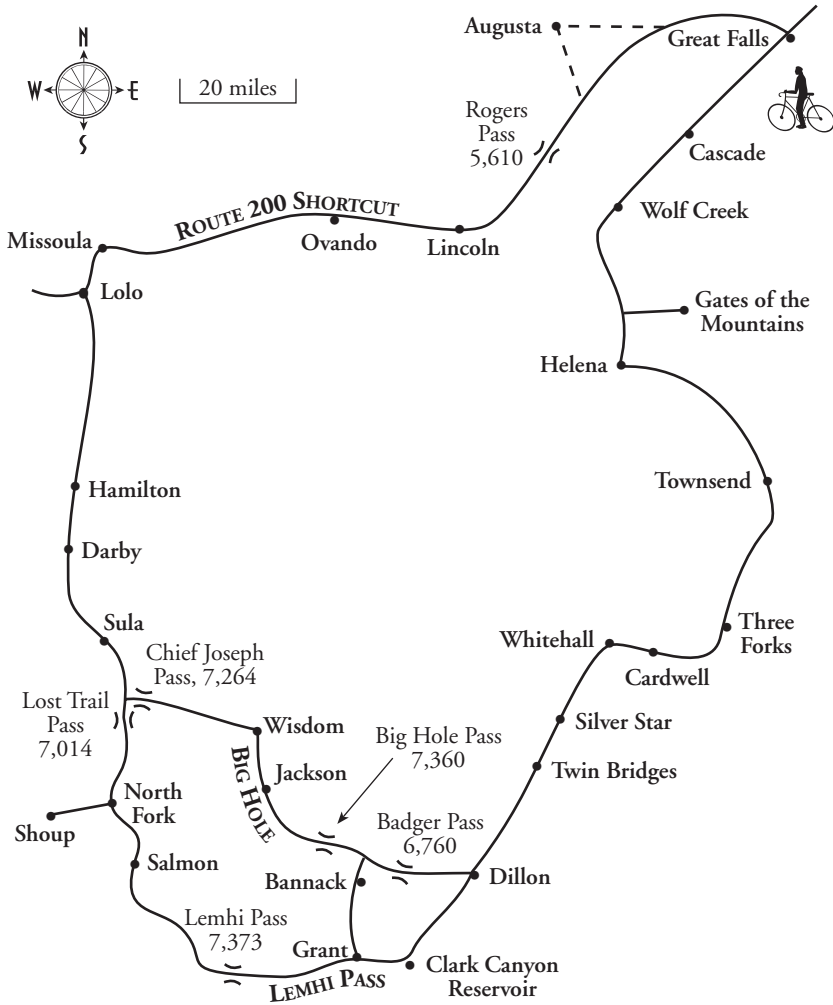




## H. THREE ROUTES OVER THE DIVIDE

### GREAT FALLS, MT TO MISSOULA, MT



Summary Data for Three Routes:

	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Climbing</i>
Lemhi Pass	460 mi.	15,000 ft.
Big Hole	420 mi.	13,000 ft.
Route 200 Shortcut	170 mi.	7,000 ft.

Great Falls is perhaps *the* critical transition point in the entire Lewis and Clark Trail—both for the original expedition and for today’s bicycle tourer—as it is the transition from the plains to the mountains. And not just any mountains; these are *the Rocky Mountains*—actually made up of many different and dramatic interlocking mountain ranges. With 1,800 miles behind you, there are another 1,200 miles to go—600 of which are in the Rocky Mountains.

The Corps of Discovery used three different routes over the Continental Divide, as shown in the map and summary above. On their original westbound journey they crossed over Lemhi Pass. On their return eastbound journey Lewis and Clark split the group and explored two different routes. Clark took his group through the Big Hole and then down the Yellowstone River. Lewis took his group on the more direct route they had learned about from the Indians—about 300 miles shorter than their original westbound route. I call this third option the “Route 200 Shortcut,” because it approximates today’s Route 200. The two groups rejoined where the Yellowstone River joins the Missouri River near the Montana-North Dakota border.

Which route should you take? I will lay out the advantages and disadvantages of each and let you decide based on what’s important to you. All three routes are described in both the Master Plan and the Detailed Plan. This part of Montana is an area where you could put together a great loop trip if you want to park a car someplace and take two of these routes. You could also use these routes along with the state highway map to design your own loop.

