this remote area. (See page 119 on Killdeer for more information about the park.)

After climbing out of the valley created by the Little Missouri, the last 60 miles from the park to the Montana border cross more rolling prairie. Just before the state border you cross the Yellowstone River, which was the return route for Clark.

Washburn, ND

Population: 1,500

In 1804 this area was home to Mandan and Hidatsa Indians living in several compact and crowded villages of round earth homes. Sometimes described today as "the Mall of the West," the Mandan Villages made up a large regional trading center, where each summer tribes from the west brought beaver pelts to barter with French, English, and American traders from both Canada and St. Louis. In 1804 this was the farthest west that white men had ever travelled in the Louisiana Territory.

Although Lewis had originally planned to spend the winter at the Knife River Indian Villages with the Hidatsas, the captains felt that a site on the north side of the river, opposite a Mandan village and about seven miles below the Knife River, provided a better location for timber and game. The original site has long since been washed away by the changing river.



Today Washburn is the county seat for McLean County. North of town is an electric generating plant, powered by coal from a large surface mine nearby. There is one motel on Highway 83 with a restaurant and grocery store nearby, a couple of restaurants a mile down the hill in the center of town, and a primitive campground down by the river. Because it is so close to Bismarck, Washburn is not a regional center and does not have the variety of services you might expect in a town with this population.

*Keeping warm in a buffalo robe.
Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center,
Washburn, ND*

The excellent Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center at the intersection of Highways 83 and 200A deserves a visit. Along with general displays and artwork that you might expect in such a center, there are several innovative displays to help the visitor better understand and appreciate the expedition of Lewis and Clark. One is a 36-foot dugout canoe made by several local people. The story of their difficulties in building this modern dugout provides many insights into the challenges the Corps of Discovery must have faced when they built six similar canoes in 22 days in the spring of 1805. You can also try on a buffalo robe to feel both how warm and how heavy and awkward it feels.



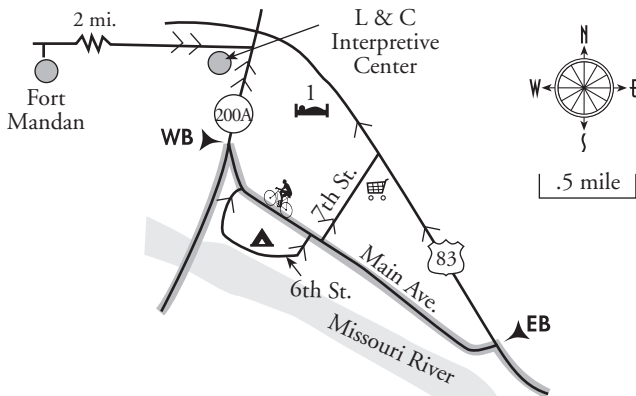
Fort Mandan, Washburn, ND

2.7 miles down the hill to the west is a reproduction of Fort Mandan—about ten miles downriver from the actual location where the Corps of Discovery spent their first winter. Although it's only a small stockade fort, it is impressive to stand there and ponder what it must have been like to build it in just 52 days and then spend a North Dakota winter inside it.

It was during this winter camp that Lewis and Clark met Toussaint Charbonneau, a French trader with two young Shoshoni wives, whom he had either purchased or won in a card game. Both these women had been captured near Three Forks, Montana, four years earlier by a Hidatsa hunting party. When Charbonneau offered to join Lewis and Clark for their trip west, a contract was eventually negotiated; but they only allowed him to take one wife. Although Charbonneau himself was of questionable value in many respects, the captains really wanted one of his wives to translate when they reached Shoshoni territory at the end of the Missouri River and would need to acquire horses to cross the Rocky Mountains.

Charbonneau chose the pregnant Sacagawea to accompany him, and she delivered her baby in February, two months before their departure. At the Interpretive Center you can try on a packboard loaded with the weight of a baby to get a better feel for Sacagawea's trip from here to Oregon and back.

Although some later books have exaggerated Sacagawea's role as a guide for the expedition, she often proved to be very helpful in daily life on the trip. She gathered roots to improve their diet, and she was probably a civilizing influence among the men of the expedition. One day she helped save both people and equipment when a canoe capsized and her husband panicked. When the Corps of Discovery finally started meeting Indians in Montana, Oregon, and Washington, she was an unintended symbol of the peaceful intentions of the expedition. War parties don't usually travel with a woman and young child. Her most incredible contribution to the success of the expedition—perhaps making the critical difference between the success and failure of the entire project—occurred several months later at Camp Fortunate. If you can't wait to find out what happened, look up Clark Canyon Reservoir and Dam (page 157).



