

Lewis and Clark viewed the Missouri River from this same vantage point. The view enabled them to see the wide and powerful river that would take them west and bring them home again.

Extensive and mixed conifer and hardwood wetlands leave the water of the Platte River clear. This shallow river rolled rapidly over sands divided into a number of channels.

Due to extreme weather conditions still common in North Dakota (average highs and lows are between 5° and 30° in winter months), the Corps of Discovery joined the Mandan Indians for wintering. The Mandans and other native tribes submitted to annual winter truces enabling them to live in villages where they could easily trade and support each other. Their homes were mounds covered in sod.

Clark left his name and the date on what he called "Pompey's Pillar," named after Sacagawea's son whom he nicknamed "Pomp." Because the sandstone pillar is the only remaining physical evidence appearing on the trail today as it did 200 years ago, it is one of the most famous sandstone buttes in America. The pillar stands about 100' above the Yellowstone River.

When the Lewis and Clark Expedition reached the fork in the Marias River, they were unable to determine whether they should take the northern or southern routes. After days of exploring both branches of the river, Lewis and Clark determined the southern route was most likely to lead toward the Rocky Mountains. Though the remaining Corps members disagreed with Lewis and Clark, they followed their leaders. The captains were correct.

Except for wintering in the Mandan villages, the Corps made significant progress on their westward journey until they reached the Great Falls of modern-day Montana. The falls were so immense that the Expedition members spent over one month portaging around the falls.

Following the Great Falls portage, Lewis and Clark met their second major challenge of the Expedition — the Bitterroot Barrier. Snow fell early in the mountains and game was scarce. The difficult journey left the Corps starving and they had to kill and eat three colts to survive. Once they emerged from the mountains, the Nez Perce provided Corps members with dried fish and roots to replenish their exhausted and hungry bodies.

In December of 1805, Clark wrote in his journal: "Great joy in camp, we are in View of the Ocean, this great Pacific Ocean which we been So long anxious to See." Though Cape Disappointment received its name in 1788 by a British sea captain seeking a wide mouthed river to travel westward, the Corps might have also called the region a disappointment. Though they were able to comfortably survive the winter months (with nearly constant rain), they had hoped to meet a ship for the return trip. The ship never arrived and the party had to return East by foot.

38°47' N 90°29' W

41°15' N 95°52' W

46°55' N 100°55' W

45°59' N 107°57' W

48°19' N 111°06' W

47°30' N 111°18' W

45°50' N 113°59' W

46°13' N 123°55' W

Picture North America: On the Trail of Lewis and Clark

Order (East to West)	Picture Letter	Relative Location	Absolute Location
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			