

The expedition of lewis and clark



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The Lewis and Clark Expedition was one of the most important missions in the history of the United States. The exploration of the uncharted west greatly aided the United States in the discovery of, ??? some 300 species unknown to science, nearly 50 Indian tribes, and the Rockies??? (Lewis and Clark Expedition). The expedition, otherwise known as ??? the Corps of Discovery??? gave the United States a greater understanding of the newly gained western territory. Through the mapping of the Louisiana Territory, the discovery of new species and land, and the greater understanding of the new Indian tribes that was gained, the Lewis and Clark Expedition became an invaluable asset to the future growth of the United States. They managed to accomplish this with only one member of the Corps, Sergeant Charles Floyd, dying along the journey from appendicitis. This expedition was an immensely great accomplishment for the United States.

The Corps of Discovery started their journey from Pittsburgh on August 31, 1803. They left with thirty three men, of which included a pilot, seven soldiers, three young men on trial, and Lewis and Clark themselves. As they went along their mission Clark spent the majority of his time mapping the way and charting the course. As the team made its way along the Ohio River and then up the Missouri River Clark was busy charting the course. The maps that Clark made would allow the people back in the east to get a better idea of what the Louisiana Territory was like. Clark??™s maps would become a great aid to scholars and others wishing to gain more knowledge on the newly purchased territory.

When Thomas Jefferson first sent the Lewis and Clark team to explore the Louisiana Territory and to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean he thought

that ??? woolly mammoths, erupting volcanoes, and a mountain of pure salt awaited them??? (Lewis and Clark Expedition). Of course none of these things were found, but what they did discover was not as fabricated but was no less mind-boggling. While Lewis was ashore studying the plants, rocks, animals, and soil he discovered nearly 300 new species of plants and animals. This new scientific finding changed the Americans??™ understanding of the flora and fauna of their newly acquired property. During his time on the Corps of Discovery Lewis discovered and cataloged 122 new animals. These animals lived throughout the Louisiana Territory.

Their habitats varied from deserts, grasslands, mountains, and riverbeds. Some of these animals included Prairie Dogs, Bull Snakes, Coyotes, Grizzly Bears, Red Foxes, Mountain Lions, and Northern Pikeminnows. The discovery of these new species of animals added to the overall knowledge of the life within the Louisiana Territory. The discovery cataloging of 178 new species of plants was another accomplishment of Meriwether Lewis during the expedition. Some of those plants included the purple coneflower, Rabbitbrush, Indian Tobacco, Lewis??™s Wild Flax, and Creeping Juniper.

These newly discovered plants were a major find for the scientific community. This new find gave the scientific community a greater understanding of the plant life in the Louisiana Territory. The Corps of Discovery had many encounters with the various Native American tribes which live along the Rockies and the Missouri River. Lewis and Clark made sure to record various words used by the different tribes so that the Americans could get a better understanding of how to communicate with them.

Also ??? different groups of Plains Indians used sign language to talk to each other??? (The American Vision 174). A good many of the men in the Corps understood this sign language. They first met with a party of Oto and Missouri Indians. That encounter went smoothly with both the Americans and the Indians exchanging greetings and gifts. As they ventured down the river they met up with the Yankton Sioux, ??? a more peaceful people than their neighbors farther up the Missouri??? (Lewis and Clark Expedition). They exchanged gifts and gave the Americans a warning about the welcoming they would receive from their neighbors upstream. They continued their journey and encountered the Teton Sioux. A standoff soon occurred but both sides pulled back at the last second.

They bunkered down at Fort Mandan for the winter, trading with the Mandan tribe. Talking with the Native Americans through sign language was a very slow way of communication so they hired an interpreter by the name of Toussaint Charbonneau. Along with Toussaint came his Shoshone wife, Sacagawea, and their baby son, Jean Baptiste.

Eventually they made their way towards the Continental Divide and there they finally met the Shoshone tribe. They traded with the chief, who luckily was Sacagawea??™s brother, for horses and some information about the trail ahead. With the aid of these Native American tribes the Corps of Discovery was able to finally make their way to the Pacific Ocean. In the end, the Lewis and Clark expedition ended up being very beneficial to the United States.

Though they did not find the Northwest Passage, what they did end up finding was just as amazing and useful to the Americans. The discovery of new species of animals and plants, the mapping of the Louisiana Territory, and the greater understanding of the Native American tribes aided the United States in getting a better understanding of their territory. In short, the Lewis and Clark expedition was one of the greatest and most beneficial missions of American History.