

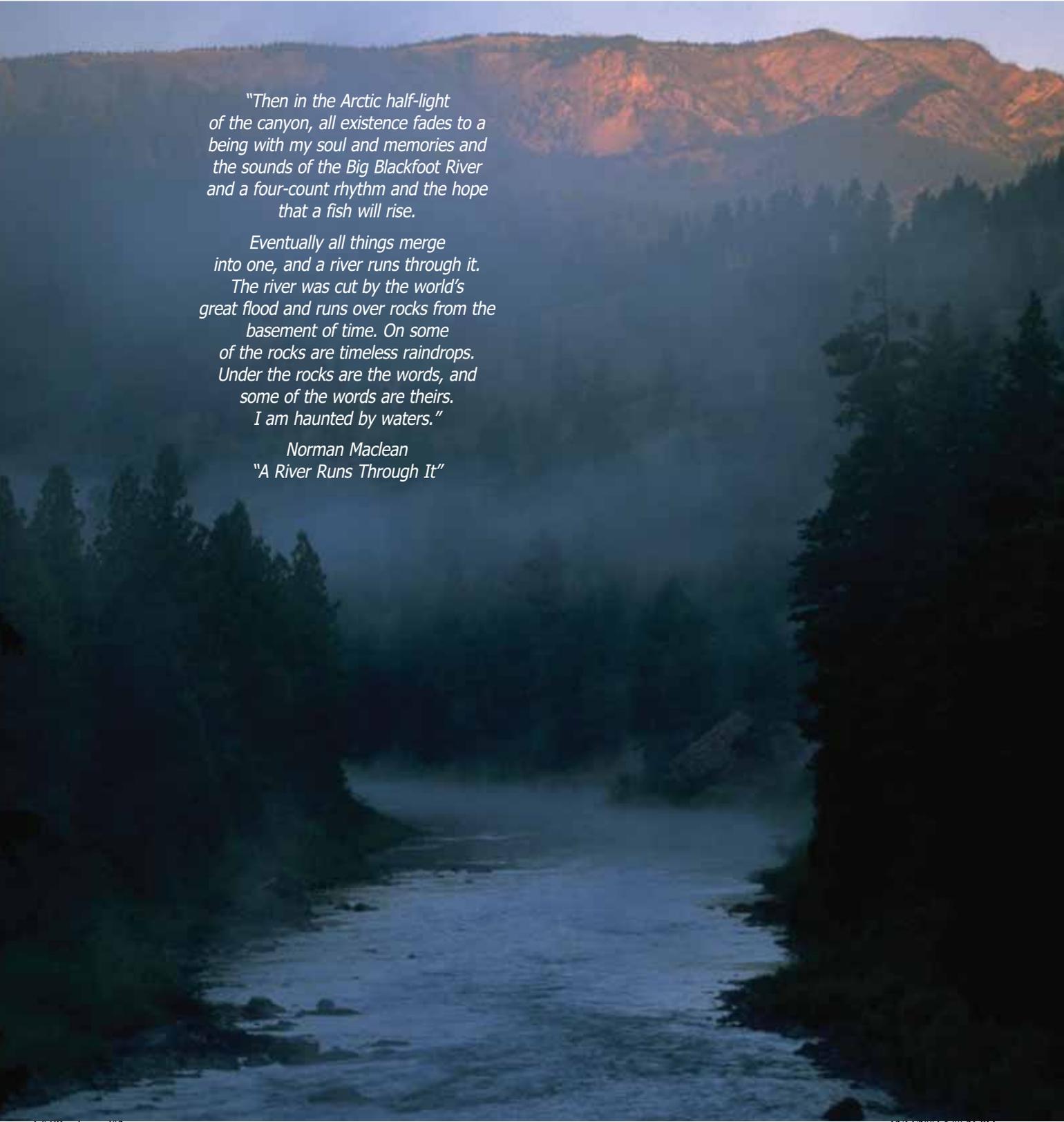
Journey Through the Blackfoot Lewis' Return Trail

A Montana guide to:

- **Meriwether Lewis' return trip east**
- **The Road to the Buffalo**
- **Local history and wildlife**



Lewis on the Road to the Buffalo

A misty river flows through a forested valley. The river is the central focus, winding through the scene. The surrounding forest is dense with evergreen trees, and the background features rolling mountains under a soft, hazy sky. The overall atmosphere is serene and somewhat melancholic.

*"Then in the Arctic half-light
of the canyon, all existence fades to a
being with my soul and memories and
the sounds of the Big Blackfoot River
and a four-count rhythm and the hope
that a fish will rise.*

*Eventually all things merge
into one, and a river runs through it.
The river was cut by the world's
great flood and runs over rocks from the
basement of time. On some
of the rocks are timeless raindrops.
Under the rocks are the words, and
some of the words are theirs.
I am haunted by waters."*

*Norman Maclean
"A River Runs Through It"*

"For this river is the storyteller of our valley."

