

Voyage of Discovery

On the Lewis and Clark Trail – St. Louis, Missouri

7-8 July 2021



The Gateway Arch National Park in St. Louis is a monument to the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which set out from here to explore it, and the westward expansion of the United States to the Pacific Coast. It's where my sister Julie and I began our own trip to the West today.

Voyage of Discovery

My sister, Julie, and I have arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, from the opposite coasts of the United States – she from North Carolina, where we were born and grew up, and I from California, my home since 1985.

We're here to begin a road trip lasting most of the next two weeks that will take us across two-thirds the breadth of our nation to the Pacific Ocean. It was Julie's idea; the concept for executing it was mine.

Julie has crossed the continent by air, but her contact with the nation's interior has been confined solely to airport concourses. I, too, have crossed many times in planes, but also several times by car, once by 18-wheeler and also by train.

"I want to see those things you've seen," Julie said on the phone in March.

I asked for a list – all were sites in the great national parks of the West – and realized there is a precedent and national historic trail we could follow to visit them. They also link our nation's past and present.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark – leaders of the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition – traveled through all of the 10 states Julie and I will visit when they set out from this city in 1804. They were commissioned to explore the massive territory that President Thomas Jefferson had just purchased from Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte of France. Map its features, describe its plants and animals, engage its inhabitants.

Buying the territory of *la Louisiane* – the Louisiana Purchase – nearly doubled the size of the United States, which before the acquisition in 1803 already had 17 states and reached inland from the Atlantic Coast to the eastern bank of the Mississippi River. The new land stretched from New Orleans, at the mouth of the river, northwest to the Continental Divide in Montana, and included all or part of 15 future states. The price was \$15 million, about double the federal budget at the time.

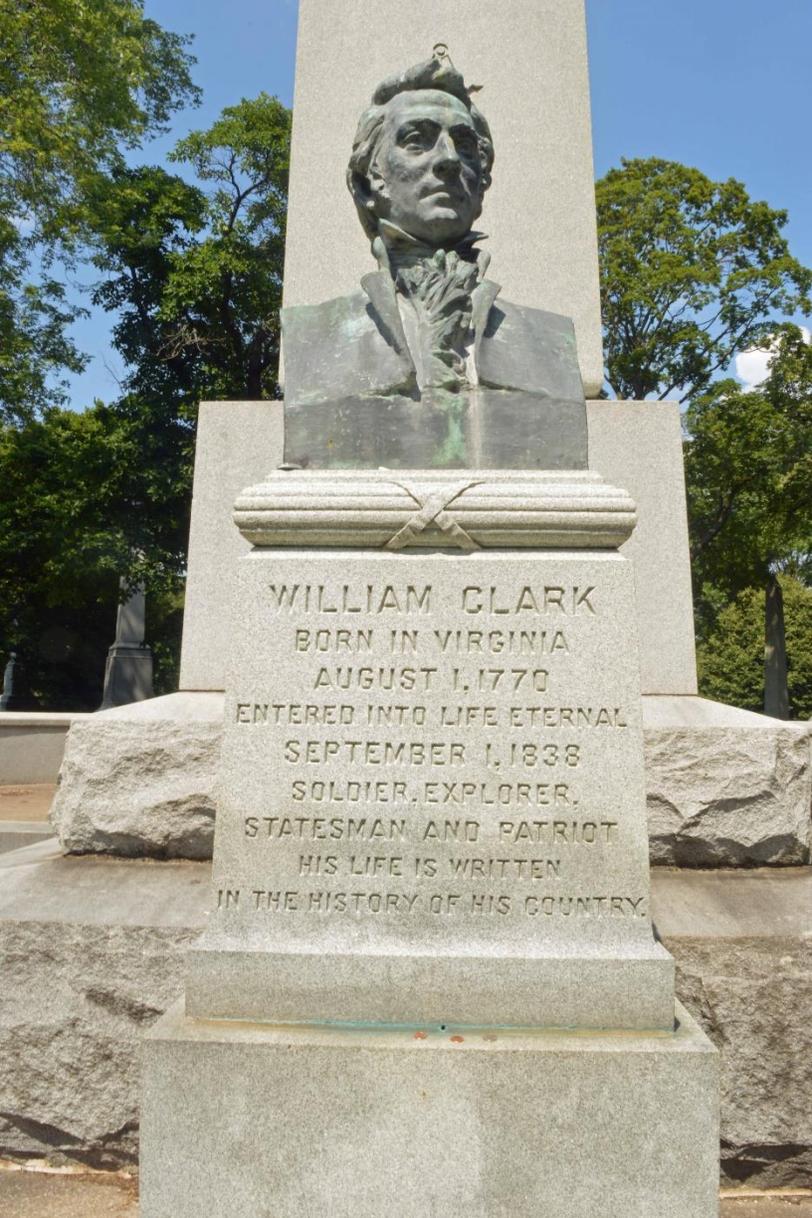
Lewis and Clark led a group of 40-plus U.S. Army volunteers, Clark's slave, York, and a few French fur traders called the Corps of Discovery. They paddled and pulled boats up the Missouri River from its junction with the Mississippi at Saint Louis to its source more than 2,000 miles / 3,200 kilometers upstream in today's Three Forks, Montana. They crossed the crest of the Rocky Mountains – the Continental Divide – packing their stuff on horses provided by the Shoshone Tribe into the future state of Idaho. They they paddled canoes down the westward flowing Snake and Columbia rivers to the Pacific Ocean.

