

NEWS RELEASE

The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Relay -- Kamiah, Idaho to Fort Clatsop, Oregon Relay Experience of a Lifetime--A Running Relay Like no Other, to Commemorate the Greatest Overland Journey of Discovery in the History of the United States

By [Skip Cleaver](http://www.coolrunning.com) www.coolrunning.com
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The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Relay will commemorate the Bicentennial of one of the most significant events in American history. The relay will follow the westernmost trail of the famous explorers, Lewis and Clark, remembering their “rapid pace” race against the elements and the seasons from the Bitterroot Mountains of Idaho to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. The relay will pit 12-person teams against each other in a modern race along the same spectacularly scenic route. The relay will run 506 miles in six adventure-filled days in August 2004.

Teams will average 84.3 miles per day, or just over 7 miles per team member. Each runner will log 42.2 miles on average for the six-day trek, so anyone can do it. Planned nightly stops will keep the teams from becoming too spread out, while allowing for ultra competitive teams, as well as mid-pack runners, and even walkers. This relay is for everyone—elite runners, corporate teams, law enforcement teams, firefighters, military personnel, running clubs, and all others. In short, it is for anyone who likes history, is in search of natural splendor, loves the physical effort of competitive running, and enjoys the organizational and logistical challenges presented. Whatever the pace of each team--the present day adventurers--this relay just might be the unique adventure of a lifetime. Unparalleled majestic sights will greet runners around every bend in the mighty rivers. Runners will experience the incomparable backdrop of the Cascade Mountains, and see the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia Rivers as only runners can—up close and personal, stride-by-stride.

EPIC JOURNEY

The Lewis and Clark expedition, from St. Louis, Missouri to the Oregon Coast and back, has been called America’s great epic of exploration. They departed May 14, 1804, paddling up the Missouri River from still-Spanish St. Louis. They huddled through the winter of 1804-05 in Fort Mandan (Bismarck) in the Dakotas, and then pushed over the Rockies and down the Bicentennial Relay route to spend the winter of 1805-06 at Fort Clatsop (Astoria) on the Oregon Coast. They triumphantly returned on September 23, 1806 to St. Louis. It was a party of 40 souls. Only one died along the way; Sargent Floyd succumbed to appendicitis in August of 1804.

Sacagawea, Shoshone guide and interpreter, is memorialized on the US dollar coin. She not only showed the way and braved the hardships; she helped to insure the safety of the group in her diplomatic dealings with powerful tribes along the way. Her son was born on the journey (1805). He was Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, who later lived with Lewis, was popular with the Corps even as an infant. His father was also part of the Corps. The baby was an unlikely but effective diplomat. Throughout the long and dangerous trip she carried her son with her—through rapids and storms, hunger, cold and heat. There are many stories of triumph in this phenomenal journey of discovery.

The explorers came from throughout the US and Canada, as will the relay teams who will honor their memory. Teams will gain appreciation for their hardship, and their tremendous accomplishments. The relay is part of a nation-wide bicentennial celebration from the roots of the original plan in Virginia to the ports of Pittsburgh and St. Louis. Celebrations will be continuous for more than two years, probably the greatest celebration in US history after the bicentennial celebrations of the founding of the nation in 1776. The Lewis and Clark celebrations are from every region in the country, as are the teams that will run the relay.

Their 863-day trek through a hostile environment created an awe-inspiring story of adventure that has burned in the American psyche right up to the present day. It is the story of tenacious determination that runners of today can really relate to and appreciate. The journey was nearly all across uncharted and unmapped territory. Their resourcefulness and ability to work with and trade with native tribes for food along the route, in itself is an amazing accomplishment and one of the great epic journeys.

From the time they left the lower reaches of the Missouri River until they sighted the sparkling cone of Mount Hood, the entire route was unknown to them. Thousands of Native Americans greeted and traded with them along the way, especially on the shores of the Columbia and Snake Rivers. American Sea Captain William Gray named the Columbia in 1792, and the British often visited the coast, but no whites had previously penetrated the interior that far north.

