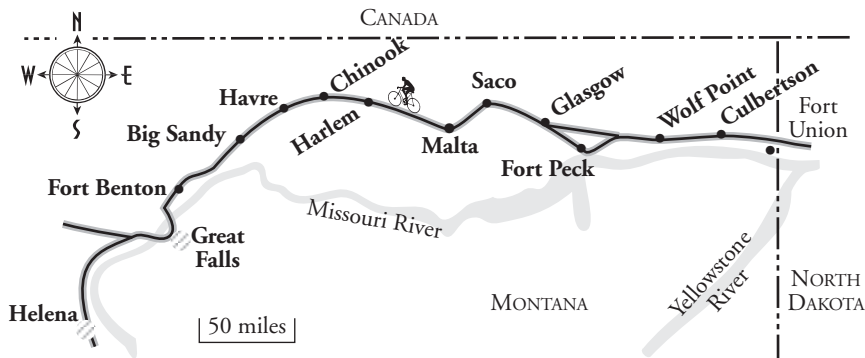




G. EASTERN MONTANA BIG SKY COUNTRY

FAIRVIEW, MT TO GREAT FALLS, MT



If you've ever wondered why Montana is called "Big Sky Country," a few days riding here will answer that question beyond any doubt. Especially in eastern Montana, there are gently rolling plains, few trees, little shade, and long vistas from horizon to horizon. This state is just plain big. It is 535 miles across, which is big enough, but our route will require from 800 to 1060 miles (depending on which route you choose over the Bitterroots). Lewis and Clark travelled more than one quarter of their journey in this state.

But don't let this bigness scare you. It's only 400 miles of gorgeous grand prairie to Great Falls, towns with good services are well spaced along the route, and traffic is light. It's lucky the traffic is light, because it's also fast. At least Montana now has a daytime speed limit of 70 mph instead of the previous "reasonable and prudent."

The directions for this section are simple: follow Route 2 west for 285 miles to Havre, and then take Route 87 southwest for 115 miles to Great Falls. Route 2 is also known as the Hi-Line, because it generally follows the route of the Great Northern Railroad—the northernmost railroad across the western states.

The directions are actually slightly more complicated. There are three opportunities to get off the main highway if you're tired of traffic. The first alternate (between Brockton and Poplar) is recommended and is built into the cue sheets in Chapter 5. The other two are not recommended—one because of added distance, and the other because of poor pavement—but both are noted in the cue sheets and described in the town descriptions of Wolf Point and Saco.

Although trappers, gold miners, and other adventurers prowled Montana in the 1800s, this part of the West was not really settled until after the Great Northern Railroad was built across Montana in 1877—seventy years after Lewis and Clark. Most early pioneers and settlers avoided the Missouri River route above Omaha because of the hostile Sioux Indians in the Dakota Territory. This made the Platte River route through Nebraska much more attractive, leading to the 1824 discovery of the relatively easy South Pass over the Continental Divide in Wyoming—which

became the main route for the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails.

The eastern two-thirds of Montana is rolling prairie similar to North Dakota. Geologically, both are part of the Missouri Plateau. As in neighboring North Dakota, agriculture is the primary industry in Montana, especially in the eastern part. This means primarily cattle grazing and wheat, because the land is dry.

Montana is also a big grain growing state, and you may see bulldozers towing wide gangs of farm implements across large dry fields. Everything here is big; they even use huge bulldozers instead of tractors.

Speaking of “big,” dinosaurs once roamed this area. There are good exhibits in the Phillips County Museum, just east of Malta and at the Fort Peck Dam Visitor



*Along the
Milk River
in Montana*

Center. The Fort Peck Dam is the largest earth dam in the world, blocking the Missouri River to form Fort Peck Lake and creating 1,500 miles of shoreline.

Although the railroads first opened Montana to settlement in the 1880s, it was mining that really attracted people. First it was gold in Helena, but later it was the cheap electricity generated by Great Falls that made copper production much bigger and more sustainable. After 1915, oil and natural gas were discovered, and the state now produces and exports coal, oil, natural gas, and energy. As copper demand and prices have fallen in the late 20th century, the growth of energy production has helped Billings eclipse Great Falls as the largest city.