Our trip will generally follow this route except when we veer off to see the sights of Mount Rushmore, Yellowstone and Glacier national parks.

It took Lewis and Clark a year to reach the Rockies, 1½ years to reach the Pacific and two years, four months to complete the round trip. We plan to reach the Pacific at the mouth of the Columbia at Fort Clatsop, Oregon, where the Corps spent the winter of 1805-06, in nine days. But we have GPS, highways and a car.

Lewis and Clark's expedition was described as a "voyage of discovery" even though Native Americans already knew the country well.

Our expedition will be, too.



A tale of two cemeteries

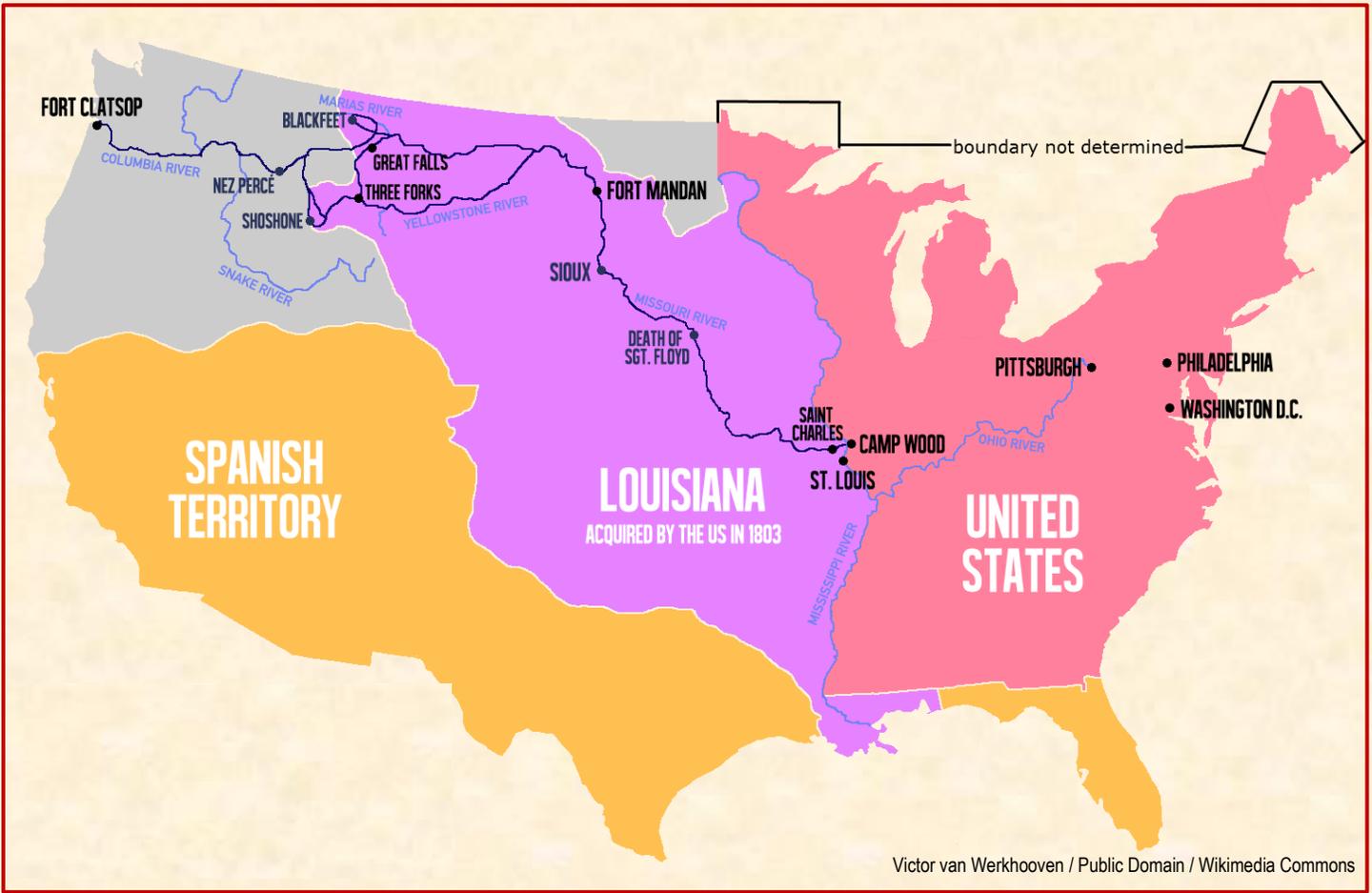
Lewis and Clark Expedition co-leader William Clark lived most of his life in Saint Louis following the expedition's return in 1806. He is buried, surrounded by many of his descendants, in this plot in Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis. Among those buried there is Clark's first son, Meriwether Lewis Clark.

Bellefontaine Cemetery is adjacent to Calvary Cemetery on St. Louis' West Florissant Avenue, where two members of the *Nimípuu* (Nez Perce) Tribe of Idaho – Black Eagle and Speaking Eagle – are buried. The Nez Perce had helped the expedition over the snow-covered Bitterroot Mountains. In 1831 four Nez Perce warriors including Black Eagle and Speaking Eagle came to St. Louis and reunited with Clark.

