

With Shoshone horses and a Shoshone guide, Lewis and Clark forged ahead with their men. It was an extremely arduous trek, not just because of the mountains. An early storm brought bitter cold, and blowing snow, causing even the Shoshone guide to lose his way.

With almost no game, the people were nearly starving - and the worst of the trip was still ahead. They were as wet and as cold as it was possible to be - and still survive. Frequently the men were convinced their feet would freeze.

With little to eat, Clark and a small party of men tried to find a way out of the mountains. Fortunately, they were found by children of the Nez Perce tribe. One of the older women pleaded for their lives to be spared. Not only did they spare the explorers' lives, the Nez Perce gave them invaluable help. Lewis called them the most honest and sincere people they'd met.

Still ahead, however, were rapids so dangerous that some of the tribe members gathered to watch - fully expecting the white men to drown. Still the expedition moved forward, everyone anxious to see the Pacific after traveling 1½ years.

When they finally reached their goal - announcing "Ocean in view!!" - the travelers could not believe what they saw. The sea was absolutely immense.

Needing to find a suitable camp site, everyone voted on the best place. Historians believe it was the first time a slave (York) and a woman (Sacagawea) were allowed to vote in America.

The Corps spent four difficult months, inundated with rain for all but twelve days. With no means of communication, Lewis and Clark could not tell anyone - including the President - about their achievements. Indeed ... everyone at home thought the group members were dead.

When they were able to return to St. Louis - from where the journey originally began two years earlier - it took only six months.

Without considerable help from Native Americans, the Corps of Discovery would have been a lost mission. With its success, "The West" was now open to their fellow countrymen. The Native-American way of life, however, would never be the same.

Returning to the Mandan and Hidatsa villages, Sacagawea and her family were left behind. Most of the men would never see her again.

See, also, these videos:

Lewis and Clark - Corps of Discovery

Lewis and Clark Meet Sacagawea

Lewis and Clark - Meeting with the Shoshone

Lewis and Clark - After the Corps of Discovery

Meriwether Lewis - Girandoni Air Rifle

Sacajawea - Interpreter for Lewis and Clark

Credits:

Clip from "Lewis & Clark - Great Journey West" (2002). Online, courtesy National Geographic and YouTube.

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See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Lewis-and-Clark-Reach-the-Pacific-Ocean>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Lewis-and-Clark-Reach-the-Pacific-Ocean>