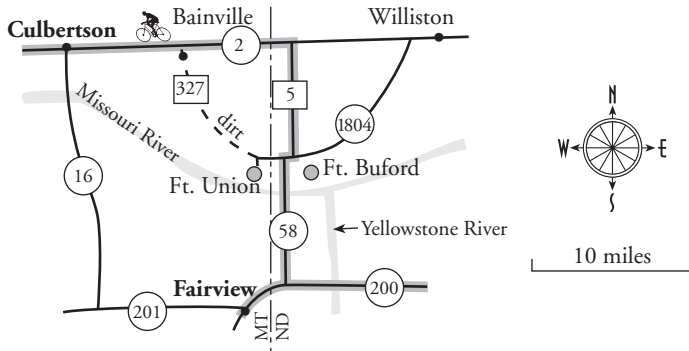
As a New Englander, I never really understood the large size and low population density of Montana until someone explained it to me like this: Take the six New England states plus most of New York and Pennsylvania and move all the people out except for those living in Hartford, Connecticut. Then tell the people of Hartford to spread out. That’s Montana.

The stretch of river between Fort Peck and Fort Benton is called the Missouri Breaks, because the river cut into the land here to create a rugged and stunning landscape of limestone cliffs and side canyons. When the Great Northern Railroad was built across Montana, it was much easier to follow the Milk River than the Missouri River in this area. Road builders had the same thoughts. No roads follow the Missouri River from Fort Peck to Fort Benton, and only a few north-south roads cross the river.

It's unfortunate that you can't see the river for 250 miles until Fort Benton. The good news is that the river runs through beautiful wilderness that looks much as it did when Lewis and Clark first saw it, and you can have a similar experience on a half-day to multi-day river trip out of Fort Benton. You deserve this kind of break, as the name "Missouri Breaks" takes on a new meaning!

NORTH DAKOTA / MONTANA BORDER AREA

It's worth doing some planning about how much time you want to spend at the two historic forts near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers at the border between North Dakota and Montana. You may then want to consider an overnight stop in one of the towns nearby in order to split up daily riding mileage better. See the map and descriptions below.



FORT UNION

Lewis and Clark were the first to recognize the strategic importance of both the relatively flat land and the strong riverbank where the Yellowstone River joins the Missouri. They recommended this site for a key government outpost. Although called a fort and built like a stockade, Fort Union was really a trading post constructed for John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company. It became a very successful commercial center, where Indians brought in buffalo and beaver skins to trade for manufactured goods from the east. As the railroads superseded river transportation, this fort became obsolete and was dismantled.



Fort Union, MT

The National Park Service has built a full scale reproduction of much of the original stockade trading post. It's an impressive structure with good exhibits and a knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff. Although the river has moved, you can still see where boats used to tie up at the levee near the main entrance.

The fort is two flat miles off our route, and admission is free. I recommend at least an hour to walk around, enjoy the setting, see the exhibits, and ponder what life was like here during the 1800s. People who are interested in American history, trade, and relations with the Indians may want to spend more time. For more information, contact Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Williston, ND (701-572-9083). The Fort Union Rendezvous is held during the 2nd week in June.

FORT BUFORD

After the Civil War, the U.S. Army built Fort Buford two miles downstream from Fort Union and closer to the Yellowstone River. This was a real fort, with soldiers stationed here to protect railroad workers and settlers. It was useful for about 30 years before it too was abandoned. The fort is most famous for some of the prisoners held here—including Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce and Sitting Bull of the Sioux.

Today the fort is long gone, and there's not much to see at this historic site. If you are interested in the military history of this time period, the state manages a small museum and cemetery here. For more information, contact State Historical Society of North Dakota, North Dakota Heritage Center, Bismarck, ND 58505 (701-224-2666).

DIRT SHORTCUT (option)

Although it's possible to save 4 miles and avoid some significant hills by taking Route 327 west from Fort Union to Bainville, MT, it includes 14 miles of fairly rough and dry dirt road. The scenery is beautiful, and there are very few cars; but the riding is rough (even on a mountain bike), and the few cars and trucks generate a lot of dust. The main route heads due north on paved 153rd Ave. (County Road 5) from Fort Buford to Route 2.

PAVED SHORTCUT (option)

If you want to skip Fort Union, or you decide to return to Fairview for the night after visiting Fort Union, it's possible to save 10 miles (36 vs. 46) by heading west from Fairview on Route 201 for 12 miles and then north on Route 16 for 24 miles to Culbertson, MT. This shortcut has a little more climbing (1500 feet vs. 1100 feet) and about the same light traffic.