The **Lemhi Pass Route** is the original route the Corps of Discovery followed on their westbound trip. It offers historical accuracy and a feeling of discovery and excitement, as you think about Lewis desperately searching for Indians so they could purchase horses before winter set in, and wondering when they would reach the Continental Divide and what the other side would be like. You, too, will wonder about making it over the mountains. This route is the longest at 460 miles, the most challenging, the most beautiful, and has the least traffic. From Great Falls it follows the river south, winding up canyons through the foothills, past the Gates of the Mountains, and into Helena—state capital and great small city. On south to Three Forks, where Lewis and Clark once again agonized over which of the three forks would lead them to the source of the Missouri River. Along the river and up through pretty valleys to Dillon—another good small town for bicycle tourers. This is the only route that includes the following places:

1. Camp Fortunate, where Sacagawea was unexpectedly reunited with her brother, Chief Cameahwait, in an incredibly emotional scene that was probably critical to the success of the expedition. The site is now covered by Clark Canyon Reservoir.
2. Lemhi Pass and the (arguable) source of the Missouri River. You can see what Lewis saw when he first looked across the Continental Divide. He expected an

easy portage to a river that would float them down to the Pacific; instead he saw more mountains and mountain ranges than he had ever dreamed of.

3. The town of Salmon, Idaho, a great little active outdoor adventure town, where you can take time off for a whitewater rafting adventure on the Salmon River (also known as the River of No Return). After scouting this river for several days, Lewis and Clark reluctantly decided they could not navigate it.

Before you choose this route, be aware there are two significant disadvantages. First, it includes two major passes instead of one. Lemhi Pass at 7,373 feet is described below. Lost Trail Pass at 7,014 feet includes 3,500 feet of climbing in 23 miles on the south side (or 2,600 feet of climbing in 12 miles if you're travelling east-bound).

Second, it includes 24 miles of fairly rough dirt road. I have done it on my touring bike, because I desperately wanted to do this route; but I will never (well, *probably* never) do it again and can't recommend it. The dirt includes 1,400 feet of climbing in 12 miles on the east side and 2,400 feet in 12 miles on the west side, and the ride *down* the west side is especially rough. After rain, Lemhi Pass can be muddy, slippery, and difficult for four-wheel drive vehicles! There is talk about adding a layer of gravel on top of the dirt, which might make it better in some ways and worse in others.

If you want to ride this route westbound but are concerned about Lemhi Pass, it is always possible to ride as far as Grant, and then make a last-minute decision to

ride a pretty good dirt road 12 miles north to Bannack and connect with the Big Hole Route. Eastbound riders don't have this easy option. Once you ride to Salmon, you would have to backtrack 45 miles and 4,000 feet to get back on the Big Hole Route.

The **Big Hole Route** is almost as long (420 miles) as the Lemhi Route, all paved, almost as beautiful, almost as free of traffic, and almost as hilly. Historically, this follows Clark's return



*Can you find the cyclist climbing Lemhi Pass?*

route pretty closely between Lolo and Bannack and between Dillon and Great Falls. You can choose to follow Clark's route by taking the dirt road between Bannack and Grant, and using the Lemhi Pass Route between Grant and Dillon. (see summary map above) This route does *not* follow Clark's route up the Yellowstone River, because this would involve several hundred miles on I-94.

This is the only route that includes the following places:

1. The Big Hole, a gorgeous high valley with dramatic mountains on both sides. There are many prosperous (and mostly invisible) ranches here using the unique Beaverslide (see photo with Wisdom, MT) to collect and store hay.
2. The cute, tiny town of Jackson with its motel, restaurant, hot springs, and bar.
3. The Big Hole National Battlefield and Visitors Center. It is definitely worth an hour or two to both see and hear the tragic and heroic story of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce Indians.

The third option is the **Route 200 Shortcut** between Great Falls and Missoula. This approximates the eastbound return route of Lewis and nine men in 1806, as they followed the well-worn Indian trail up the "River of the Road to the Buffalo" (today's Blackfoot River). About ten miles east of Lincoln, they followed the trail over the divide, at what is now called Lewis and Clark Pass—about five miles north of today's Route 200 crossing at Roger's Pass. Lewis followed the trail

east—close to today's Augusta—and picked up the Sun River to Great Falls.

This general route was also followed in 1859 when John Mullan constructed the Mullan Road so the U.S. Army could transport military



*The Big Hole near  
Jackson, MT*



*Approaching the  
Divide on the  
Route 200 Shortcut*

supplies over 600 miles from the Missouri River at Fort Benton to the Columbia River at Wallula—both places we pass on the Lewis & Clark Trail. The road was completed in only one year, although there was a 130% cost overrun and the quality of the road left something to be desired.

The major (only?) advantage of this route is that it's shorter with less climbing. If you have a tight schedule, or need to make up time, this route can help. If Lewis and Clark had known about this route, they could have saved about 45 days and continued over the Bitterroots in the summer weather of early August.

Route 200 also has several disadvantages. First, because it is more direct, it carries more and faster traffic—including trucks—than the other routes. Second, although this route involves less climbing, the climbing is less pleasant. Especially between Simms and Lincoln, the highway tends to be straight with lots of big ups and downs. Third, Lincoln, at about the halfway point, is the only significant town on this 165-mile stretch. If you don't want to do two long days, you can detour through Augusta, stop in Ovando, or camp in pleasant Forest Service campgrounds. Finally, although the scenery is beautiful, it's not as spectacular as the other routes; and you miss a lot of great towns.