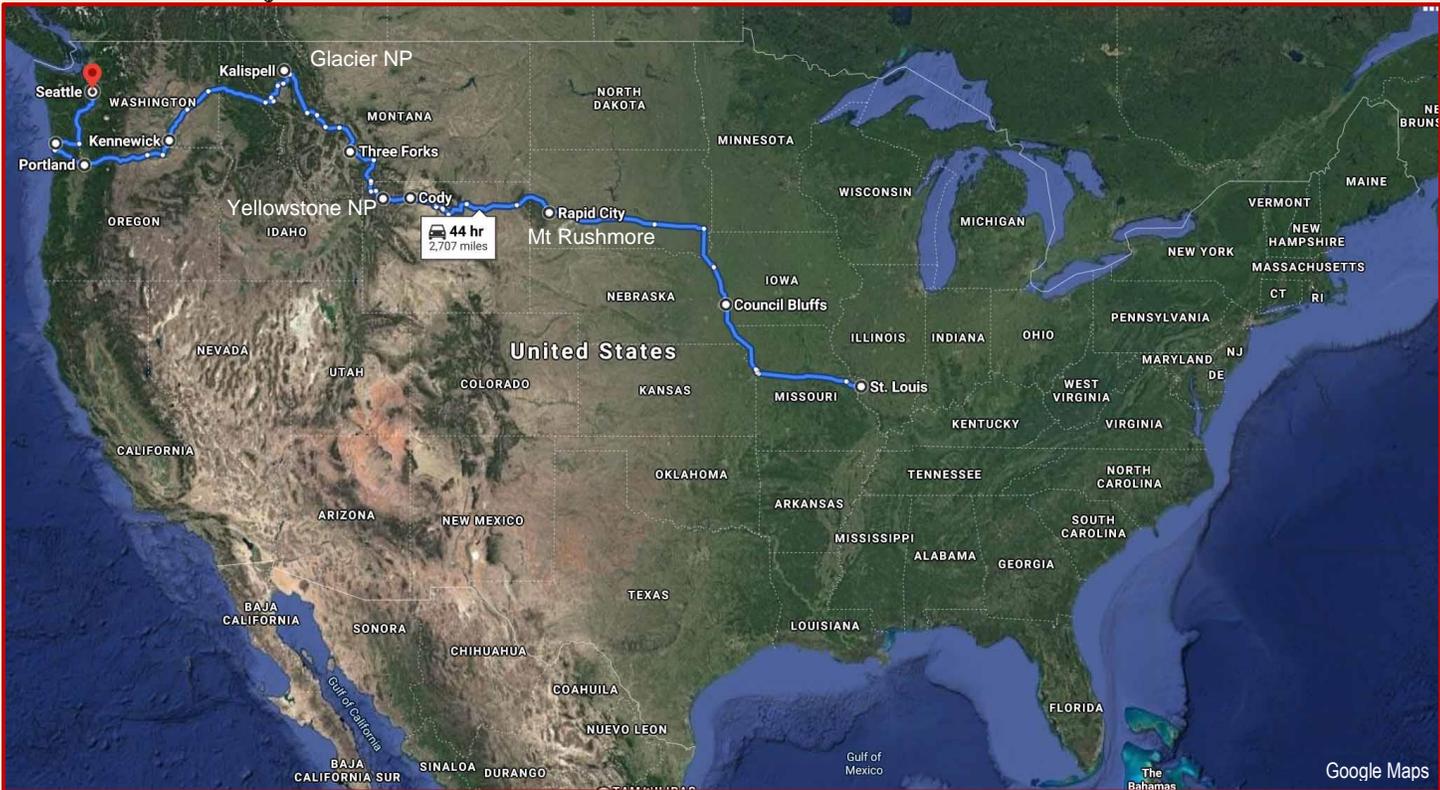
“Later on it spread through St. Louis that these four mountain Indians were looking for the Bible,” retired Nez Perce historian Otis Halfmoon said in a webinar I attended. “Actually, they just wanted to understand the white man's religion – not so much the Bible, but they wanted the material wealth that came with the religion. The ‘black robes’ (priests) buried them.”

Black Eagle and Speaking Eagle died after contracting an infectious disease during their visit. In 2003, during the Lewis and Clark bicentennial, Nez Perce members erected the feather monument in the cemetery that says: “We *Nimípuu* leave our ancestors in the bosom of this sacred earth.”

Lewis and Clark's route 1804-06



Our route July 8-17



This chart will track the 78 counties in nine states that we're traveling through from St. Louis to the Pacific coast. The counties are listed in the order we enter them. Counties that the Corps of Discovery traveled through or had some other connection with have red explanation cells.

