The Lewis and Clark Expedition Begins…

The Lewis and Clark expedition was planned and prepared in the east. Although Meriwether Lewis travelled the Ohio River from its beginning in Pittsburgh, Pa. to its mouth in Cairo, Ill., it was not the waterway it is today. Shallow stretches and riffles often divided a sparsely settled landscape. There are many sites along the river and beyond travelled by the explorers that we can actually see and visit today. The following are among the best.

Harpers Ferry, West Virginia: Meriwether Lewis arrived in Harpers Ferry (Virginia) March 16th 1803 to secure supplies vital to the expedition’s survival, such as rifles and extra rifle parts. He also oversaw the construction of the iron frame boat. Lewis left April 18th but returned July 7th to gather his supplies. He departed for Pittsburgh, Pa., the following day.

GPS: 39°19.007 N - 77°45.381 W

Lower Armory Grounds: See a replica of the iron frame boat where it was produced for Meriwether Lewis. The unusual design was developed for the explorers to use in the unknown west with the uncertain river conditions.

Meriwether Lewis Exhibit: Located in the Lower Town, it explores how the Harpers Ferry Armory supplied the expedition for success and survival.

Elizabeth, Pennsylvania: Located on the Monongahela River, the Walker Boat Yard constructed boats, and many historians believe that the keelboat and perhaps other smaller vessels were built here for the journey.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Lewis began recording August 30th 1803 in his journal at this point of his departure to the West. “Left Pittsburgh this day at 11 ock with a party of 11 hands 7 of which are soldiers, a pilot and three young men on trial they having proposed to go with me throughout the voyage.”

Brunot Island: Located just 3 miles below Pittsburgh, Lewis stopped to show his air gun to “some of the gentlemen present.” He fired it successfully 7 times “with pretty good success” when he allowed “Mr. Blaze Cenas being unacquainted with the management of the gun to suffered her to discharge herself accedentaly the ball passed through the hat of a woman about 40 yards distance cutting her temple …” With blood gushing from her temple, they thought she was dead but learned the wound was neither fatal nor dangerous.

Legionville: (located at Baden, Pennsylvania) William Clark reportedly received his military training at this location established by Anthony Wayne.

GPS: 39°49’55” - 79°36’2”

GPS: 39°46’32” - 79°55’51”

40°37’30”N - 80°13’34”W
Logstown: (near Ambridge, Pa.) At this village of Shawnee, Delaware, Iroquois, and other Indians established before 1748, Lewis noted in his journal on September 2nd 1803 the rich land here. He had to engage a horse and an ox for $1 to pull their boats over the riffles much to his disdain.

GPS: 40°37'22” N - 80°13'46” W

Beaver Creek, Pennsylvania:
Lewis described “the water so low and clear that we see a great number of Fish of different kinds, the Stergeon, Bass, Cat fish, pike, &c.” in this area.

GPS: 40°41'55” N - 80°17'18” W (Beaver River)
GPS: 40°41'52” N - 80°17'12” W (Rochester)

Ft. McIntosh, Pennsylvania:
Lewis anchored off Ft. McIntosh (built in 1778) where he discharged “one of my hands.” The modern town of Beaver, Pa. now stands on the approximate site.

GPS: 40°41'29” N - 80°18'7” W

Georgetown, Pennsylvania: On September 4th Lewis recorded, “purchase a canoe compleat with two paddles and two poles for which I gave 11$” but found the canoe leaky and unsafe without repairs. About a mile further downstream they camped, repaired canoes, dried out and oiled articles they had brought with them.

GPS: 40°38'40” N - 80°29'55” W

Point of Beginning, Pennsylvania: Lewis describes in detail this location in his journal where “the line which divides the States of Virginia [now West Virginia] and Pennsylvania; this line is made visible from the timber having been felled about sixty feet in width, the young timber has spring up but has not yet attained the hight of the other that it can with ease be traced with the eye a considerable distance—”

GPS: 40°38’33” N - 80°31’9” W

Bust of Patrick Gass:
After the expedition returned in 1806, expedition member Patrick Gass eventually settled in Wellsburg, wrote a book about the expedition, and lived to the age of 99.

GPS: 40°16’9” N - 80°36’50” W

Gravesite of Patrick Gass:
This expedition member was buried here in the Brooke Cemetery. Roads are narrow with sharp curves and impassible during winter months. It is located off Rt. 2, east on 23rd St.

GPS: 40°17’15” N - 80°36’19” W

Brooke County Museum: Located at 704 Charles St., Wellsburg, West Virginia, it contains exhibits about the Lewis and Clark Commemoration here in 2003.
Wheeling, West Virginia:

- **Lewis and Clark state historical marker:** It notes Lewis’ arrival September 7th. While here he “wrote to the President, purchased a [red] pirogue and hired a man to work her.” His men “were much fatigued” and he concluded they needed rest, an opportunity to wash their clothes and exchange flour for baked bread. Lewis “dined with Colo. Rodney and his suit” walked down to his boat and ate watermelon. He reported, “the people began to top their corn and collect ther fodder –”

Departing on the 9th, Lewis and his men encountered a powerful cold rain that came down in torrents. Boats were bailed “frequently during the course of the night…”

**GPS:** 40°3’43” N - 80°43’59” W

---

Ravenswood, West Virginia:

- **Riverfront Interpretive Panel:** Located at the riverfront, the panel explains Lewis’ visit to the Wheeling area where he received the goods brought overland on the Braddock Trace.