## LEMHI PASS AND BIG HOLE ROUTE

### Cascade, MT

Population: 730

Cascade is a pleasant small town for an overnight stop, and especially convenient if you don't want to do the whole 88 hilly miles to Helena in a single day. There are two possible areas to stay. There is camping, motels, food shopping, and a café right in town. There is also camping with a full restaurant and bar near Hardy, about nine miles south (towards Helena) from the downtown area.

Zip: 59421

- 1) Badger Motel & Café (\$), 1st St., 406-468-9330
- 2) A&C Motel (\$), 308 1 Ave. N, 406-468-2513
- ▲ 1) Atkinson Park, 3rd Ave. N, next to I-15, good grass, no shade, restrooms, showers at pool next door
- 2) Missouri Inn, 9 mi. south of Cascade, camping behind restaurant, restrooms with showers, some shade, be aware of possible conflict with weekend flea market on summer weekends, 406-468-9884

## Wolf Creek, MT

Population: 150

Wolf Creek is a very small fishing town right on the river in the beautiful Wolf Creek Canyon. There are two motels, a restaurant, café, and bar. Pleasant and convenient as this town is, the motels are usually filled by fishermen on a weekly basis during the summer. Call ahead for reservations. There are also two primitive National Forest Service campgrounds north (towards Cascade) of Wolf Creek.

Zip: 59648

🏠 1) Montana River Outfitters Cabins (\$–\$\$), 800-800-4350

2) Frenchy's Motel (\$), 406-235-4251

▲ 1) NFS Campground, 11 mi. north (towards Cascade), on river, rough ground, no water, pit toilet

2) NFS Campground, 3 mi. north (towards Cascade), on river, rough ground, no water, pit toilet

## Helena, MT

Pop 30,000

Nestled in the foothills of the Elkhorn Mountains, Helena is the capital of Montana. There was nothing here in 1864 when four discouraged miners decided to take one last chance to find gold on their way home to Georgia. They struck it rich, and the population exploded. The name “Last Chance Gulch” stuck, and today you can visit shops and restaurants along a pleasant pedestrian mall in the gulch. Bicycle tourers can minimize hills and avoid traffic by skirting the city to the north and east, but you miss a lot if you don't tackle some of the hills and see the sights.

Helena is a very appealing small city. It's big enough to have a variety of services, but small enough to get around without too much traffic. The nearby mountains, river, and lake offer great opportunities for year round outdoor recreation. There is an active community of both road and mountain bikers. Finally, it is a well-educated and sophisticated small city with lots of music and art.

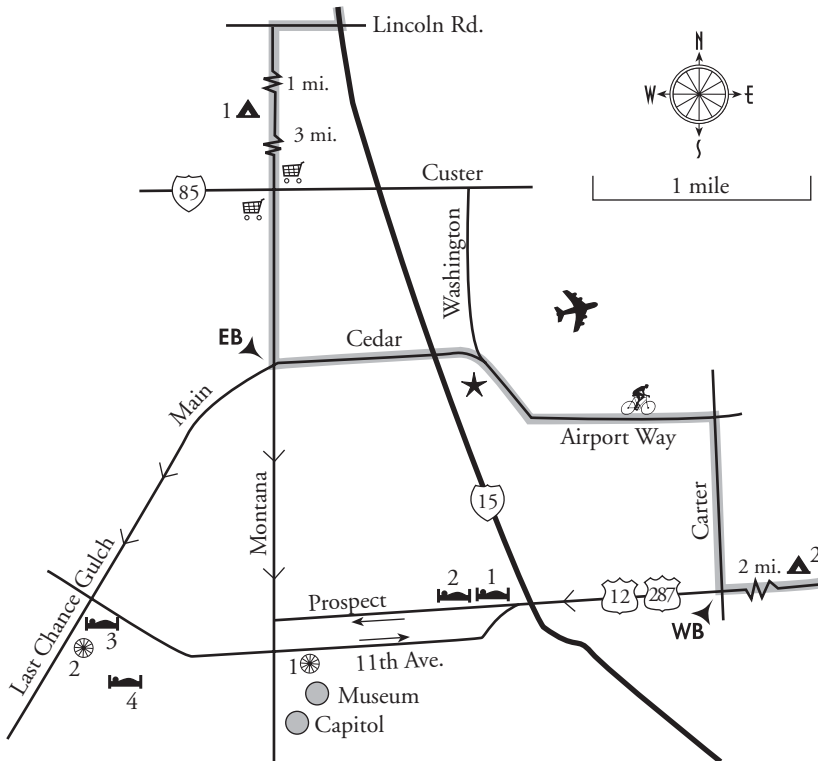
There are clusters of motels and restaurants near the I-15 interchanges and in the downtown area. You can find camping either five miles east or five miles north of the city, although food shopping is much better north of the city. Remember that east of the city means heading westbound on our route, and north of the city means heading eastbound.