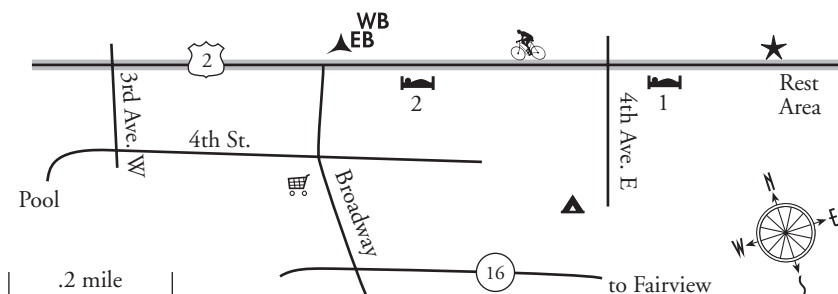
WILLISTON, ND (option)

If you need a big town, Williston, North Dakota, is 23 miles northeast of Fort Buford; the last 7 miles is a busy four-lane highway with poor shoulders. Williston has a population of 12,000 and Amtrak service between Chicago and Portland or Seattle.

Culbertson, MT

Population: 1,000

Culbertson is a flat town that is small enough to get around easily on your bicycle. There are two motels, camping, several restaurants, and a small supermarket. Across from a highway rest area on Route 2, just east of town, the Visitor Center is located in an interesting free local museum. It is divided into rooms that display an old general store, school classroom, kitchen, doctor's office, barber shop, and beauty shop.



Culbertson, MT — Zip: 59218

★ **Culbertson Museum and Visitor Information Center**

1 mi. east of town on Route 2, 406-787-5821

- 🏠 1) King's Inn Motel (\$), 406-787-6277
- 🏠 2) Diamond Willow Inn (\$), 406-787-6218

- ▲ Bruegger Centennial Park, 4th Ave. E, free, open grass area, bathroom, showers available at town pool (small fee) at western end of 4th St.,

Poplar, MT

Population: 900

Located on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Poplar is home to two museums. The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Culture Center and Museum contains exhibits of Native American arts and crafts. The City Museum chronicles the growth of an Indian camp into a frontier town, focusing on the fur trade in the mid-19th century and the homesteading in the early 20th century. Poplar also has a motel, several small restaurants, convenience store, and grocery store.

Zip: 59255

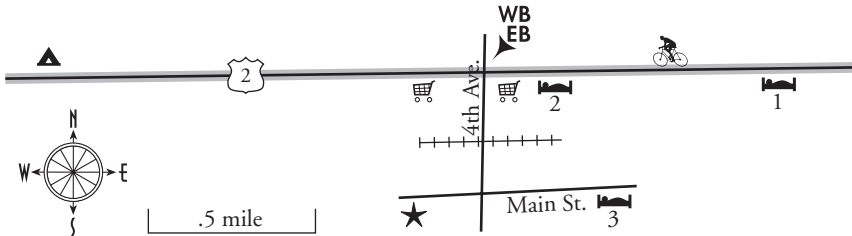
- 🏠 Lee Anns Motel (\$), 406-768-5442

Wolf Point, MT

Population: 2,900

Wolf Point is an open flat town with a variety of restaurants and many services. A historical kiosk near Albertson's explains, "A party of trappers poisoned several hundred wolves one winter, hauled the frozen carcasses in and stacked them until spring for skinning. It taught the varmints a lesson. No wolf has darkened the door of a house in this town since."

The Historical Society and Museum in the town library features displays of early settlers and Indians. If you're interested in old John Deere tractors, you can call the Toavs (406-392-5294) and make an appointment to view more than 500 old tractors at a private museum on his farm. At the east end of town Bell Enterprises Indian Market has a variety of items to view and buy. On the second weekend in June the Wild Horse Stampede includes a rodeo.



Wolf Point, MT — Zip: 59201

★ **Chamber of Commerce:** 218 3rd Ave. S, 406-653-2012

- 🏠 1) Big Sky Motel (\$), 406-653-2300
- 🏠 2) Homestead Inn (\$), 406-653-1300
- 🏠 3) Sherman Motor Inn (\$\$), 406-653-1100

▲ El Rancho Campground, 1.4 mi. west of town on Route 2; some shade, some tables, some grass, satisfactory restrooms and showers

ALTERNATE ROUTE

It is possible to avoid 25 miles on Route 2 by taking the old road, which runs parallel to the south. It is good pavement, but it adds 5.4 miles to this stretch. West-bound, turn left 2.2 miles west of Wolf Point and follow the pavement west for 30.8 miles to reconnect with Route 2 6.8 miles east of Nashua.

Fort Peck, MT

Population: 325

The town of Fort Peck was built in the 1930s to house the 30,000 workers and families involved in building the Fort Peck Dam—the largest earth dam in the world. The town was literally owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers until 1986, when it became a self-governing town serving the needs of today's power plant workers and the many people fishing and camping at Fort Peck Lake. If you want to get away from Route 2 for 14 miles and don't mind adding another 16 easy miles between Wolf Point and Glasgow, you can easily detour down to Fort Peck from either Nashua (11 miles on Route 117) or Glasgow (19 miles on Route 24). Either way, be sure to check out Bergie's home-made ice cream in Nashua.