Washburn, ND — Zip: 58577

- ★ **Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center:** Box 607, 877-462-8535, www.fortmandan.com, info@fortmandan.org
- 🏠 **ScottWood Motel** (\$), Route 83, 701-462-8191
- ▲ **Riverside Park:** primitive, on river, grass, shade, bathroom

Stanton, ND

Population: 500

This small town is located two miles north of our route on Route 31. A mile farther north is Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site with a good visitor center and an excellent guided tour of a furnished Hidatsa earth home. If you're interested in learning about plains Indian life in the early 1800s, this detour is definitely worthwhile. If you're not sure, write or call for their excellent brochure. (PO Box 9, Stanton, ND, 58571, 701-745-3309, www.nps.gov/knri)

Back in downtown Stanton are several small restaurants, bars, and a grocery store. A few blocks east is Sakakawea Town Park (701-745-3202) on the Knife River. Although there is water and covered picnic tables, the poorly maintained restroom has neither roof nor shower.

Hazen, ND

Population: 2,800

Hazen is located on flat land very close to our route, making it a convenient possibility for an overnight stop. Two campgrounds, a motel, and a restaurant are all visible from the highway. About a half mile south is the downtown area with a variety of restaurants, food shopping, and other services.

Zip: 58545

★ **Hazen Chamber of Commerce:** Box 717, 701-748-6848

🏠 Roughrider Motor Inn (\$), Hwy. 200, 701-748-2209

- ▲ 1) John Moses Memorial Town Park, 701-748-6948, grass, shade, water, and poorly maintained outhouses, no showers
- 2) Lewis and Clark Campground, Main St. at west end of town, new restrooms with showers

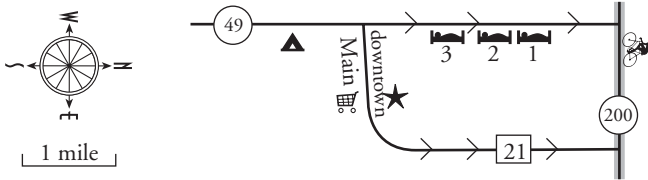


Strip mining is BIG in North Dakota.

Beulah, ND

Population: 3,400

Beulah calls itself the Energy Capital of the Midwest, because of the billions of tons of lignite coal in the area. The town is two miles down a big hill. Halfway down the Route 49 hill to town are several motels and restaurants. For more restaurant selection, food shopping, and camping, you will have to go all the way down the hill.



Beulah, ND — Zip: 58523

- ★ **Chamber of Commerce:** 120 Central Ave., 800-441-2649, www.tradecorridor.com/beulah, chamber@westriv.com
- 🏠 1) AmericInn (\$\$), Hwy. 49, 800-634-3444
- 2) Dakota Farms Inn (\$\$), Hwy. 49, 701-873-2242
- 3) Super 8 Motel (\$), 1008 Hwy. 49, 701-873-2850
- ▲ Riverside Recreation Area, 0.7 mi. south of Main on Hwy. 49, 701-873-5852, pleasant grass, shade, showers

Zap, ND

Population: 300

Zap is one mile off our route with 100 feet of climbing. There is a bar, small grocery store, and town campground with water, pit toilets, and no showers.

Golden Valley, ND

Population: 250



Golden is one mile off our route with 100 feet of climbing. There are two bars and a small grocery store.

Halliday, ND

Population: 300

This small town is a mile north of the Trail down a 100-foot hill. Partway down the hill is a motel. Downtown are several small restaurants, bars, grocery store, and a town park.

Zip: 58636

-  Halliday Motel (\$), 680 7th St., 701-938-4777
-  Town Park, grass, shade, poorly maintained outhouse, and water that may be locked. Camping is allowed, although you may have to hunt around to find someone to unlock the water.

Killdeer, ND



Population: 725

Since your next overnight stop from Killdeer is either camping at Theodore Roosevelt National Park in 38 miles, or motels and camping in Watford City in 52 miles, this is almost a required overnight stop. The town is two flat miles north of Route 200 on Route 22.