The Capitol offers both guided and self-guided tours. Note that the dome is gilded with copper instead of the more typical gold, once again reminding us what made this state. The building contains several historical paintings, including the famous mural of “Lewis and Clark Meeting the Flathead Indians at Ross' Hole” by Charles Russell. Across the street the Montana Historical Society Museum has

exhibits of Montana history, plus a gallery of Russell art. The Last Chance Tour Train leaves from the museum for an overview tour of the city, including the pedestrian mall in Last Chance Gulch, the cathedral, and the elegant Victorian mansions built with the wealth from gold mining.

Seventeen miles north of Helena, and down a 2.7-mile steep hill from its own exit on I-15, is the beautiful two-hour boat trip along a three-mile stretch of the Missouri River with 1,200-foot cliffs through the Gates of the Rocky Mountains (406-458-5241, [www.gatesofthemountains.org](http://www.gatesofthemountains.org)). Although it may be difficult to fit this into your riding plan (it almost requires either an overnight stop in Wolf Creek or an extra day in Helena), this is a spectacular section of the river.

On July 19 Lewis wrote, *“wherever we get a view of the lofty summits of the mountains the snow presents itself, altho’ we are almost suffocated in this confined vally with heat. . . this evening we entered much the most remarkable clifts that we have yet seen. these clifts rise from the waters edge on either side perpendiculary to the hight of 1200 feet. every object here wears a dark and gloomy aspect . . . the river appears to have forced it’s way through this immense body of solid rock for the distance of 5 3/4 miles and where it makes it’s exit below has thrown on either side vast collumns of rocks mountains high . . . from the singular appearance of this place I called it the gates of the rocky mountains.”*



Helena, MT — Zip: 59601



*Gates of the Mountains, near Helena, MT*

- ★ **Chamber of Commerce:** 225 Cruse, 800-743-5362, [www.helenachamber.com](http://www.helenachamber.com), [hchamber@initco.net](mailto:hchamber@initco.net)
- 🏠 The Chamber of Commerce can provide a listing of 20 motels and 8 B&Bs. Listed below are a few convenient ones from different price categories.
  - 1) Motel 6 (\$), 800 N Oregon, 406-442-9990
  - 2) Holiday Inn Express (\$\$), 701 Washington, 800-465-4329
  - 3) Budget Inn (\$\$), 524 N Last Chance, 800-862-1334
  - 4) St. James B&B (\$\$\$), 114 N Hoback, 406-449-2623
- ▲ 1) Helena Campground and RV Park, 5820 N Montana, 406-458-4714, 5 mi. north, former KOA campground, quiet, good grass sites with shade, excellent restrooms with showers, pool, hot tub, laundry, camp store, relatively expensive tenting, excellent food shopping 3 flat mi. south
- 2) Buzz In RV Park and Campground, 3699 Hwy. 12, 406-449-1291, 5 mi. east, open, near highway, grass, some shade, showers, laundry
- 🌀 1) Big Sky Cyclery, 1419 11th Ave., 406-442-4644
- 2) Great Divide Cyclery, 336 N Jackson, 406-443-5188



## Townsend, MT

Population: 1,650

Townsend is a pleasant small town with motels, campgrounds, restaurants, and good food shopping. If you plan to camp, wait until you arrive and make your choice based on your priorities.

Zip: 59644

- ★ **Townsend Area Chamber of Commerce:** Box 947, 406-266-3911
- 🏠 **Mustang Motel (\$)** and **Lake Townsend Motel (\$)**, 406-266-3491
- ▲ 1) Indian Road CG, 1 mi. north, grass, shade, water, pit toilet, no shower  
2) Roadrunner RV CG, .6 mi. north, on road, some grass, open, no shade



*Along the Jefferson River, Three Forks, MT*

## Three Forks, MT

Population: 1,200

As its name suggests, Three Forks is where the Missouri River splits into three rivers. Confirming what they already suspected when they left Fort Mandan, Lewis and Clark believed the westward branch was the most promising, and they named it the Jefferson, after their president and sponsor. They diplomatically named the others the Madison (Secretary of State) and the Gallatin (Secretary of Treasury).

This small town requires a flat 2.5-mile detour southeast from Route 287. It includes a small market, a couple of restaurants, two motels, and the attractively restored Sacajawea Inn. There is also a motel and campground located directly on Route 287 near the intersection with I-90. The nearby Wheat Montana Bakery and Deli offers a limited, but very good, menu. Although I hesitate to mention restaurants because they change periodically, I have to tell you we had a memorable creative dinner at the Historic Headwaters Restaurant on Main Street.

