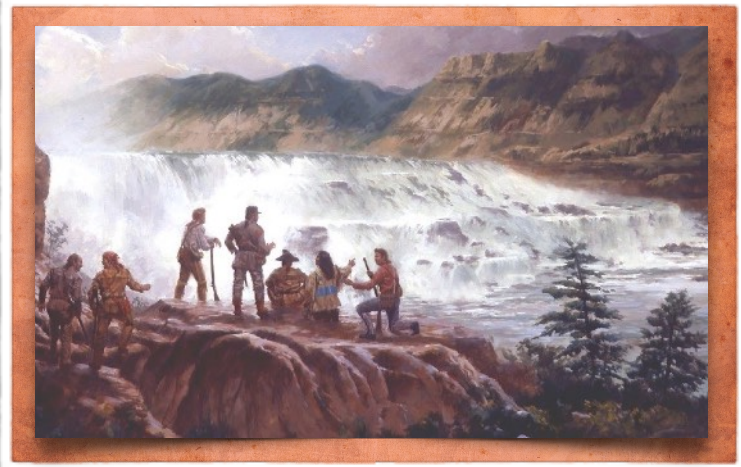


## THE GREAT FALLS

### The great falls portage

*My ears were saluted with the agreeable sound of a fall of water and advancing a little further I saw the spray arise above the plain like a column of smoke which would frequently disappear again in an instant...*

**Meriwether Lewis, June 13<sup>th</sup> 1805**



The Great Falls, Jim Carson

The Great Falls Portage presented Lewis and Clark with one of the most challenging ordeals of the expedition. On June 13, 1805, Lewis and a small advance party witnessed "the grandest sight" when they became the first white men to see the Great Falls of the Missouri River. Lewis commented that "from the reflection of the sun on the spray or mist which arises from these falls is a beautiful rainbow produced which adds not little to the beauty of this majestically grand scenery".

Despite their splendor the Great Falls presented much danger and hardship for the explorers. In one afternoon Lewis's path converged with a bear, a mountain cat or wolverine and three buffalo bulls; to Lewis it seemed that "all the beasts of the neighborhood had made a league to destroy me, or that some fortune was disposed to amuse herself at my expense". Many members of the expedition were ill, including Sacagawea who had been suffering for more than a week from an unknown sickness. Clark, Charbonneau, Sacagawea and her baby nearly drowned in a violent storm of torrential rain and huge hailstones. Grizzly bears, rattlesnakes and mosquitoes were a constant worry, even to the dog, Seaman, who Clark noted was "in a constant state of alarm with these bear and keeps barking all night".

Finally on July 15, after a month of portaging around the Great Falls, the explorers set out upstream, eager to locate the Shoshone Indians. Only a short time remained to cross the Rocky Mountains before winter and there were many great obstacles ahead.

National Park Service, [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)



### THE GREAT FALLS

1. What did Lewis and Clark had to face on June 13, 1805? Explain why they cannot continue on the river.
2. Why was it such a danger?
3. What was the health condition of many members of the expedition?
4. When did this episode end?
5. Finally , what was the new obstacle in view?



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