**GPS:** 40.06750517 – 80.72475242

---

Point Pleasant, West Virginia:

- **Riverfront Park:** On September 14th Lewis and his men camped on the NW shore in this area. He recorded that he “saw many squirrels this day swimming the river from N.W. to S.E. caught several by means of my dog—”

**GPS:** 38°50’34” N - 82°8’23” W

---

Grave Creek Indian Mound, Moundsville, West Virginia: On September 10th Lewis described “a remarkable artificial mound of earth called by the people in this neighbourhood the Indian grave.—” Located “on the east bank of the Ohio 12 miles below Wheeling and about 700 paces from the river” he described the mound in detail noting “a regular cone 310 yards in circumference at it’s base & 65 feet high terminating in a blont point whose diameter is 30 feet.” He noted “a white oak tree whose girth is 13 ½ feet, from the aged appeance of this tree I think it’s age might resonably calculated at 300 years…”

**GPS:** 39°55’0”N - 80°44’39”W

---

Tu-Endie-wei State Park: Located at 1 Main Street overlooking the river, it is the site of a decisive battle led by Chief Cornstalk in 1774. The name of the park is a Wyandotte word meaning “point between two waters.” Lewis passed this point in 1803 where the Kanawha and Ohio rivers meet.

**GPS:** 38°50’28” N - 82°8’33” W

---

Ft. Randolph: Under the command of Ft. Pitt along with Ft. Fincastle (Wheeling), the fort was established in 1776. William Clark’s older brother, George Rogers Clark, stopped here on his way to Vincennes in 1778.

**GPS:** 38°50’1” N - 82°7’43” W

---

Huntington, West Virginia: This river town is where the “river runs West” making a turn west along the southern border of the Northwest Territory. Ohio to the North had just been carved out of that mostly unsettled territory in 1803. A USGS Lewis and Clark geodetic marker commemorates the passage of the expedition past this point.

**GPS:** 38°25’37” N - 82°26’41”W
**Vanceburg, Kentucky:** This quiet river town overlooks the river traveled by Lewis and his men. In 2003 a Cottonwood tree was planted and a plaque installed to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the expedition passing this point.  
GPS: 38°36’10” N - 83°19’1” W

**Maysville, Kentucky:** Expedition member John Colter was from Maysville. After the expedition, he went on to explore what became our first park, Yellowstone National Park.  
GPS: N38°51.72852 - W45°44.07989

**Augusta, Kentucky:** Several structures overlooking the river were here at the time of Lewis’ journey past this village. Today a small ferry transports people and cars across the river to Ohio (statehood in 1803).  
GPS: 38°46’28” N - 84°0’33” W

**Big Bone Lick, Kentucky:** President Jefferson asked Meriwether Lewis to explore this area known for its wealth of large bones and fossils. At that time, it was unknown if Lewis and Clark might find descendants of these massive animals still living in the unexplored West. On the return of the expedition, Clark conducted a major dig in 1807 at the request of the President.  
GPS: N37°77714 - W83°68073

**Clarksville, Indiana:**
- **Ashland Park:** Below, the Falls of the Ohio was a series of rapids and a treacherous area to navigate in 1803. Pilots helped move vessels through the channels around the fossil beds on the river bottom. It was in this area that Lewis and Clark continued to recruit, swear in the men, and prepare for the journey west. Further downstream overlooking the river are statues of Lewis and Clark commemorating their meeting at the Falls of the Ohio as the two men continued to recruit and prepare for the journey west. The site is always open.  
  GPS: 38°16’13” N - 85°45’17” W (park entrance)  
  GPS: 38°16’26” N - 85°45’33” W (river overlook)

- **Clarksville Bicentennial Park:** Interpretive signs near the riverfront explain the importance of the expedition in the area. A replica of the keelboat provides children an opportunity to play explorer at the site. The site is always open.  
  GPS: 38°17’12” N - 85°46’10” W

- **Mill Creek:** The site located along the river at Clarksville Bicentennial Park is the point of departure for Lewis and Clark on their journey west. It is always open. Nearby is the Clark Cabin, home of George Rogers Clark whose younger brother, William Clark lived there at the time of the expedition.  
  GPS: 38°17’23” N - 85°46’48” W

**Leavenworth, Indiana:** Located at the Overlook Restaurant bluff is a 20 mile panoramic view of the beautiful Ohio River that Lewis and Clark traveled on their journey to the West.  
GPS: 38°7’22” N - 86°25’12” W

**Crawford County Tourism Visitor Center:** Located at 6225 E. Industrial Lane in Leavenworth, the visitor center has exhibits about Lewis and Clark and the 200th anniversary commemoration in 2003.