Their adventure took them to the outer reaches of the newly acquired Louisiana Territory, bought by the US from France on December 20, 1803. The expedition then trekked hundreds of miles beyond into British Oregon Territory and down the rivers to the sea. Only the Eastern boundary of the Purchase (the Mississippi River) and the southern boundary (the Gulf of Mexico) were known. The western border with Spanish Mexico ran along the uneven wall of the Rocky Mountains, and the northern boundary with British Canada would not be established until 1818. Most importantly, the Louisiana Purchase did not address competing claims for the Oregon Territory (now Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Southern British Columbia).

Oregon was claimed by Britain and Russia, and the US; Spanish Mexico laid claim to southern portions, from the Mexican states of California and Nevada. In any case, the expedition was planned even before the Purchase was made in order to reinforce those claims. They bought boats and supplies in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the summer of 1803 (before the Purchase was made), and sailed down the Ohio and up the Mississippi to St. Louis, where they spent the winter of 1803-04.

EXPLORATION AND EXPANSION

Theirs was the first Federal expedition of exploration. The Corps exploration of the Oregon territory led to joint occupation by the USA and Britain from 1818, and planted the flag of the US on the shores of the Pacific for the first time. The effect was immediate. Only six years after Lewis and Clark departed Fort Clatsop and the coast, trader John Jacob Astor arrived in the same region and founded Astoria where the Bicentennial Relay will finish. Large numbers of American settlers flooding into the territory finally convinced the British to give up claims, and Oregon became a US territory in 1848.

The “race to the sea” by Lewis and Clark and Company established the first United States claim to any territory bordering the Pacific. The Louisiana Purchase, immense as it was, did not include today’s Washington and Oregon, and only a portion of the eastern fringe of Idaho. President Jefferson, who commissioned the expedition, clearly stated the aim of establishing a claim on the Oregon country. The British claim was based on exploration by ship. A British captain, in fact, explored the lower Columbia River, and first recorded the majestic Mount Hood, which became a pivotal and welcome landmark to the Lewis and Clark expedition as they raced to the sea. They knew their goal was within reach when they viewed the unmistakable peak, so inspiring when it comes into view today.

The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Relay retraces the route of the famous expedition from the small town of Kamiah, Idaho to the mouth of the Columbia. Kamiah lies west of the Nez Perce National Forest and the Bitterroot Wilderness Area. The town lies within the Nez Perce Indian Reservation. It was the Nez Perce route, the Lolo Pass and Lolo Trail, the Corps of Discovery used to get to Canoe Camp. The Corps arrived on the Clearwater River on September 25, 1805 and established a camp just a few miles down river from Kamiah, which they dubbed Canoe Camp. They spent a precious two weeks in this camp, refitting and stocking food supplies. They made five large dugout canoes during the encampment, which they used for the final race to the sea along the sometimes-treacherous rivers. They left Canoe Camp on October 7, and exactly two months later on December 7, 1805, they set up winter quarters at Fort Clatsop, more than 500 miles west. This winter encampment was named for the local Clatsop Indians.

THE ROUTE—EXHILARATION IN RACING TO THE SEA

The Bicentennial Relay follows this route, down the Clearwater to the confluence with the Snake River and the town of Lewiston, Idaho, just across the river from Clarkston, Washington. The relay begins near the Lewis and Clark Resort and Motel. The names and lore are everywhere along the historic path—roads, counties, towns, businesses--reminding everyone of their legacy. From the start, relay runners will be in awe of the region’s landscape and remarkable scenery—much of it unchanged in the 200 years since the expedition pushed through the area.

Day One. The race will blast off 198 years, 364 days after Lewis and Clark arrived in Canoe Camp. The starting horn sounds the morning of August 6th. Urgency spurred the Corps of Discovery and ruled their pace. Competition, teamwork, and destiny will pace the relay teams. It took the expedition three days to reach the Snake River, a 1,038-mile wonder of nature. But the relay teams will see the Snake within hours. The 76-mile first day will end at Chief Timothy State Park along Route 12 in western Washington.

Day two is an 87-mile journey through Dayton and the Lewis and Clark State Forest to Walla Walla (named for the Walla Walla Indians), with an overnight lodging at the Walla Walla Community College.