Land Lindbergh
Blackfoot Valley
rancher

The Blackfoot River flows with the stuff of American legends.

If its swirling currents could speak, we would hear first of the Indians. The Kootenai, Salish, Nez Perce, and Shoshone followed the "Road to the Buffalo" – well-worn trails of their ancestors to buffalo hunting grounds east of the Continental Divide. The Blackfeet and Crow rode west from the Plains on horse capturing ventures.



Notes to travelers:

Camping sites are limited – first come, first serve. See map for campgrounds.

Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor is narrow in places – not suitable for large tour buses.

Please respect private property rights—follow the site guide to public access areas.

In July of 1806, a band of newcomers arrived from the west. Captain Meriwether Lewis and his party of nine men split from Captain William Clark and the rest of the Expedition at Travelers Rest, near today's Lolo, Montana. Rather than heading back to St. Louis the way they came, Lewis took the shortcut to the buffalo country up the Blackfoot River, over the Continental Divide, and into trouble with the Blackfeet. Clark explored the Yellowstone River before meeting up again with Lewis on the Missouri River.

This guide highlights the places mentioned in Lewis' journal from July 4th to 7th, 1806. A hurried pace (120 miles in 3-1/2 days) likely contributed to sketchier entries than in other parts of the Expedition. To fill in details, place yourself in the role of the

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explorers. Where would you select a camp or a lunch break? Cross the river? Climb a hill? What keen observations can you make now? Lewis collected 12 plant species and noted birds, animals, wild horses, signs of buffalo and Indian encampments.

Today, outfitters and recreationists – in the spirit of Lewis and Clark – explore the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Anglers cast for cutthroat trout. Ranchers irrigate, cut hay and herd cattle. Loggers and miners head into the hills for work. Children attend small schools and neighbors lend helping hands – come blizzard or forest fire.

Key to
Site Guide

Site
Number **1**

Approx.
Milepost **MP
10**

Additional
Directions
to Site **➔**

How to Use this Guide

As you journey through the Blackfoot, take an extra hour, a day or several days. Return in different seasons. Stop along the way, open the car doors and listen to the river. The guide is designed for use heading upriver, but you can find the sites downriver by paying close attention to mile markers and signs. Note, too, the points of divergence where Lewis and party's Trail leaves today's Highway 200 – offering route choices for your own explorations.

Lower River – Canyon Corridor Bonner to Clearwater Junction

Enter river time – where the currents and twists of the Blackfoot dictate the lives of its inhabitants. The lower section takes you through a forested river canyon, and across open prairies. Canoeists navigate rapids and anglers cast from shore. In winter, bighorn sheep descend from the peaks to the riverbanks near Bonner.



Blackfoot Gateway Kiosk in Bonner

1 Blackfoot Gateway Kiosk, Bonner

→ From I-90, take Highway 200 exit. Kiosk on east side before entering the lumber town of Bonner.

To whet your appetite for a journey upriver, pause at this wayside exhibit. Three colorful signs commissioned by the Blackfoot Challenge feature Meriwether Lewis' trip, the Blackfoot River and Bonner history.

2 Marco Flats Fishing Access

MP 3 Milepost 3

Only three miles from town, you can skip stones or fish from a small river beach in the shade of ponderosa pines and cottonwoods. This is the first public river access.

Lewis described his first eight miles on July 4th, 1806:

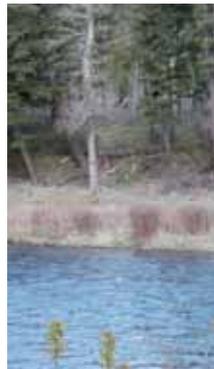
"...up the north side of the Cokahlah-ishkeit R. through a timbered country, mountains high and rocky, river bottoms narrow and land poor."

Rainbow Trout



3 Angevine Park: Close to Lewis' campsite, July 4, 1806

MP 6 Milepost 6



Angevine Park

When Lewis and party reached his first camp on the Blackfoot, they had at least one reason to celebrate the 4th of July Independence Day – no mosquitoes!

"thus far a plain or untimbered country bordered the river which near the junction of these streams spread into a handsome level plain of no great extent; the hills were covered with long leafed pine and fir. I now continued my rout up the N. side of the Cokahlahishkeit river through a timbered country for 8 miles and encamped in a handsom bottom on the river where there was an abundance of excelece grass for our horses. the evening was fine, air pleasant and no musquetoes."

Lewis, July 4, 1806

4 Site of Indian encampment

MP 10 Milepost 10

→ On flat across the river.
→ Drive-by only (no pull-out and located on private land).

If you rode with Lewis on the morning of July 5th, 1806 you would have seen

"an old Indian encampment of 11 lodges of bark and [leather?]."