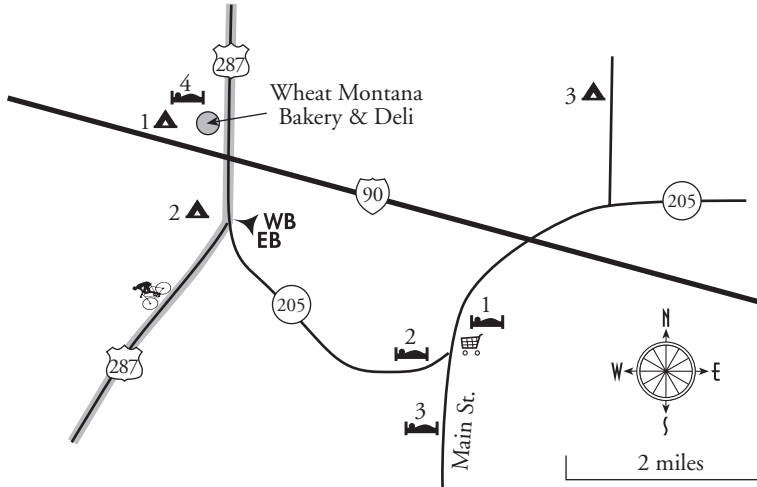
Another six flat miles east and north of town is the Missouri Headwaters State Park, where the river actually splits. This is a flat area, and it is difficult to see the actual split of the rivers unless you cross the river and climb the limestone cliff (as Lewis did) or go up in an airplane and get a wonderful overview. It's a pleasant place with a primitive campground, but there is little to see or do here.

In 1805 Sacajawea recognized their campsite as the place where her Shoshoni group had been camping when they were attacked by a Hidatsa hunting party four years earlier. Several were killed, and several boys and women were taken as prisoners and slaves.

The area around Three Forks was rich in beaver, and three men from the Corps of Discovery later found their way back as guides and trappers. Four years later John Potts was killed by Blackfoot Indians, and a year after that George Drouillard had both his scalp and his head taken off.

John Colter also returned to the area to trap, trade, and fight. He was the first white man to wander through the thermal pools and geysers that are now part of Yellowstone National Park, but were originally called Colter's Hell. He was with Potts when Potts was killed, but the Blackfeet had a special punishment for Colter. He was stripped naked and given a headstart, running barefoot over the needle grass and prickly pear. The Blackfeet then started chasing him for a human hunt. The Indians must have been furious when Colter outran all but one of them, then turned and killed him. They kept chasing Colter across the flat land, but he hid in a pile of driftwood in the Gallatin River. During the night he stole away, and over the next week managed to travel 200 miles to safety.

Back on Route 287, five miles farther south is Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park (see camping below). Although the campground is convenient to the highway, the caverns require a three-mile ride up a 1,400 foot hill. It takes about two hours to walk the two-mile tour of the caverns.



### Three Forks, MT — Zip: 59752

★ **Three Forks Chamber of Commerce:** Box 1103, 406-285-4753,  
[www.threeforksmontana.com](http://www.threeforksmontana.com)

- 🏠 1) Broken Spur Motel (\$-\$), 124 W Elm 406-285-3277
- 2) Lewis and Clark Sportsman's Lodge (\$\$), 510 S Main, 406-285-3454
- 3) Fort Three Forks Motel (\$\$), on Route 287 near I-90, 406-285-3233
- ▲ 1) Fort Three Forks RV Park and Campground, grass, no shade, windy, good restrooms with showers, 406-285-3233
- 2) KOA Campground, Route 287 just below I-90, 406-285-3611
- 3) Missouri Headwaters State Park Campground, no water, pit toilets, flat, near river, 6 mi. east and north of town
- 4) Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park, Route 287 4.8 mi. south of Route 205 intersection, sloping ground, pretty canyon, no shade, little privacy, good restrooms with showers

### Special Events

- Rodeo, 3rd weekend in July
- Lewis and Clark Rendevous, last weekend in July
- Antique Aircraft Show, first weekend in August

## Cardwell, MT

Pop 35

Cardwell Store is an interchange on I-90 that offers a convenience store and inexpensive cabins, tepees, and camping area.

Zip: 59721

- ▲ Cardwell Store, camping behind store, grass, some shade, restrooms with showers

## Whitehall, MT

Pop 1,100

Whitehall offers good food shopping and a variety of motels and restaurants in the small downtown area and near the I-90 interchange a half mile from downtown.

Zip: 59759

- 🏠 1) Whitehall Creek Motel (\$), Legion St., 406-287-5315  
 2) Chief Motel (\$), Legion St., 406-287-3921  
 3) Rice Motel (\$), Legion St., 406-287-3895  
 4) Super 8 Motel (\$\$), I-90 Interchange, 406-287-3055

## Silver Star, MT

Population: 50

This pleasant tiny town offers a country store, café, and, two miles farther down the route, a fishing resort with cabins, rooms, and campground.