There are four main attractions in Fort Peck. One is the huge Fort Peck Lake—135 miles long with 1,500 miles of shoreline. Another is the huge Fort Peck Dam—4 miles across and two-thirds of a mile thick at the base. At the base of the dam is a power plant and a visitor center that displays many of the dinosaur parts and fossils found in this area. In the early 1900s an 18-foot high 47-foot long skeleton of a *Tyranosaurus Rex* was discovered here; it now resides in the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

The third attraction is the Fort Peck Theatre. Built in 1934 as a magnificent log chalet, it showed movies 24 hours a day to workers who were building the dam in shifts around the clock. Today the theatre has been beautifully restored and is used for all kinds of summer productions. The fourth attraction is the Fort Peck Hotel, a vintage 1930s hotel with a restaurant and bar. During the summer reservations are essential.



Fort Peck Theatre, Fort Peck, MT

Zip: 59223

🏠 Fort Peck Hotel (\$), 800-560-4931

▲ Downstream Campground, below Fort Peck Dam, grass, shade, showers

Saco, MT

Population: 225

If you like small towns, you will like Saco (pronounced Say-co). It would be easy to miss in a car, if you blinked; but you will definitely see it on your bicycle. There is a motel, B&B, café, grocery store, and a couple of bars.

Zip: 59261

- 1) Saco Motel (\$), 800-752-3051
- 2) Big Dome Hotel B&B (\$\$), 406-527-3498

ALTERNATE ROUTE

It is possible to avoid 21 miles on Route 2 on the old Route 2, which bears south 5 miles west of Saco and 1.6 miles east of Malta. The pavement is very rough on this stretch; mileage is the same.

Sleeping Buffalo Hot Springs, MT

56 miles west of Glasgow, 10 miles west of Saco, and 18 miles east of Malta, this aging, but still pleasant and reasonably priced family resort lies 1.5 miles north of Route 2 on a gentle hill with sweeping views of the plains. Developed around three hot mineral pools, it includes a golf course, campground with good restrooms and showers, laundromat, older motel rooms, a café, and a restaurant. Soaking in the hot mineral pools can be very soothing after a hard day of cycling!

- & ▲ Sleeping Buffalo Resort (\$), 406-527-3370

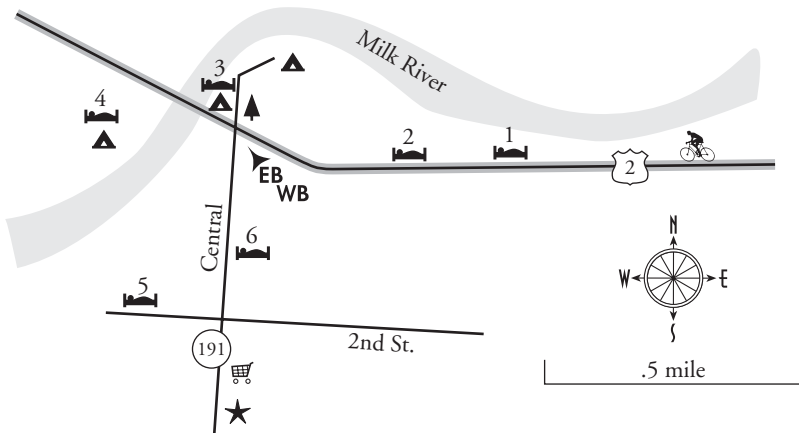
Malta, MT

Population: 2,400

Malta is a flat town located on the Milk River, named by Lewis and Clark. *“The water of this river possesses a peculiar whiteness, being about the colour of a cup of tea with the admixture of a tablespoonfull of milk. from the colour of it’s water we called it Milk river. we think it possible that this may be the river called by the Ninitares the river which scalds all others.” (May 8, 1805, Lewis)*

Today Malta has a variety of motels and restaurants, food shopping, and camping. The free Phillips County Museum is located on Route 2 one mile east of Route 191. Along with artifacts, beadwork, and articles from early Native Americans and pioneers, it also has a large dinosaur exhibit—including a life-size model of an Albertosaurus, and a Tyrannosaurus Rex skull. Northeastern Montana is a rich area for fossil hunting.

The Milk River Wagon Train on the first weekend in September includes a parade, rides, and festivities.