The lodges served as tangible reminders to Lewis of the warnings he had received the day before. His five Nimi'ipuu (Nez Perce) guides would not come further than the confluence with the Clark Fork River for fear of meeting up with their tribal enemies.



As you head up the Blackfoot Corridor from Bonner, bighorn sheep on the cliffs may be visible from the road, particularly in winter.

5 Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor – 16 mile scenic detour

MP 11 Milepost 11

At Johnsrud Park. Rejoins Highway 200 at milepost 27 (Roundup Bar Fishing Access).

Caution: Narrow gravel road with washboards. Not suitable for large RVs and tour buses.

Popular for floating, angling and camping, the recreation corridor also traces parts of the Road to the Buffalo and the route of Lewis. There are a dozen developed sites, including four campgrounds. Several sites feature interpretive signs on cultural and natural history. The road eventually winds through Ninemile Prairie before re-entering Highway 200. The latter Lewis' site is easily accessed from the Highway at milepost 27 for those not driving the entire scenic detour.

6 Potomac Valley – Historic camas digging grounds

MP 12 Between mileposts 12 and 16

→ Highway 200 route

Where ranchers irrigate hayfields, the Salish people once dug the nutritious roots of the camas – a wildflower that can paint a valley purple in spring. You won't see the camas in these cultivated fields, but watch for blooms along Alice Creek in late June and early July on the way to Lewis and Clark Pass.



Blue Camas

7 Garnet Ghost Town

MP 22 Milepost 22

Garnet Ghost Town is 11 miles from Highway 200. Open year-round: winter access by snowmobile or skis.

Once these Garnet Mountains echoed with the blasts of dynamite and the shouts of men out to find fortune. Today, you can follow a gravel road 11 miles to Garnet, one of Montana's best-preserved ghost towns.



Kelly's Saloon

"These hushed woods once echoed with the rumble of wagons chock-full of gold ore.

Teamsters urged horses down muddy streets. Mine hoists clanged. Whistles blew. Children raced to school. In January of 1898, some 1,000 people knew Garnet as home. By 1905, only 150 remained. Each empty building tells a story. Step into Kelly's saloon.

Can you hear the piano tinkling? Enter Billy Liberty's blacksmith shop. Can you feel the heat?"

– Welcome sign from a series of Garnet Ghost Town interpretive signs



8 Lubrecht Experimental Forest – University of Montana

MP 23 Milepost 23

Here, foresters study tree growth and harvest in a landscape shaped by logging. Visitors are welcome to stop in for a hike, picnic or cross-country skiing.



9 **Ninemile Prairie –
Corrick Riverbend Campground**
MP 27
Milepost 27

→ If on Highway 200, turn onto Blackfoot Recreation Corridor called Ninemile Prairie Road. Drive to Corrick Riverbend Campground and park.

"From its head-waters to its mouth it was manufactured by glaciers. The first sixty-five miles of it are smashed against the southern wall of its valley by glaciers that moved in from the north, scarifying the earth; its lower twenty-five miles were made overnight when the great glacial lake covering Montana and northern Idaho broke its ice dam and spread the remains of Montana and Idaho mountains over hundreds of miles of the plains of eastern Washington. It was the biggest flood in the world..."

Norman Maclean
"A River Runs Through It"

The river beckons today's picnickers, but Lewis and his party chose to take their break "at the mouth of a little drane." That point could be on Bureau of Land Management land off a small dirt road across from the west end of the campground. Take a stroll to the small aspen grove through native bunchgrasses and wildflowers. Look, too, for signs of early homesteading and farming.

"...halted and dined in the mouth of a little drane on the left of the plain where there was a considerable quantity of quawmash. saw a gang of antelopes here of which we killed one the does at this season herd with each other and have their young. the bucks are alone n there are many wild horses on Clarkes river about the place we passed it we saw some of them at a distance."

Lewis, July 5, 1806



Lewis and his party saw antelope near Ninemile Prairie.



15,000 years ago, Glacial Lake Missoula covered an area the size of Lake Ontario.

10 **Blackfoot Gateway Kiosk–
Clearwater Junction**
MP 32
Milepost 32

→ At Rest Area across from junction with Highway 83 (north to Seeley-Swan Valley)



The "high insulated knob" that Lewis noted when passing by this spot in July of 1806.

The Blackfoot Challenge continues its wayside exhibits at a modern rest area where teepees had graced the landscape seasonally for hundreds of years. Step back 15,000 years and you would be swimming in Glacial Lake Missoula. A gargantuan ice dam near Lake Pend Oreille (Idaho) blocked the Clark Fork River, creating a body of water the size of Lake Ontario that extended up the Blackfoot River to the Clearwater Junction area. When Lewis passed by here, he noted a glacial feature, "a high insulated knob."