Zip: 59751

- 🏠 & ▲ Jefferson River Cabins and Campground, 406-684-5225

## Twin Bridges, MT

Population: 375

In Twin Bridges the Jefferson River splits again into three rivers. Lewis and Clark named the westernmost river the Wisdom (now the Big Hole River that flows through the town of Wisdom), and the central river the Philanthropy (now the Beaverhead). Although tempted by the larger volume and western direction of the Wisdom, they chose the Philanthropy because it was warmer—deducing that it must flow from a greater distance into the mountains. The easternmost river, the Ruby, was

never a temptation. Its source, at the Continental Divide near Yellowstone National Park, was later determined to be the most distant source of the Missouri River.

Be sure to notice the Beaverhead River just north and west of town and think about the Corps of Discovery dragging their canoes up this river. On August 4 Clark wrote, *“the method we are compelled to take to get on is fatiguing & laborious in the extreen, haul the Canoes over the rapids, which Suckceed each other every two or three hundred yards and between the water rapid oblige to towe & walke on stones the whole day except when we have poleing men wet all day Sore feet &c.”*

Lewis was struggling on ahead of the main party at this point, trying ever more desperately, as summer turned into fall and the river continued to peter out, to locate Indians who could provide them with horses for travel over the mountains. At this time they still believed it would be a one-day portage over the mountains to a new river that would carry them to the Pacific. Clark was following behind with the main group—several of whom were sick and injured, and all of whom were becoming discouraged by the ever dwindling river and increasing difficulty of making mileage towards the mountains.

About ten miles upriver (south) from Twin Bridges Sacagawea recognized the “Beaver’s Head” rock formation off to the right, and the captains felt reassured they were heading in the right direction to find the Shoshoni and horses. Many people today question how appropriate the name is for this rock formation. I think it’s a valid question if you just view it from the main road, but I’ve found the formation

actually looks more like a beaver if you explore farther north and east off the main road—as the Native Americans would have done in their normal daily life.

Today Twin Bridges offers cabins, a motel, small restaurants, grocery store, and a rest area with water and restrooms on the river.



*Beaverhead Rock Monument,  
Twin Bridges, MT*

*Historical Association  
Twin Bridges, MT*



Zip: 59754

★ **Chamber of Commerce:** PO Box 134

- 1) Hemingway's Cabins and Fly Shop (\$\$), 406-684-5648
- 2) King's Motel (\$), 800-222-5510

▲ Hemingway's Cabins and Fly Shop, lawn with bath house and showers, 406-684-5648

## Dillon, MT

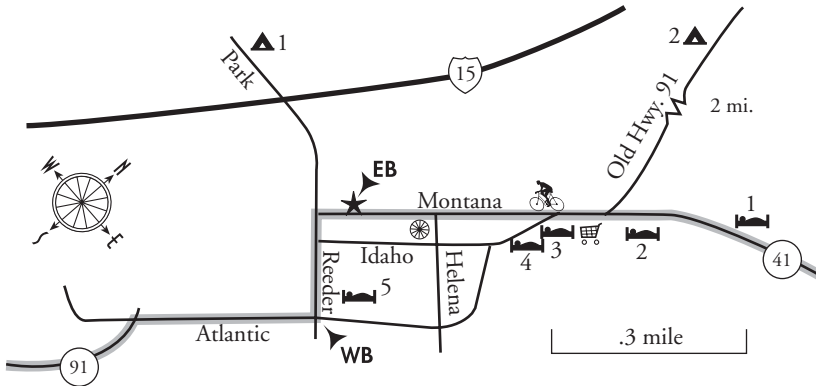
Population: 4,000

Located in the southwestern corner of the state, Dillon is the county seat of Beaverhead County and the home of Western Montana College of the University of Montana. Named after Sydney Dillon, president of the Union Pacific Railroad, the town was built as the railroad pushed north in 1880 to haul gold from Butte. Notice the attractive architecture of the courthouse, railroad station (now the visitor center), and Western Montana College (south end of town).

Today agriculture is the main industry in this area, and Dillon seems to be a young and active town. Although it's a little too large to walk around, it's flat and easy to ride anywhere on your bicycle. There is a good selection of motels, restaurants, food shopping, and campgrounds.