Malta, MT — Zip: 59538

★ **Chamber of Commerce:** Box 1420, 800-704-1776

- 🏠 1) Sportsman Motel (\$) 406-654-2300
- 🏠 2) Royal Inn (\$) 406-654-1150
- 🏠 3) Riverside Motel and Campground (\$) 406-654-2310
- 🏠 4) Edgewater Inn and Campground (\$\$) 800-821-7475
- 🏠 5) Maltana Motel (\$\$) 406-654-2610
- 🏠 6) Great Northern Hotel (\$\$) 406-654-2100

- ▲ 1) Town Park, Central Ave. north of Route 2
- 2) Riverside Motel and Campground (3 above)
- 3) Edgewater Inn and Campground (4 above)

Harlem, MT

Population: 900

Harlem has a motel on the highway, with food shopping and a couple of restaurants located in the downtown area about a mile north of the highway.

🏠 McGuires' Motel (\$), 406-353-2433

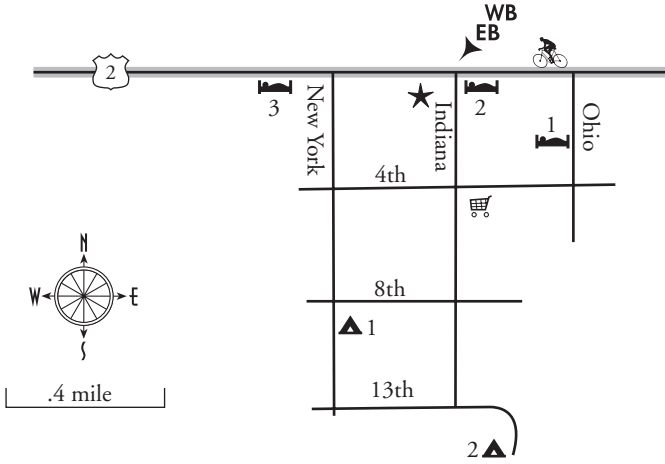
Chinook, MT

Population: 1,600

Chinook is an Indian word meaning “warm thawing winds of late winter.” It’s an appropriate name for a town that is friendly to cyclists. There are two motels, an inexpensive hotel, two parks for camping, several restaurants, and good food shopping. Although located on both the Milk River and the railroad, passenger trains no longer stop here. Chinook is the county seat for Blaine County.

The Blaine County Museum houses a collection of early fossils, Indian and pioneer artifacts, and an introduction to the Bear’s Paw Battlefield 16 miles south of Chinook. This is the place where the U.S. Cavalry finally caught up with Chief Joseph and his band of Nez Perce Indians struggling to escape to Canada. Just 40 miles short of freedom, Chief Joseph surrendered with these famous words, “From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.”

Captain Lewis was probably looking at the Bear’s Paw Mountains when he wrote in his journal, “*on arriving to the summit one of the highest points in the neighbourhood I thought myself well repaid for any labour; as from this point I beheld the Rocky Mountains for the first time, I could only discover a few of the most elevated points above the horizon . . . these points of the Rocky Mountains were covered with snow and the sun shone on it in such manner as to give me the most plain and satisfactory view. while I viewed these mountains I felt a secret pleasure in finding myself so near the head of the heretofore conceived boundless missouri; but when I reflected on the difficulties which this snowy barrier would most probably throw in my way to the Pacific, and the sufferings and hardships of myself and party in them, it in some measure counterbalanced the joy I had felt in the first moments in which I gazed on them; but as I have always held it a crime to anticipate evils I will believe it a good comfortable road untill I am compelled to believe differently.*” (May 26, 1805)



Chinook, MT — Zip: 59523

★ **Chamber of Commerce:** Box 744

- ▬ 1) Chinook Hotel (\$), 406-357-2231
- 2) Chinook Motor Inn (\$\$), 406-357-2248
- 3) Bear Paw Court (\$), 406-357-2221

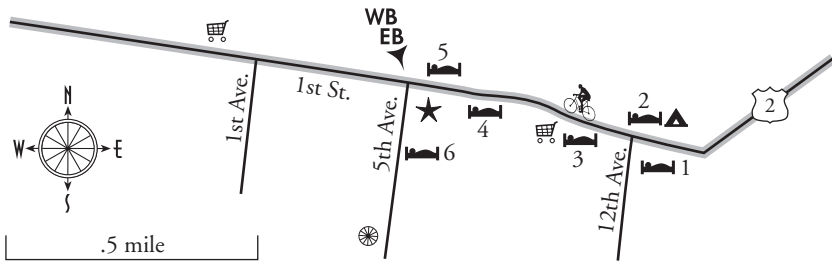
- ▲ 1) Town Park, grass, shade, restrooms with no showers
- 2) Griffin Park, grass, shade, showers

Havre, MT

Population: 11,000

Havre (pronounced Have-er) is the largest town on the Hi-Line, a major railroad junction, and a regional farming and commercial center. Although the surrounding land was originally used for grazing cattle and sheep, in the 20th century it has been primarily used for growing both winter and spring wheat.