Downtown you will find a motel, several restaurants, and a supermarket. If you are planning to camp at Roosevelt National Park, do food shopping here before you leave. The next food shopping is in Watford City in 52 miles (14 miles beyond Roosevelt Park).

Killdeer Mountain Battlefield State Historic Site is ten miles north of Killdeer on Route 22. In 1864 2,000 Army troops under General Alfred Sully battled 6,000 Sioux Indians there.

Zip: 58640

-  Mountain View Motel (\$), Route 22, 701-764-5843
-  Killdeer RV Park, 701-764-5295, Route 22 halfway into town, pleasant grass, no shade or privacy, clean restrooms with showers

Theodore Roosevelt National Park

As you descend into the Little Missouri River Canyon on Route 85, you will experience an excellent view of the North Dakota Badlands and the national park off to the west. If this looks appealing, there is much more of this gorgeous scenery on a fourteen-mile hilly park road to Oxbow Overlook—and another fourteen miles back. Be careful around the buffalo; they are faster and more agile than they look. The road climbs up and down some side canyons on the north side of the canyon for spectacular views. There is also a variety of hikes for those who would like to spend some time out of the saddle. If you're still in doubt about whether or how long to stay, you can talk with Rangers at the Visitor Center just inside the Entrance Station or contact them in advance.

The campground is five miles from the entrance. It is a pleasant and typical national park campground with separate sites among Cottonwood trees near the river. There are good clean restrooms, but no showers. There is also camping at the National Grasslands just north of the Little Missouri River. It's cheaper and the views are great, but there is only rough ground, water, pit toilets, and a rough 1.1-mile dirt road to get in there.

▲ Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Box 7, Medora, ND 58645,
701-623-4466, www.nps.gov/thro



*Badlands in
Theodore Roosevelt
National Park, ND*

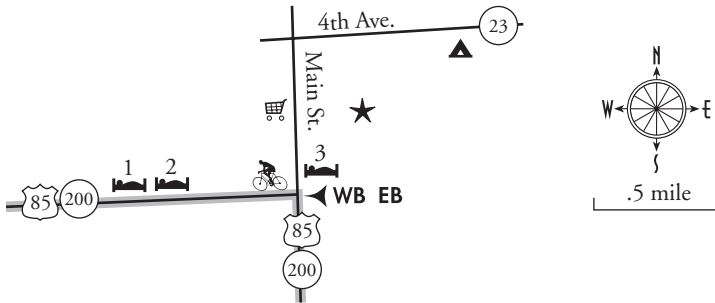


Little Missouri River in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, ND

Watford City, ND

Population: 1,800

This regional center with a relatively flat and compact downtown area makes a good overnight stop. It offers a pleasant municipal campground, three motels, several restaurants, food shopping, and a Pioneer Museum.



Watford City, ND — Zip: 58854

★ **Chamber of Commerce:** Box 458, 701-842-2526

🏠 1) Roosevelt Inn (\$), Hwy. 85 W, 888-206-0400

2) McKenzie Inn (\$), Hwy. 85 W, 800-842-3989

3) Four Eyes Motel (\$), 122 S Main, 701-842-4126

▲ Tourist Park, 0.7 mi. east of town on Route 23, quiet, grass, shade, covered picnic tables, clean restrooms with showers


Alexander, ND

Population: 220

If you are willing to live with less variety of services, this small town offers a motel, a small restaurant next door, grocery store, and town park for camping. For some people, the real advantage of staying overnight in Alexander or Fairview is the way it splits up daily riding mileage. It also offers flexibility if you want to spend more or less time at Roosevelt National Park, Fort Union, and/or Fort Buford.

Zip: 58831

 Ragged Butte Inn Motel and Café (\$), 701-828-3164

 Town Park, grass, shade, covered picnic tables, clean restrooms, no shower


Fairview, MT

Population: 900

This is another small town just one flat mile west of our route on Route 200, where it is possible to spend the night. There is a grocery store, several small restaurants, a basic motel, and a pleasant town park for camping with showers at the pool next door.

Zip: 59221

 Korner Motel (\$), 800-656-7637

 Town Park, grass, shade, covered picnic tables, satisfactory restroom, showers next door at town pool

Bicycle Guide to the Lewis & Clark Trail

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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.

Updates will be posted on the author's website at www.deerfootpublications.com as they are received and verified. Readers are invited to send suggested updates to Tod@deerfootpublications.com.

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