*Kids love fire drills in Dillon, MT.*



### Dillon, MT — Zip: 59725

- ★ **Chamber of Commerce:** Box 425, 406-683-5511, [www.bmt.net/~chamber](http://www.bmt.net/~chamber), [chamber@bmt.net](mailto:chamber@bmt.net)
- 🏠 1) Sacagawea Motel (\$), 775 N Montana, 406-683-2381
- 2) Best Western Paradise Inn (\$\$), 650 N Montana, 406-683-4214
- 3) Super 8 Motel (\$\$), 550 N Montana, 800-800-8000
- 4) Sundowner Motel (\$), 500 N Montana, 800-524-9746
- 5) Centennial Inn B&B (\$\$), 122 S Washington, 406-683-4454
- ▲ 1) KOA, E Park St. (from Reeder St.), convenient, pool, 406-683-2749.  
If mosquitoes are a problem, try the drier Skyline (see 2 below).
- 2) Skyline RV Park, 2.5 relatively flat mi. north on Old Hwy. 91, sloping dry ground, not much grass or shade, good restrooms with showers, laundry, 406-683-4692
- 🚲 Bad Beaver Bike and Ski, 25 E Helena, 406-683-9292

### Special Events

Jaycee Rodeo and Concert, Labor Day weekend  
Beaverhead County Fair, week before Labor Day



Montana  
traffic jam

## LEMHI PASS ROUTE

## Clark Canyon Reservoir and Dam

Twenty miles upriver (south) from Dillon, Clark Canyon Reservoir offers two possibilities for camping. This is the general location of Camp Fortunate for the Corps of Discovery, although the actual site is now buried under the reservoir.

The story of Lewis forging ahead with a small party to find the source of Horse Prairie Creek, cross the Continental Divide at Lemhi Pass, drink from the headwaters of the Columbia River, and finally make contact with the Shoshonis is a spectacular adventure—especially as told by Stephen Ambrose in *Undaunted Courage*. Ever more desperate to find Indians and horses as the river petered out, the mountains loomed, and winter approached, Lewis and a small band of men finally saw an Indian scout, who ran away from them. Later that day Lewis caught up with two Indian women, convinced them he was friendly, and finally met with the Shoshoni leaders.

Although the Indians suspected that Lewis was leading them into a trap, they finally followed their leader, Chief Cameahwait back over Lemhi Pass to find the rest of the Corps of Discovery and help transport their baggage over the pass. The story of the emotional meeting of Chief Cameahwait and Sacagawea back at Camp Fortunate—when they discovered they were brother and sister—is one more incredible example of truth being stranger than fiction. Although these Indians were frightened and poor in all resources, they offered everything they had for the success of the Corps of Discovery. Even though the expedition was sometimes clobbered by bad luck, this was a case of incredibly good luck—hence the name of Camp Fortunate.

- ▲ 1) Clark Canyon Reservoir NFS Campground, 19 mi. south of Dillon and 12 mi. east of Grant, off I-15 on Lemhi Pass route, pretty location on lake, windy, no shade/grass/privacy, covered picnic tables, water, pit toilets
- 2) Armstead Campground, 19 mi. south of Dillon and 12 mi. east of Grant, east side of I-15 across from Clark Canyon Reservoir, 406-683-4199, more sheltered, grass, showers, laundry



## Grant, MT

Population: 35

Twelve miles farther west is the “town” of Grant, a road intersection and a former stagecoach stop on the Dillon-Salmon run. Later it was a stop on the Gilmore and Pittsburgh Railroad, whose Galloping Goose rail-bus is still parked here. The Horse Prairie Hilton is a rustic rambling B&B with a “big sky” view all around.

Zip: 59725

🏠 & ⚠️ Unfortunately the Horse Prairie Hilton is now closed. This means the Lemhi Pass route requires some extra thought and planning for the 67 miles between lodging/camping options in Clark Canyon Reservoir and Salmon. There has also been new gravel added on the west side of Lemhi Pass, which makes this road more difficult for both road and mountain bikes. Inquire at Dillon or Salmon for more updated information on this route.



*Horse Prairie Hilton at the stage stop, Grant, MT*

### LEMHI PASS, MONTANA/IDAHO BORDER

If you made it to the top of the Continental Divide here, you deserve some time for rest and reflection. Lewis arrived here with a small party on August 12, 1805. Revel in your accomplishment, as Lewis did on August 12. *“After refreshing ourselves we proceeded on to the top of the dividing ridge from which I discovered immense ranges of high mountains still to the West of us with their tops partially covered with snow. I now descended the mountain about 3/4 of a mile which I found much steeper than on the opposite side, to a handsome bold running Creek of cold Clear water. here I first tasted the water of the great Columbia river. after a short halt we continued our march along the Indian road.”*

Although Lewis wrote nothing of his feelings at this moment, most historians speculate that he must have been disappointed to look west and see nothing but a series of massive snow-capped peaks instead of a broad gentle river flowing to the Pacific. I'm not convinced he was discouraged. I have looked both east and west, seen the same view of many confusing mountains, and thought optimistically: If a series of rivers can flow eastward through that tangle of mountains, there's no reason a series of rivers can't flow westward through a similar tangle of mountains.