MIDDLE RIVER – GLACIAL VALLEYS Clearwater Junction to Highway 141

The river leaves the canyons after Russell Gates Fishing Access and flows under vast skies across what Lewis called the “prairie of the knobs.” You’ll pass by a series of these hummocky glacial moraines and smooth outwash plains – reminders of a cold, icy land. Some of the glacial features date to the Bull Lake ice age (between 70,000 and 130,000 years ago). Others are more recent; the Pinedale ice age ended 10,000 years ago.



One of the “knobs” Lewis described in his journal.



Rare trumpeter swans nest in a glacial “pothole” or pond in the Blackfoot Valley.

11 Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area MP 32 Milepost 32

→ Turn north on Highway 83 to mile marker 2 (also noted on Highway 200).

To read interpretive signs, take a short side trip north to the pull-out on Highway 83. Back on Highway 200 heading upriver, you will see the east entrance to the WMA at Woodworth Road, which leads to an unmanned field headquarters.

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks protects critical winter range for approximately 1000 elk, 800 mule



Elk (Wapiti)

deer and 800 white-tailed deer. Elk descend from the Bob Marshall Wilderness to take refuge from deep snows. Acquired in 1948, the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA now spans 67,000 acres of prime wildlife habitat.

12 Big Blackfoot Railroad – Historic sign and old grade MP 32 Between mileposts 32 and 33

A little over a century after Lewis and party rode through the Blackfoot, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company built a railroad to supply logs to the Bonner sawmill. Construction on the line took from 1911 to 1936 and then stopped short of Ovando (at Cottonwood Creek). After 1978, the rumble of trains ceased altogether.

13 Sperry Grade River Ford Site MP 33 Before milepost 34

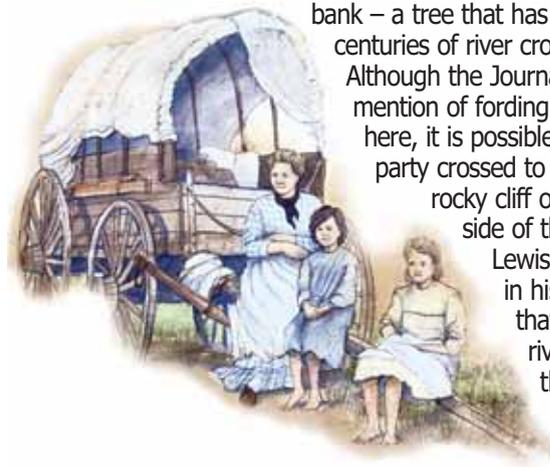
→ Turn at the Clearwater State Forest sign and drive 1/2-mile to the fishing access site. Note, this day-use site is not maintained and lacks facilities.

Stand below the spreading branches of a huge ponderosa pine on the bank – a tree that has witnessed centuries of river crossings. Although the Journals make no mention of fording the river here, it is possible the Lewis party crossed to avoid a rocky cliff on the north side of the river.

Lewis drew a map in his journal that indicates a river crossing that lines up with this one.

“Charles and Helen Sperry family homesteaded near here in 1899 and became known for growing the finest strawberries in the valley. One of their eight children later wrote of their father: “He was so taken with the country’s beauty and abundance of water and grass, that he returned to Helena, sold his property, brought the family, stock and equipment to the Blackfoot Valley.”

Rachel Sperry Grace, “Profile of Early Ovando, 1878 to 1900”



14 Russell Gates Campground**MP 35** **Between mileposts 35 and 36**

Spotted Sandpiper

Look for spotted sandpipers at water's edge and osprey soaring overhead. At this campground, consider the many Indian camps that once dotted the valley. Some were hasty shelters meant for overnight rests on the way to the buffalo hunting grounds. Others were teepees set up for days as tribes harvested camas, picked berries, or dug for chert (rock used for tools and arrowheads).

15 Monture Creek Fishing Access and Campground – Vicinity of July 5th Lewis campsite**MP 40** **Milepost 40**

Lewis with his dog, Seaman. Monument is located next to the Bonner Kiosk.

Lewis named this stream "Seaman's Creek" after his companion Newfoundland dog, but it was since named for George Monture. Descending to the creek, you will first cross the abandoned railroad grade – before the cattleguard – and then the old highway. Somewhere in the vicinity is the Road to the Buffalo. How you experience the Blackfoot depends on your mode of travel. It's tough to see the details at 65 mph – a speed possible only since 1957 when Highway 200 was paved. Lewis and his party rode hard on July 5th – covering 31 miles to this camp. How far have you traveled today? What have you noticed along the way?

"the road passing through an extensive high prairie rendered very uneven by a vast number of little hillucks and sink-holes {holds}. we encamped on the lower side of the last creek just above it's entrance. here a war party had encamped about 2 months since and

conceald their fires."

Lewis. July 5, 1806

16 Ovando Scenic Route – on Lewis' Trail**MP 44** **Between mileposts 44 and 45**

Turn south between
→ mileposts 44 and 45.



Blackfoot Commercial Company was established in 1897.

