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## Lewis and Clark in Iowa, South Dakota and North Dakota

*Epic adventure. Scientific discovery. Preparing the United States to become a transcontinental nation.*

*Those phrases describe the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which journeyed from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean and back in 1804-1806.*

*The bicentennial celebration of the expedition led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark began this year and will continue through 2006.*

*While there's plenty of time to retrace the trail blazed by the Corps of Discovery, why not start now? Whenever they go, history-minded travelers will find ample historical attractions plus nearby KOA Campgrounds.*

*To guide the way, articles during the next few months will focus on the Lewis and Clark trail. Last month we featured the expedition's travel in Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska, and this month we'll cover Iowa, South Dakota and North Dakota. Next month we'll travel across Montana, where the expedition covered ample scenic miles and we'll conclude our series by taking in Idaho, Washington and Oregon.*

by Dennis Gaub, for KOA Kompass

"This scenery already rich pleasing and beautiful, was still farther heightened by immense herds of Buffalo deer Elk and Antelopes which we saw in every direction feeding on the hills and plains. I do not think I exaggerate when I estimate the number of Buffalo which could be [comprehended] at one view to amount to 3000."

Meriwether Lewis – not renowned for his spelling – wrote that observation in The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition to describe what he saw on September 17, 1804, near present-day Chamberlain, South Dakota.

Seeing vast herds of wildlife along the Lewis and Clark Trail is unlikely today, but campers often enjoy Great Plains landscapes little changed since the Corps of Discovery made its grand journey. Featured this month are Lewis and Clark-related attractions in Iowa, South Dakota and North Dakota.

### Iowa

"Quite a bit" of activity tied to the trek occurs in Onawa and nearby Blue Lake, according to Brian Dye, co-owner of the Onawa/Blue Lake KOA.

A new visitor center is scheduled to open in 2004. Lewis and Clark State Park, on the lake, features a replica of the Corps' keelboat; visitors can take rides.

The community stages an annual Lewis and Clark festival during the second week of June. Events include a muzzleloader shoot, fun run, quilt show, music, 1880s crafts and demonstrations, reenactments and encampments.

[Iowa KOA campgrounds](#)

## South Dakota

Worth seeing:

- The Sergeant Floyd Monument, actually located in northwest Iowa; the closest Kampground is in nearby North Sioux City, South Dakota. Sergeant Charles Floyd, Jr., the only Corps fatality during the expedition, is buried here. He died on August 20, 1804, apparently from infection brought on by appendicitis.
- Teton Council site, in the Pierre area, where Lewis and Clark held an unforgettable meeting with the much-feared Teton Sioux. The gathering escalated into an armed face-off, but the Corps was able to continue upriver without bloodshed.

[South Dakota KOA campgrounds](#)

## North Dakota

Counting the winter encampment of 1804-05 at Fort Mandan and the return trip through North Dakota in 1806, the expedition spent more time there than in any other state.

Fittingly, then, the Flickertail State offers much to Lewis and Clark buffs:

- A major interpretive center situated a few miles south of the actual site of Fort Mandan, including a replica of the winter quarters.
- Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park/On-A-Slant Mandan Village. Here, the expedition found an abandoned Mandan village, which earlier had been ravaged by smallpox.
- Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, which has remains of three Hidatsa villages visited by Lewis and Clark during their winter in the area.
- Three Tribes Museum, near New Town, which focuses on the Arikara, Mandan and Hidatsa Indians.
- Lewis and Clark State Park, near Williston. Lewis was shot and seriously wounded in the area by nearsighted Private Pierre Cruzatte, who was hunting and mistook his captain for an elk. Lewis recovered.

Also worth a visit is the North Dakota Heritage Center on the state capitol grounds in Bismarck.

The center, which has a major collection of Plains Indians artifacts, surveys the history of North Dakota from the age of the dinosaurs to the present, said Pam Mueller, co-owner of the Bismarck KOA.

She said caravans touring the region have the right idea: "They're all spending three days here -- that's what it takes to do it right."

[North Dakota KOA campgrounds](#)

Next month: Across Montana.

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