The downtown area is compact, flat, and easy to get around. There is a variety of restaurants, entertainment, and other services. Fort Assinniboine, built in 1879 six miles southwest of town, was once home for 500 soldiers protecting the Montana frontier. Summer tours are offered at 5 pm. "Havre Beneath the Streets" on 3rd Ave. offers tours of a rebuilt historic underground mall, including the Sporting Eagle Saloon, a bordello, and an opium den.



Havre, MT — Zip: 59501

★ **Chamber of Commerce:** 518 1st St., 406-265-4383

1) Duck Inn (\$), 406-265-9615

2) Best Western Great Northern (\$\$), 888-530-4100

3) Budget Inn (\$), 888-868-8625

4) Siesta Motel (\$), 406-265-5863

5) El Toro Motel (\$), 406-265-5414

6) Rails Inn (\$), 406-265-1438

▲ Havre RV Park, very convenient open campground on main street with beautiful soft grass, little shade, pool, hot tub, and clean restrooms with showers. 406-265-8861

⊙ Havre Bicycle, 425 5th, 406-265-3654

Special Event: Havre Festival Days, mid-Sept., (parade, arts & crafts, concerts)

Big Sandy, MT

Population: 750

Big Sandy has a town park that allows camping, combined with a highway rest area with restrooms, but no showers. Within walking distance are a couple of restaurants and a food supermarket.

Loma, MT

Population: 80

In the small town of Loma, 11 miles north of Fort Benton, the Marias River joins the Missouri River. The Corps of Discovery stopped at this critical point for nine days trying to decide which river was the Missouri. Although the Indians in the Mandan villages had told them about “the great falls,” the Milk River, and many other features to look out for, no one had mentioned this confluence of two rivers. Both appeared to be “the main river,” and there were good arguments for each. After several days of exploring each branch, both Lewis and Clark were convinced the southern branch was correct; all the men were equally convinced the northern branch was correct.

Since everyone in the party understood this was a military expedition, they obeyed their commanders and proceeded on the southern branch. Two days later Lewis, hiking out ahead of the boats, heard and then saw the first of “the great falls,” and they knew they had made the right choice.

Today there is a dirt road just south of the bridge that goes 0.7 miles out to Decision Point. From a small hill you can look down on the confluence of the Marias and the Missouri. Today it’s obvious which is the main river, because so much water from the Marias has been used for irrigation.

For twelve years before Fort Benton was established farther upriver, Loma was the head of navigation on the Missouri River. In 1831 James Kipp built Fort Piegan here to trade with the dreaded Blackfeet Indians. Kipp succeeded where earlier traders and trappers had failed, because he had a translator who convinced the Indians of the benefits of trade. However, the peace did not last, and this important river junction was the scene of much bloodshed over the ensuing years. Today there is a café and convenience store here.

Fort Benton, MT

Population: 1,700

In 1846 the American Fur Company decided to replace Fort Mackenzie (in today's Loma) with Fort Lewis on this site twelve miles farther upriver. The name was later changed to Fort Benton to honor the company's best friend in Congress—Thomas Hart Benton. Originally a fur trading post, it became a gold trading town with the gold rush in the 1860s. As many as 50 steamboats arrived each summer—bringing settlers, adventurers, and manufactured goods. In one year over 10,000 miners disembarked here, and there would have been 1,000 oxen pulling wagons on the streets. From here wagon trains took over and spread out to carry people and goods farther north and west. It remained the head of navigation on the Missouri River until the railroad replaced steamboat travel in the late 1880s.

The town is working on several restorations that will make it even more interesting. The original fort is being rebuilt, and is the site of ongoing archeological study. The Grand Union Hotel has been restored to its original glory next to the river. The town is also home to the Museum of the Upper Missouri (describing life in the area) and the Museum of the Northern Great Plains (describing the history of farming and agricultural machinery in the area).