Take a scenic and leisurely detour through Ovando to Harry Morgan Fishing Access – site of Lewis' river crossing. From here, head southeast following signs to Browns Lake. Re-enter Highway 200 at milepost 53. The route via Browns Lake is 13 miles, four miles farther than remaining on the Highway.



The Ovando Museum was originally Trixie's Saloon.

17 Historic Ovando and museum

A weathered wood trading post, angling and welding shop, café and the Blackfoot Commercial Company (a store and Inn established in 1897) cluster on the Road to the Buffalo. The original Trixie's Saloon is now the Ovando museum – overflowing with historic photos and artifacts. The community dates to 1878 and was named for Ovando Hoyt—employed as its first postmaster at an annual salary of \$2.25.



An aerial view of
"Prarie of the Knobs".

18 "Prarie of the Knobs"

Driving the Ovando-Helmville Road toward Harry Morgan offers a good opportunity to study what Lewis described as "knobs." These rumpled small hills are moraines left from glaciers that plowed through the valley about 10,000 years ago from the northeast and east. Moraines formed from the sediment and rocks dumped from glacial ice. You can also see lake lines along some of the hills that suggest Glacial Lake Missoula extended this far.

"these plains I called (the knob plains) the prarie of the knobs from (the) a number of knobs being irregularly scattered through it."

Lewis, July 6, 1806

19 Harry Morgan Fishing Access – North Fork Crossing

Named for an early game warden in the Depression era, this site also marks the put-in for a popular river float to Russell Gates. It's a peaceful spot for picnicking, fishing and birding.

Lewis and men crossed the North Fork Blackfoot "45 yards wide, deep and rapid" near today's bridge upstream from the Fishing Access site.



Red-necked Grebe



Sandhill Crane



Long-billed Curlew

20 Browns Lake Campground

Follow signs to Browns Lake.
→ Go 1-1/2 miles further to rejoin Highway 200.

Lewis and party rode close by Browns Lake and noted passing "a large crooked pond." Lewis observed plentiful wildlife in this area and today Browns Lake is known as a birding hot spot. Spring is an excellent time to see ducks as well as red-necked grebes, sandhill cranes and even loons.

"great Number of the burrowing squirrels in this prarie of the species common to the plains of the Columbia. saw some goats and deer... saw some Curloos, bee martains woodpeckers plover robins, doves, ravens, hawks and a variety of sparrows common to the plains also some ducks."

Lewis, July 6, 1806



Browns Lake, managed by Fish, Wildlife & Parks, offers camping, a boat launch and excellent fishing, birding and windsurfing.

21 Bob Marshall Scapegoat and Great Bear Wilderness Areas

MP 52

Milepost 52, historic sign

→ *Note: You will need to backtrack if coming out from Browns Lake.*

"Someone once asked Bob Marshall how much wilderness America really needs. In reply he asked, How many Brahms symphonies do we need?"

Excerpt from historical sign

22 Road to the Buffalo Overlook

MP 53

Milepost 53

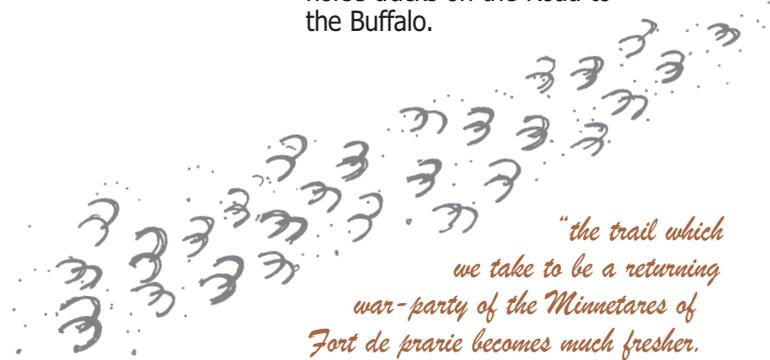
→ *Small pull-off with a gate north of Highway 200 across from two large wetlands on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Blackfoot Waterfowl Production Area.*

Park and walk past the gate up a two-track road on public land. You'll soon be rewarded with views of Kleinschmidt's and Browns Lakes. Imagine watching Lewis and party

View from the Road to the Buffalo Overlook.



riding across these plains and into the forested river canyon on July 6th, 1805. They rode with increasing anxiety, especially when they met with fresh horse tracks on the Road to the Buffalo.



"the trail which we take to be a returning war-party of the Minnetares of Fort de prarie becomes much fresher. they have a large pasel of horses."

Lewis, July 6, 1806

Plant "discoveries"

Despite their haste in the Blackfoot trek, Lewis and his men collected yellow monkeyflower on the way to the July 4th camp. They lingered in the "Prarie of the Knobs" to pick Missouri Iris, bitterbrush, silverberry and shrubby cinquefoil. They added elephant's head and fern-leaved lousewort after leaving the July 5th camp. Enroute to Lewis and Clark Pass on July 7th, Lewis noted in his journal these wildflowers: bearberry honeysuckle, blanketflower, silvery lupine and showy death camas.