It's worth a short walk down to the Sacagawea Memorial, where Horse Prairie Creek first emerges from a small spring. Although Lewis and Clark—and some writers—claim this is *the source* of the Missouri River, the source of the Red Rock River (a neighboring tributary of the Ruby/Jefferson/Missouri River) is technically the farthest point from the mouth of the Missouri, and therefore is officially considered *the source*. *“two miles below Mc Neal had exultingly stood with a foot on each side of this little rivulet and thanked his god that he had lived to bestride the mighty & heretofore deemed endless Missouri.”* (August 12, Lewis)



*The author also “exultingly stood with a foot on each side of this little rivulet and thanked his god that he had lived to bestride the mighty & heretofore deemed endless Missouri.” Below Lemhi Pass, MT*

## Salmon, ID

Population: 3,000

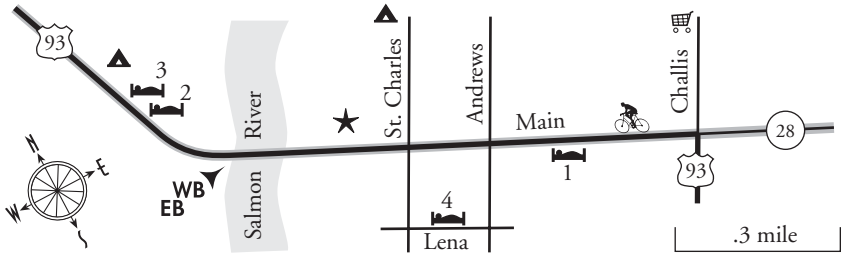
This delightful town is your reward for climbing over both Lemhi Pass (3,500 feet above you) and Lost Trail Pass (3,500 feet above you). You climbed one to reach Salmon, and you will climb the other to leave. So enjoy yourself here. Salmon has many opportunities for camping, lodging, shopping, and eating; and it is a flat and compact town that is easy to get around.

If you have any dreams of whitewater rafting, the Chamber of Commerce lists 27 outfitters and guides; and this would make a fine resting place for a day or two. What's rewarding to us was extremely disappointing and discouraging to Lewis and Clark. They knew they were on the west side of the Continental Divide, and they thought they would float gently down to the Pacific Ocean; but the Salmon River below here is known as the "River of No Return" for good reasons.

At first they refused to believe the Indians, who told them the Salmon was not navigable. Cameahwait *"added on further enquiry . . . that the river was confined between inaccessible mountains, was very rapid and rocky insomuch that it was impossible for us to pass either by land or water down this river to the great lake where the white men lived as he had been informed. this was unwelcome information but I still hoped that this account had been exaggerated."* (August 13, Lewis) However, after several days of exploring the river, they reluctantly agreed and set off on foot on the most difficult and dangerous part of their trip—struggling over Lost Trail Pass and Lolo Pass in early fall snowstorms.

In 1805 Lewis and Clark were the first white men to visit this area. In 1832 Captain Bonneville drove the first wagon over the Rockies and built a fort on the Salmon River. In 1855 a Mormon group from Salt Lake City established a fort in this area and named it *Lemhi*, after a person in the Book of Mormon. In 1866 a group of prospectors from Montana discovered gold fourteen miles west of Salmon, and this led to the establishment of Salmon City in a more convenient location in 1867.

*Clark determined the Salmon River  
(aka "River of No Return") was not navigable.  
Below North Fork, ID*



**Salmon, ID** — Zip: 83467

★ **Chamber of Commerce:** 200 Main, 208-756-2100

▣ 1) Motel DeLuxe (\$), 112 S Church, 208-756-2231

2) Stagecoach Inn (\$\$), 201 Hwy. 93 N, 208-756-2919

3) Wagons West Motel (\$\$), 503 Hwy. 93 N, 800-756-4281

4) Heritage Inn B&B (\$), 510 Lena, 208-756-3174

▲ 1) Century II Campground, 603 Hwy. 93 N, laundry, 208-756-2063

2) Salmon Meadows, St. Charles 3 blocks N of Main, grass, shade, laundry, showers, 208-756-2640



## North Fork, ID

Population: 250

Twenty-one miles north of Salmon is the tiny village of North Fork, where the North Fork of the Salmon River joins the main river. There are two motels, two restaurants, and a campground. This is also a staging area for many raft trips on the river.

If you want to take a side detour down the river towards Shoup on 18 miles of paved road along the river, you can get a good idea of the rugged canyon that scared Lewis and Clark. There is a pleasant café with a couple of rustic cabins at Shoup.

Zip: 83466

- ▣ 1) North Fork Motel and Campground (\$\$), 208-865-2412
- 2) River's Fork Inn (\$\$), 208-865-2301
- 3) Shoup General Store and Cabins (\$), 18 mi. west of North Fork on Salmon River Rd., Shoup, 83469, 208-394-2125
- 4) 100 Acre Wood B&B, 3 mi. north on Route 93, 208-865-2165
- ▲ 1) North Fork Motel and Campground, 208-865-2412
- 2) Wagon Hammer Springs Campground and RV Park, 1 mi. South on Route 93, 208-865-2477



*Former gold rush town and capital of Montana Territory, Bannack, MT*

## **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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