TOMORROW - County-by-county in Missouri

Start Day 2 at St. Louis, Missouri

Via Interstate-70 (part of the Lewis and Clark Trail)

County	Population	County seat	Source of name / relationship to Lewis and Clark
1. City of St. Louis	300,576		King Louis IX of France, a Catholic saint. Founded by the French in 1764 at the point the Missouri River joins the Mississippi River. The city has been independent of St. Louis County since 1877.
2. St. Louis	994,205	Clayton	Same as the city.
3. St. Charles	402,022	St. Charles	Charles Borromeo, an Italian cardinal and saint. On the Missouri.
4. Warren	34,711	Warrenton	Gen. Charles Warren, killed in Revolutionary War at Bunker Hill. On the Missouri.
5. Montgomery	11,534	Montgomery City	Gen. Richard Montgomery, killed in Revolutionary War trying to capture Quebec City, Canada. On the Missouri.
6. Callaway	44,889	Fulton	Capt. James Callaway, a grandson of Daniel Boone. On the Missouri.
7. Boone	180,463	Columbia	Descendants of Daniel Boone who settled in the area. On the Missouri.
8. Cooper	17,603	Boonville	Sarshell Cooper, settler killed by Native inhabitants in 1814. On the Missouri.
9. Saline	22,895	Marshall	Salt springs found in the region. On the Missouri.
10. Lafayette	32,598	Lexington	The Marquis de La Fayette of France, Revolutionary War hero. On the Missouri.
11. Jackson	703,011	Kansas City	President Andrew Jackson. On the Missouri.

Via Interstate-29 (part of the Lewis and Clark Trail)

12. Clay	249,948	Liberty	Henry Clay of Kentucky, member of Congress and a U.S. Secretary of State. On the Missouri.
13. Platte	102,985	Platte City	Platte River, a French name for a shallow, intermittent stream. On the Missouri.
14. Buchanan	87,364	St. Joseph	President James Buchanan. On the Missouri.
15. Andrew	17,607	Savannah	Andrew Jackson Davis, St. Louis lawyer and editor. On the Missouri.
16. Holt	4,404	Oregon	David Rice Holt, state legislator from Platte County. On the Missouri.
17. Atchison	5,685	Rock Port	U.S. Sen. David Rice Atchison, Confederate general, slave owner and fighter against abolitionists. On the Missouri.

County-by-county in Iowa

18. Fremont	6,993	Sidney	Gen. John C. Fremont, explorer of the American West, military governor of California, a contributor to the genocide of the California's native population and anti-slavery candidate for U.S. president as the first Republican Party nominee. On the Missouri.
19. Mills	15,063	Glenwood	Major Frederick Mills, killed in the Mexican-American War. On the Missouri.
20. Pottawattamie	93,533	Council Bluffs	Named for the first Council Bluff (singular) on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River 20 miles upstream from here where Lewis and Clark first met the Otoe tribe Aug. 2, 1804. This city is where three tribes – Chippewa, Ottawa and Pottawatami, called the Council of Three Fires – were resettled in 1821 after being forced out of the Chicago area to create that city. It is directly across the Missouri from Omaha, Nebraska. On the Missouri.