Missouri Iris

"the bois rague in blume. -- saw the common small blue flag and peppergrass"

Lewis, July 6, 1806

Note: The red osier dogwood is the "bois rague". The western blue flag or *Iris missouriensis* was new to science. Peppergrasses are members of the mustard genus.



UPPER RIVER:
BLACKFOOT HEADWATERS
Highway 141 Junction to Alice Creek

The road winds through the Blackfoot Canyon close to the river and beneath towering trees that shelter bald eagles and osprey. Stop at pull-outs to scan for beaver, moose and trout rising from the river. You'll enter the town of Lincoln and then ascend to the Continental Divide – via Alice Creek and a hike to Lewis and Clark Pass, and then a return to Highway 200 to Rogers Pass.

23 Arrastra Creek

MP 58 Between mileposts 58 and 59

→ Turn north past bridge over Arrastra Creek. Take a short spur dirt road to a primitive campsite by the creek. Unmarked turn and road.

Lewis dined about a half-mile before he reached Arrastra Creek, but he did take note of the stream "wide shallow and clear." How does the creek look today?

"here we halted and dine and our hunters overtook us with a deer which they had killed. River bottoms narrow and country thickly timbered.

Cottonwood and pine grow intermixed in the river bottoms mosquitoes extremely troublesome. we expect to meet with the Minnetares and are therefore much on our guard both day and night...passed several old indian encampments of (stick) brush lodges. -- ...passed a creek on the N. side 12 yds. wide shallow and clear."

Lewis, July 6, 1806



Indians peeled the bark from these ponderosas to harvest "nature's candy".

24 Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Ponderosa Pine Grove

MP 59 Between mileposts 59 and 60

→ Unmarked turn. Large grove of trees clearly visible from the road.

Breathe in the scent of vanilla from the centuries-old ponderosa pines. Touch the great scars on trees that bear witness to an age-old Indian custom – peeling bark to harvest the sweet cambium layer – nature's candy. The practice left the trees unharmed. Lewis made no mention of these particular trees, but it's likely they passed close to them as they headed upriver.

**25 Upper Blackfoot Historical Museum –
Near July 6, 1806 Lewis campsite**
MP 69 Milepost 69

→ Turn at Hi Country Trading Post.

Read interpretive signs and displays on the Corps of Discovery and the history of the Upper Blackfoot. From the Monture Creek campsite, Lewis and party rode through the Prairie of the Knobs, across the North Fork, and followed the Road to the Buffalo over a “steep high balld topped hill” and down through a “thick wood,” to Beaver Creek – a 25-mile day.

“...encampment on a large creek some little distance above it's mouth through a beautifull plain on the border of which we passed the remains of 32 old lodges... much sign of beaver in this extensive bottom.”

Lewis, July 6, 1806

**26 Blackfoot Gateway Kiosk –
Lincoln; Hooper Park Pavilion**
MP 72 Milepost 72

The third Blackfoot Challenge interpretive kiosk gives you a chance to appreciate Lincoln before and after it was a town. Imagine buffalo loping by or Indian lodges among the pines. That changed by the late 1800s when a mining boom gave rise to Lincoln and its hardy residents.

“...Reubin Fields wounded a moos deer this morning near our camp. my dog much worried... .. saw some sighn of buffaloe early this morning in the valley where we encamped last evening from which it appears that the buffaloe do sometimes penetrate these mountains a few miles.”

Lewis, July 7, 1806



Moose



One of the eight prehistoric cairns that marked The Road to the Buffalo Trail.

27 Lander's Fork Cairns
Between mileposts 77 and 78
MP 77 Turn north and follow Copper Creek Road approximately 1.5 miles. Watch for signs directing you to the cairns.

The Road to the Buffalo Trail headed up Landers Fork and into Alice Creek. Today, it's not possible to drive this route through to Alice Creek. But you can visit two of eight prehistoric cairns that marked the ancient trail. Native Americans placed these rock piles carefully there hundreds of years ago both as trail markers and as points of spiritual significance – a way to assure a safe and bountiful journey. As you walk along the terrace, picture yourself following the cairns and the hoof prints of horses 200 years ago.

Please be responsible visitors; Access is provided by a private landowner and the state of Montana. Respect the spiritual and historic nature of the cairns by not disturbing them.

28 Alice Creek – Road to the Buffalo Milepost 82, Road Number 293

**MP
82**

Drive 10.4 miles up Alice Creek to the trailhead – 1.7 mile hike to Lewis and Clark Pass. Clock the driving miles so you can find the points mentioned.



Lewis and Clark Pass. Clock the driving miles so you can find the points mentioned.



Beaver dams play a key role in keeping the watershed healthy – creating deep pools for trout and helping to conserve water and control flooding.