Fort Benton marks the upper end of the 150-mile stretch of river designated and protected as the Wild and Scenic Missouri River. It's only "wild" in the sense that it looks very much like it did when Lewis and Clark first travelled on it 200 years ago. This is an ideal place to rent a canoe for a day trip or sign on with an outfitter for a multi-day trip down the river. Contact the Chamber of Commerce for information about rentals and



*Grand Union Hotel,
Fort Benton, MT*



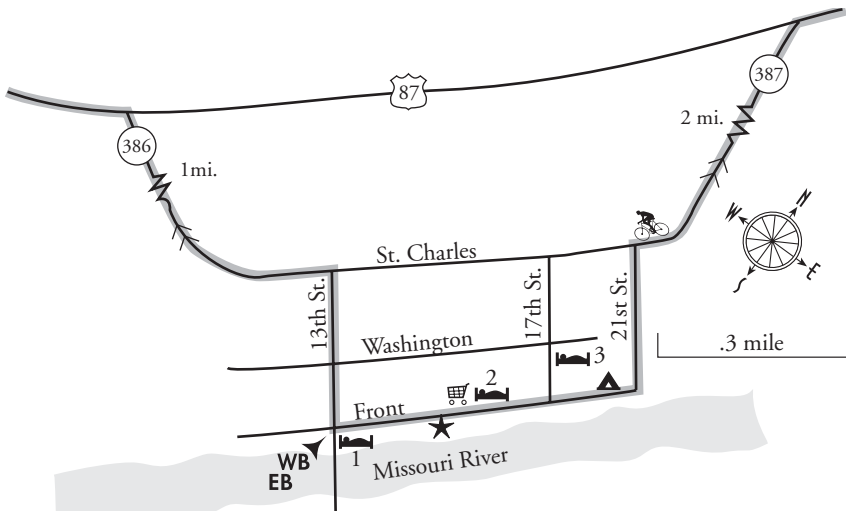
*Can you find the
canoe? Missouri
River near
Fort Benton, MT*

trips. Canoes can often be rented at the last minute, but reservations are strongly recommended for longer guided and catered trips.

Although lodging is scarce, there is very pleasant free camping at the town park along the river at the north end of town. The town is flat and compact enough to walk around easily. There are several restaurants, a small supermarket, and many shops along Front Street. It's both fun and educational to walk along the levee side of Front Street and read the history of the area on a series of signs. Besides the wonderful statue of Lewis, Clark, and Sacagawea, and a keelboat, there is also the statue and touching story of the faithful dog, Shep, who waited every day at the train station for his dead master—whom he had last seen at the station.



Notice the carefully researched details on this statue by Robert M. Scriver in Fort Benton, MT.



Fort Benton, MT — Zip: 59442

- ★ **Chamber of Commerce:** along the Steamboat Levee, PO Box 879, 406-622-3864
- 🏠 1) Grand Union Hotel (\$\$), Front, 888-838-1882
- 🏠 2) Pioneer Lodge Motel (\$\$), Front, 406-622-5441
- 🏠 3) Long's Landing B&B (\$\$), 17th and Washington, 406-622-3461
- ▲ Town Park at north end of Front St., pleasant grass and shade, water, satisfactory restrooms with no shower (possible shower at town pool or swim in river across street), easy walk to restaurants and shopping

Great Falls, MT

Population: 60,000

Great Falls emerged as a planned city in the 1880s, and it grew rapidly as five dams were built to take advantage of the hydroelectric power available by the drop in the river. The copper industry was booming, and huge amounts of electricity were required to refine copper from ore. The Anaconda Copper Company once employed 60% of the workers in Montana, and Great Falls was the largest city in the state. In fact, many people would tell you that Anaconda “owned” Montana—including many of its politicians. As copper declined and oil and gas boomed in the late 20th century, Great Falls was surpassed by Billings as the largest city.

Great Falls today is about 4 miles by 1.5 miles in size with moderate hills and traffic, so you need your bicycle to get around and see things. I recommend heading to the very helpful visitor center overlooking the river as soon as you arrive to get oriented, get a detailed city map, and figure out what you want to see and do.

It's helpful to understand that two areas have evolved in Great Falls. The old downtown area is in the ten blocks east of the river around Central Ave., while the entire three-mile stretch of 10th Ave. South near the south edge of the city provides many newer motels, shopping malls, chain restaurants, and other stores.

