



OPB'S LEWIS AND CLARK EXPLORER GUIDE

A SALTY DAY IN SEASIDE

DESTINATION:

Seaside, Oregon and the Salt Works,
a unit of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park

“It requires 4 deer, or an elk and a deer, or one buffalo to supply us for 24 hours.” -- William Clark

The Lewis and Clark expedition, 33 hardworking people, depended on hunting and gathering food, or trade with the Native Americans, to get enough to eat. By the time the Corps reached the Pacific, the food and salt that they had carried with them were long gone. As a result, the Corps was often hungry. Food — getting food, storing food, cooking food and eating food — was a constant concern. The taste of the food was often a problem, too. The men liked meat and lots of it. They disliked the local salmon because they found it too rich. On the other hand, when there was no salt, the Corps often complained about the blandness of their diet.

ADVENTURE:

Take a trip to Seaside to find out more about the kinds of food the Corps ate and to learn why salt making was such a central part of their lives. Before you head out, experience a modern version of the “Corps diet” by packing a *“Lewis and Clark Picnic”* to eat on the beach at Seaside.



Photo: NPS

Members of Fort Clatsop's Living History Corps collect ocean water in preparation for making sea salt.

While they were in Oregon, the Corps ate meat (fresh, salted or smoked), “pounded salmon” and, sometimes, “rotten elk.” They also ate root vegetables, camas (an edible bulb in the lily family) and wapato (a potato-like tuber). Though “rotten elk” is not recommended for your picnic, you can experience a small taste of the adventure by packing a picnic that includes smoked salmon, beef jerky and root vegetables like potatoes. Though the Corps probably did not get too many of them, be sure to include some of our wonderful local berries. And, to get a sense of why salt making was so important to the Corps, try eating a piece of cooked potato without any salt—and then with salt. Which one tastes better?

GETTING AROUND:

Driving Instructions to

Seaside: From Gearhart continue south on 101 to Seaside (about 4 miles).

The Salt Works:

From Highway 101, follow the signs for the turn-off to the Salt Cairn. Then follow the signs on the city streets. Turn right on Avenue U. The Salt Works is on the left in the last block. You can also park downtown and walk to Avenue U along the prom, rent a bike or take the Seaside Trolley.

Seaside Museum & Historical

Society: Located four blocks north of the Convention Center at 570 Necanicum Drive.

Quatat Park in Seaside:

From Astoria go south on 101 to Seaside. Turn left on Broadway for three blocks to Sunset Recreation Center. Park and walk to the park from the parking lot. Restrooms available.



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MORE TO DO AND SEE:

“We found it (salt) excellent, fine, strong & white ...

This was a great treat to myself and most of the party.” -- Meriwether Lewis

- **Visit the Salt Works**, a commemorative site in Seaside and a unit of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. This location was one day’s hike to Fort Clatsop, where some of the men of the Corps were stationed from January 2-February 20, 1806. Their assignment was to collect a salt supply. They found a place with all they needed — stone to build an oven, wood to burn, fresh water to drink, elk to hunt and seawater with “a good concentration of salt.” Salt making was a 24-hour-a-day operation. During their stay, the salt makers produced about 20 pounds of salt.
- **The Salt Makers Return in Seaside** — Members of Fort Clatsop’s Living History Corps build an ocean-side camp where they boil salt, trade with the locals and talk about their journey west; end of Avenue U in Seaside; July 16-17, 2005, August 19-21, 2005 and February 17-19, 2006.
- **Hit the beach!** Seaside offers lots of access to the ocean and a boardwalk that extends the length of the city and beyond the Salt Works.
- **Visit the Seaside Museum and Historical Society**, which offers a Native American exhibit featuring a map of Native American tribes and languages; handcrafted items made by Clatsop Indians; and a Lewis and Clark display and diorama of the Salt Works.
- **Enjoy shopping, games, bike rentals** and so much more fun in Seaside!



Although Captain Clark wasn’t much interested in salt, Meriwether Lewis and other men of the Corps considered it a treat. It was also a preservative. During their stay in the Pacific Northwest, the Corps needed salt to preserve their meat, which tended to spoil quickly because of the damp, mild climate.



ACTIVITIES TO TRY WITH YOUR CHILDREN:

You will need: A gallon jug for collecting seawater

Discover How to Get Salt From Seawater: The salt makers of the Lewis and Clark expedition scooped ocean water out of the surf, brought it to the Salt Works and went through the process of making sea salt — over and over again. To find out what it felt like to be a salt maker, take some seawater home with you and follow these steps:

1. While on the beach, fill a gallon jug with seawater to take home. At home, measure one cup of seawater into each of two pie plates. Then, warm one pie plate of water over low heat until the water evaporates and leaves salt crystals behind.

2. Note: It is important not to heat the water too quickly. Boiling may carry salt away through sheer force. Be careful not to let all the water evaporate — this can result in a melted pie plate.

3. How much salt did you get from one cup of water? Measure the amount of salt you made and compare it to the amount of water you used (remaining in the second pie plate) to create that salt. Seawater averages 35 parts-per-thousand of salt. Imagine how much water the salt makers had to boil to get 20 lbs of salt!

You can also experiment with forming salt crystals from seawater: Pour a cup of water into a plate. Hang some string or shape three pipe cleaners into a tripod and stand them on the plate. Salt crystals will form around them.