Watch for camas blooming in early summer, as well as signs of beaver and deer. Lewis and party entered Alice Creek from Landers Fork at mile 5.2 (marked with a sign). Please do not leave the road until you enter the Helena National Forest at mile 74 – where you can stop to read interpretive signs.

“over two ridges and again striking the wright-hand fork at 4 ms. then continued up it on the left hand side much appearance of beaver and many dams. Bottoms not wide and covered with low willow and grass. halted to dine at a large beaver dam the hunters killed 3 deer and a fawn. deer are remarkably plenty and in good order.”

Lewis, July 7, 1806

Note: Alice Creek is the “wright-hand fork”

29 Lewis and Clark Pass

End of Alice Creek road. Interpretive displays at trailhead. Hike up a gently ascending two-track road to the Pass. Bring water and extra jackets for the windy Divide.

Lewis and Clark Pass marks perhaps the wildest part of the entire Trail – the only place where grizzly bears still roam. When hiking in grizzly country, always use caution, even though most bears will avoid people. Make noise as



Dave Cochran,
Blackfoot Challenge



Grizzly bears still roam near Lewis and Clark Pass.

you walk, so bears are aware of your presence, and hike with a group if at all possible.

When Lewis reached the Pass (a 32-mile trek from the Beaver Creek camp), perhaps he breathed a sigh of relief at the familiar sight of Square Butte (“fort mountain”), From the Divide, the party descended to camp about three miles east of Table Mountain where...

“Drewyer killed two beaver and shot third which bit his knee very badly and escaped.”

“from this gap which is low and an easy ascent on the W. side the fort mountain bears North East, and appears to be distant about 20 Miles.”

Lewis, July 7, 1806

30 Rogers Pass – Continental Divide and Blackfoot Headwaters

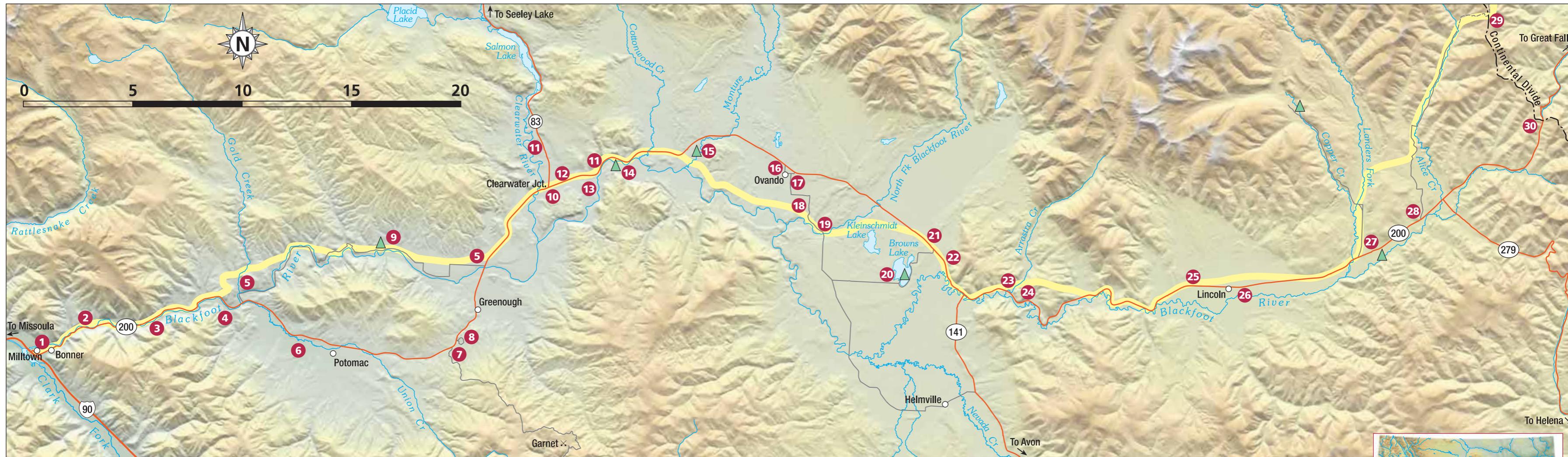
**MP
87**

Milepost 87, elevation 5610

You stand on the threshold between the great Missouri and Columbia Rivers. To the west, the Blackfoot River begins its 132-mile journey to merge with the Clark Fork River and on toward the Columbia. To the east, the Great Plains stretch toward what seems like infinity. The Continental Divide Trail runs north and south. From here, it’s approximately a six-mile hike north to Lewis and Clark Pass.

Continental Divide Trail near Lewis and Clark Pass.