The Corps of Discovery learned about the great falls from the Indians at Fort Mandan, but the information turned out to be unduly optimistic. They were told about “*a most tremendous cataract . . . the noise it makes can be heard at a great distance . . . a precipice of solid and even rock, many feet high . . . there is a fine open plain on th N. side of the falls, through which, canoes and baggage may be readily transported. this portage they assert is not greater than half a mile.*” (*Toulton, Vol 4, p. 367*)



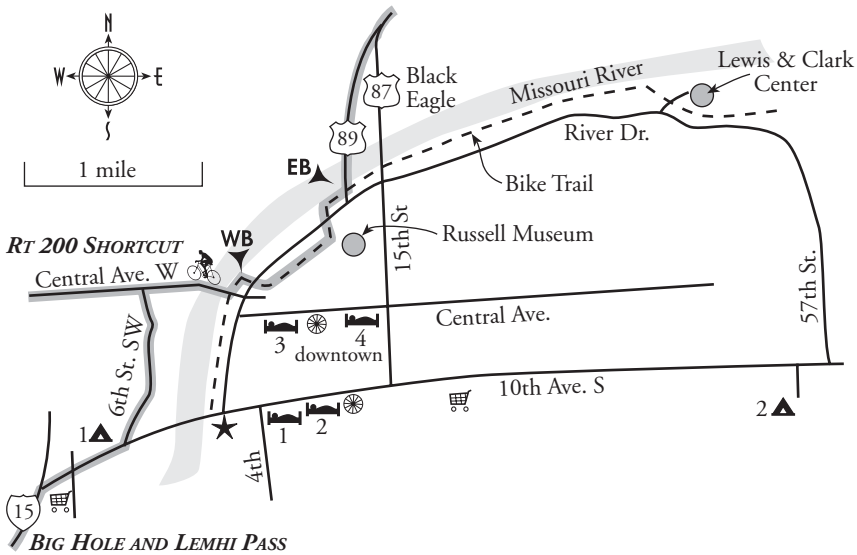
Only one of the “Great Falls,” now tamed by dams, Great Falls, MT

What Lewis discovered when he arrived on June 13 was much worse. There were actually a series of five large falls in a ten-mile stretch of river, and steep rocky banks on both sides. After scouting both sides of the river, they decided to use an eighteen-mile portage route on the south side. It required a very difficult month to get by these falls, and it must have dealt a discouraging blow to the idea of a commercial Northwest Passage.

The new Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center (4201 Giant Springs Rd., 406-727-8733) is a “must see” for anyone, especially people following the Lewis & Clark Trail. On the south side of the river at the north edge of the city, it can be reached by a pleasant ride along the River’s Edge Bike Trail. This trail also provides a glimpse of the falls, rapids, and steep side walls that provided such a huge barrier to Lewis and Clark—even though today’s dams make the river somewhat different.

The C.M. Russell Museum Complex (400 13th St. N, 406-727-8787) is well worth a visit for anyone who enjoys western art. Charlie Russell (the son of a prominent St. Louis family) left home in 1880 at age 16 to pursue his dream of becoming a cowboy. Instead, he gained fame as a self-taught artist. The museum complex includes a museum of western art, featuring works of Russell and others, his home, and the restored cabin and studio where he worked.

Although it’s a little hard to get to, the 3-D International Restaurant across the river in Black Eagle offers an excellent all-you-can-eat Mongolian Grill buffet at a reasonable price. You can see their sign atop the restaurant from the Great Falls side of the river.



Great Falls, MT — Zip: 59403

★ **Visitor Center:** 10th Ave. S at the river, PO Box 2127, 800-735-8535, www.greatfallscvb.visitmt.com

🏠 The Visitor Center lists 33 motels. Several older and newer ones are grouped in the downtown area, around Central Ave. in the 10 blocks east of the river. Another grouping can be found scattered along 10th Ave. S along with many franchise restaurants and several shopping malls. A sample from both locations:

- 1) Holiday Inn (\$\$), 400 10th Ave. S, 800-257-1998
- 2) Village Motor Inn (\$), 726 10th Ave. S, 406-727-7666
- 3) Best Western Ponderosa (\$\$), 220 Central, 406-761-3410
- 4) Royal Motel (\$), 1300 Central, 406-452-9548

- ▲ 1) Dick's RV Park, at intersection of 6th St. SW and 10th Ave. S just west of the river, a few tent sites distant from clean restrooms with showers, rough grass, no shade, near noisy roads, about 2 mi. from downtown, expensive. 406-452-0333
- 2) KOA, 1500 51st St. S just south of 10th Ave. S at east end of city, quiet area, some shade and grass, tent sites near excellent restrooms with showers, pool, hot tub, about 4 mi. from downtown, more expensive. 406-727-3191

- ⊗ 1) Scheels, Holiday Village Mall, 10th Ave. S at 9th St., 406-453-7666
- 2) Bighorn Wilderness Equipment, 600 Central, 406-453-2841

Special Events

Lewis and Clark Encampment, weekend late June or early July
(living interpretation of portage around falls),

State Fair and Rodeo, late July

International Dixieland Jazz Festival, Labor Day weekend

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.

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