Day three the relay teams power to the south shore of the mighty Columbia and briefly into Oregon before crossing to the north shore and Washington State at Umatilla and McNary Dam. The 86-mile third leg ends at Crow Butte State Park. Cameras will be clicking to capture both runners and the background.

Day four the relay races to Bingen, Washington along the road less traveled, Route 14. This route is a National Scenic Highway, and the moment the running shoes hit this road it is crystal clear why it has that designation. Runners and teammates will view the powerful Cascade Mountains to the north, west and south, and the gorgeous Columbia Gorge presents a continuous panorama of cliffs, forests, waterfalls and rapids. On foot with a 360-degree view is the only way to fully appreciate the beauty of this country. Teams will hardly notice that this is the longest leg at 90 miles.

Day five presents more of the fabulous Columbia Gorge and excellent views of Mount Adams, Mount Hood, and Mount St. Helens. The Relay crosses to the south shore at Vancouver, Washington, near historic fort Vancouver, to the overnight accommodations at Cathedral Park in Portland. Mount Hood was one of the few landmarks to appear on a map of the Pacific Coast.

“OH, THE JOY” --BATTLING THE CLOCK, RELIVING HISTORY

Day Six brings another 90 miler, and the teams will feel the exhilaration of approaching the coast just as the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discover did so many years ago. Much of this run will be through the beautiful forests. Record-sized trees that lived when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark passed are still living to see the relay teams roll through. Route 30 parallels the Columbia through small towns and state forests to the shores of the tidal Columbia and the town of Astoria. The FINISH will bring overpowering joy and a sense of accomplishment. And it will put an exclamation mark one of the greatest running adventures ever. Talk about team

building—just wait until the entire team crosses that line together. A mixture of pride, and a sense of destiny will bring many a tear to even the toughest of elite runners. There will also be a feeling of patriotism, just as the explorers felt when they planted the flag on the western shore of the continent.

Fort Clatsop National Memorial will beckon nearby, as will Fort Stevens State Park. Only 55 years after the Corps of Discovery set foot on these peninsulas, they were fortified for the Civil War, and then again for the Great War and World War Two.

Lewis and Clark and Company spent four months at Fort Clatsop, from December 7 to March 23, 1806. They hoped that a part of the Corps could return by ship, either British or American, along with maps, journals, charts, and collected plant and animal samples. But no ships came, and the entire group set out overland to return to St. Louis. They split into two sections and explored the Yellowstone River. Their return trip was faster in part because they already had collections, and in part because they were going downstream once they reached the 2,700-mile long Missouri. After their return the party split to go their separate ways, but they had the journey of a lifetime. Relay teams will have a tremendous appreciation for the accomplishments of the Corps of Discovery. They will also take their own memories of triumph and teamwork from a relay like no other.

BEING THERE

The 200th anniversary of this epic journey has fired the imagination of the American people. Hundreds of events are associated with the celebrations from major cities to remote villages. None of these remarkable celebrations on the calendar can bring people closer to the spirit, the adventure, and the hardship—there is no better way to appreciate the historical significance—than the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Relay. The event is a limited edition in the true sense—it will only be held in 2004 and 2005, the year the Corps of Discovery set out, and the year they arrived at Fort Clatsop. It is a unique adventure for all who enjoy nature, running, and connections with history. Everyone is invited.

There are several ways to participate:

Six-day racing teams, competitive and non-competitive;

Two or three day “Weekend Specials”;

And one-day fun runs, team or solo;

Walkers and wheelchair athletes are also invited.

A comprehensive list of accommodations, camping locations, motels, hotels, and bed and breakfast locations will be provided for each registering group or individual. Dinner is provided all six nights, along with beverages and a light breakfast.

Each team is responsible for ongoing transportation throughout the event (two vans are suggested) and for water and daytime meals. Detailed route maps, including legs, elevation change, and overall degree-of-difficulty are available.

For information, visit Relays of America at EventMgmt.com

4840 S. W. Western Avenue,

Beaverton, OR 97005.

Phone (760) 328-2739, or (503) 643-9440, or e-mail lorenjack@msn.com.