**Alton, Indiana:** Here boaters can access the Ohio River at the launch ramp and follow in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark on the water. Large blue catfish (like the ones Lewis and Clark encountered further downstream) and other fish are abundant in this area.  
GPS: 38°7’22” N – 87°35’41.1”W
Henderson, Kentucky: John James Audubon, friend of William Clark, made his home in the area and painted some of the magnificent wildlife paintings that document the flora and fauna of our country. This river community existed at the time Lewis and Clark continued down the Ohio River in November 1803. GPS: 37°50’25.5” N - 87°35’41.1”W

Paducah, Kentucky: The river history of the Ohio is intertwined with William Clark who surveyed the town after he and Lewis passed through this area on their journey. Several notable sites are:

- **1905 William Clark Market House Museum:** Located at 200 Broadway, several items once belonging to the Clark family are on display. In 1827, General William Clark purchased 37,000 acres of land including the site where Paducah is now.

- **National Quilt Museum:** Located at 215 Jefferson St., life-size statues of figures from the Lewis and Clark expedition are displayed.

- **Floodwall Murals:** Two panels of Paducah’s Wall to Wall Dafford murals painted on the city’s floodwall commemorate the Lewis and Clark expedition passing this point and Clark surveying the town are noted.

- **Paducah’s Riverfront:** Lewis and Clark’s journey passed the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee rivers in 1803. GPS: 37°05’17.8”N - 88°35’39”W

Ft. Southwest Point: The fort was located to the south at Kingston, Tenn. overlooking the Clinch, Tennessee, and Emory rivers. There Lewis recruited 4 soldiers who could meet the rigorous physical requirements necessary for members of the expedition. GPS: 35.861230800 - 84.528465300

Ft. Massac, Illinois: On November 11, 1803, the Lewis and Clark Expedition stopped at the fort on its way west. During this time, Ft. Massac was the largest U.S. military outpost. While here, Lewis hired the local woodsman, George Drouillard, the son of a French father and a Shawnee mother, as an interpreter. On November 13th, the Corps of Discovery left the fort. Drouillard became a premiere hunter, scout, and interpreter for the expedition. GPS: 37.144946 - 88.715207

Cairo, Illinois: The explorers spent 6 days here practicing surveying and exploring the area before they departed for the unknown and unmapped territory of the Louisiana Purchase.

- **Historic Customs House:** Located at 1400 Washington St., it houses an excellent exhibit about Lewis and Clark and their experiences in the area. One of the finest collections of period surveying equipment is on display at this site. Markers commemorating the participation of York, Clark’s slave, and Seaman, the Newfoundland dog, are prominently displayed in front of the building.
- **Ft. Defiance (now Ft. Defiance State Park):** The fort was located at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Arriving on November 14th, Lewis and Clark spent 6 days here while Lewis taught Clark how to use the navigational and surveying equipment. To their surprise, the men of the expedition caught a 128 lb. blue catfish. The 3rd Principal Meridian begins at the mouth of the Ohio and is crucial to astronomical observations.

  **GPS:** 36°59'24.8" N - 89°09'01.2" W

- **Cairo Library:** Located at 1609 Washington Ave., in Cairo, see the extensive collection of books about the Lewis and Clark expedition.

  The explorers continued west after departing the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Much is written to guide you further west in the footsteps of this first of the great expeditions. Lewis and Clark and most of the members of the expedition returned east in 1806 and continued with their lives and their contributions to this nation. This peaceful military mission established a baseline of scientific information still referred to today. Their journals and the majority of the plant specimens they collected are housed in Philadelphia. What a journey!

  Sign symbol designates a site located on the route followed by Lewis and Clark and their men. The symbol may also mark a site related to the expedition that houses original artifacts, journals, documents, or sites crucial to the planning of the expedition.

  Sign symbol designates a site related to the life events of Lewis and Clark and the members of the expedition prior to and subsequent to the journey west. Museums or visitor centers with significant exhibits about the journey may also be marked with the sign symbol.

  Sites marked with signs:
  - Harpers Ferry, W.Va.
  - Friendship Hill, Pa.
  - Braddock's Trace, Pa.
  - Braddock's Grave, Pa.
  - Elizabeth, Pa.

  These locations follow the river westward:
  - Pittsburgh, Pa.
  - Brunot Island, Pa.
  - Legionville, Pa.
  - Logstown, Pa.
  - Beaver Creek, Pa.
  - Ft. McIntosh, Pa.
  - Pt. of Beginning, Pa.
  - Georgetown, Pa.
  - Ft. Steuben, Oh.
  - Wellsburg, W.Va.
  - Wheeling, W. Va.
  - Moundsville, W.Va.
  - Ravenswood, W.Va.
  - Huntington, W.Va.
  - Vanceburg, Ky.
  - Maysville, Ky.
  - Augusta, Ky.
  - Big Bone Lick, Ky.
  - Clarksville, In.
  - Leavenworth, In.
  - Alton, In.
  - Henderson, Ky.
  - Paducah, Ky.
  - Ft. Massac, Ill.
  - Cairo, Ill.

  Ft. Southwest Point, Tenn.