LOWER RIVER SITES

- 1 Blackfoot Gateway Kiosk, Bonner
- 2 Marco Flats Fishing Access
- 3 Angevine Park
- 4 Site of Indian Encampment
- 5 Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor
- 6 Potomac Valley
- 7 Garnet Ghost Town
- 8 Lubrecht Experimental Forest
- 9 Ninemile Prairie
- 10 Blackfoot Gateway Kiosk, Clearwater Junction

MIDDLE RIVER SITES

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- 12 Big Blackfoot Railroad
- 13 Sperry Grade River Ford Site
- 14 Russell Gates Campground
- 15 Monture Creek Fishing Access
- 16 Ovando Scenic Route

UPPER RIVER SITES

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- 28 Alice Creek – Road to the Buffalo

- 29 Lewis and Clark Pass
- 30 Rogers Pass

LEGEND

- Lewis & Clark Trail
- ▲ Campgrounds
- State Primary Roads
- State Secondary Roads

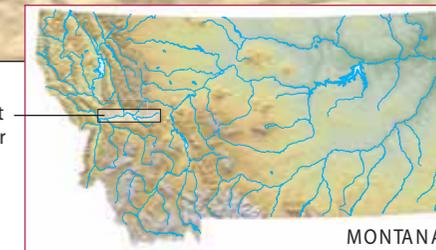
Please respect private lands

This guide directs you to public lands where you can hike, fish, view wildlife and picnic. When driving by private ranches and residences, please respect their privacy and rights by staying on public land.

Wildlife Viewing

- Bring binoculars and look for clues – moose tracks, beaver dams, woodpecker holes, and bald eagle nests in treetops.
- Please respect the wildness of animals by not approaching or feeding.
- Keep a clean camp to keep bears and other wildlife out of trouble.

The Blackfoot River Corridor



The Blackfoot Watershed is home to:

- Grizzly bears crossing the Lewis and Clark Trail – the only place on the entire route where grizzlies still roam.
- Westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout idling in river eddies.
- Bald eagles and osprey nesting in riverside trees.
- Thousands of elk wintering on the Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area.



John Patterson Ranch Cabin
6.3 miles up Alice Creek

From the road, you can see one of the ranch buildings of John Patterson, who homesteaded here with his wife Stella in 1898. Their family recollections are sprinkled with stories of encounters with Indians passing through on the Road to the Buffalo.

Please stay on the road –
you are on private land.



Alberta Patterson
ca. 1903

“Ranch life in 1900 was a grueling occupation and especially so in the Alice Creek area where early snows and long winters made for a very short summer work period. When Alberta was twenty-one months old her mother told of putting Alberta into a wooden apple box use for a portable crib when she would go into the field to build fences.”

“Gold Pans and Singletrees”
compiled by the Upper Blackfoot
Valley Historical Society

**George Monture
Memorial**

*In Memory of
George Monture
A half-breed scout
And interpreter
Friend of the early
settlers*

Of Nevada Valley

*Stone monument
erected in 1920 by
North Fork bridge –
south side.*

**More about George Montour, first
noted in site 15 on page 14.**

An October 15, 1877, Deerlodge newspaper article reported a different view of George Montour (the original spelling):

"KILLED? Rumor, of which there has not yet been confirmation, but which is probably correct, says that George Montour, a half-breed, well known in the Nevada Creek Country, was killed in a whiskey row on the North Fork of the Big Blackfoot some days ago. He has been living with the Indians for years, supplying them with whiskey and ammunition and bidding defiance to the laws. On this occasion it is stated he took out some whiskey and while he and a man named Glass were in camp, Montour became embroiled in a row with two Indians. The result was the killing of Montour. The occurrence created some alarm and one settler sent his family to Helena. It appears, however, no other person was molested and the death of Montour is not a matter of regret..."



Nimi'ipuu —the real people

Meriwether Lewis relied on Indian guides to direct him to the shortcut to the Plains, which the guides called Ooq' aalx'Iskit. Lewis translated the word as Cokahlarishkit. What he never knew was the true name of the tribe who helped him in this part of his journey. He called them Nez Perce (translated "Pierced Nose"), which came from French Canadian traders. However, the people did not follow this cultural practice and called themselves the Nimi'ipuu (pronounced Nee Mee Poo), translated the "real people" or "we the people." Today, the tribe would prefer all people to call them the Nimi'ipuu.

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Acknowledgements:

Lewis quotes from The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, Volume 8, Gary E. Moulton, Editor.

Funded in part by a USDA Forest Service Rural Community Assistance grant, Helena National Forest.

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A publication of the Blackfoot Challenge,
a nonprofit organization

The natural beauty and rural landscapes of the Blackfoot are no coincidence. A group of landowners, agencies and local officials roll up their sleeves to restore streams, control weeds and conserve open space.

Thanks to the following partners:

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Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
Bureau of Land Management
Helena National Forest
Lincoln and Ovando Historical Societies
Lolo National Forest
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
US Fish and Wildlife Service

Thanks to contributors:

For all who contributed to the printing of this publication see the Blackfoot Challenge Website:
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