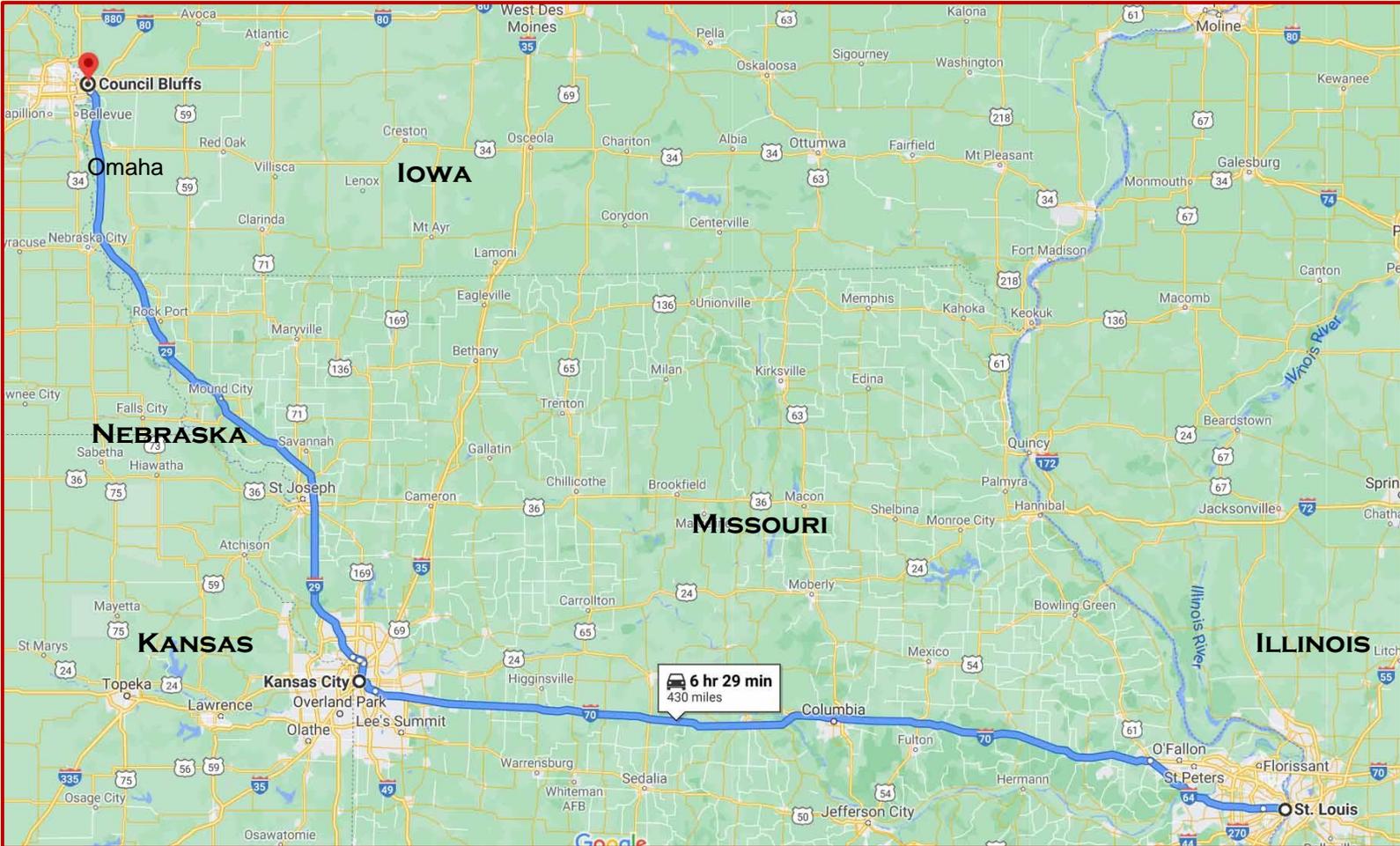
County-by-county in Nebraska

21. Douglas	571,327	Omaha	U.S. Sen. Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, who defeated Abraham Lincoln for that seat but lost to Lincoln in the 1860 presidential race. On the Missouri.
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End of Day 2 at Council Bluffs, Iowa

Day: 430 miles / 692 kilometers

Trip: 430 miles / 692 kilometers



Top of the Arch: Julie gets the lowdown on St. Louis from up high.



On Monday the 14th of May 1804, we left our establishment at the mouth of the river du Bois or Wood river, a small river [...] The best authenticated accounts informed us, that we were to pass through a country possessed by numerous, powerful and warlike nations of savages, of gigantic stature, fierce, treacherous and cruel; and particularly hostile to white men.

Sergeant Patrick Gass

[First day of the expedition]

An entry from the journals of either Lewis, Clark or one of their men will appear in each newsletter from this series.