

Tour 10
(Water Route)

Medora -- South Roosevelt Regional State Park -- Beaver River -- North Roosevelt Regional State Park -- Cherry Creek -- Missouri River -- Elbowoods -- Stanton -- Fort Clark -- Washburn -
- Bismarck.

Route: Little Missouri and Missouri Rivers.

Medora to Bismarck, 350 m. (by river), 10 to 20 days. N.P. Ry. parallels route from Stanton to Bismarck.

Special equipment: Light duffel, including 7 x 7 tent, waterproof sleeping bags, waterproof duffel bags, complete change outdoor clothing; flat-bottomed boat capable carrying 1,000 lb., of not more than 5 in. draft for party of three; complete camping gear. No accommodations available.

Food: Fourteen days supply, carried in paraffin-treated bags; mainly canned goods--soups, meats, vegetables, and milk; flour, salt, sugar, coffee, and cocoa; dried fruits. Butter hard to keep. Biscuits can be made en route.

Water: Carry light water cask or bag. Refill at various ranch houses. Use chlorine or iodine in settled river water.

Warning: No trip for "tenderfeet" unless accompanied by experienced guide and riverman; select night camps on high ground at safe distance back from river's bank, overhanging banks may cave in, creek and gully bottoms subject to suddenly rising water if rain falls; tie boats to trees on high ground, boat may be lost in sudden rise of river if tied too low; avoid drifting near overhanging cutbanks along stream, landslides dangerous to small boats occur occasionally; watch channels for snags; high, upstream winds dangerous on Missouri; carry antivenom serum for treatment of possible rattlesnake bites.

Seasons: Latter part of June or first weeks of July. Spring floods and early June rise make rivers treacherous; dry seasons of late summer may require portage of Little Missouri.

Maps: Highway Planning Survey, Bismarck, N. Dak., can furnish county maps.

For the experienced camper, for the seeker of adventures, for the lover of nature, this route offers much pleasure; it is on the Little Missouri River through the heart of North Dakota's Badlands and down the Missouri River to Bismarck. During past ages the Little Missouri has been the chief agent in cutting into the prairies of North Dakota the wide slash that is the Badlands region. Rain and surface waters have washed away the soft upper layers of the deposits made by successive prehistoric seas, and, continually seeking lower levels, in the slow process of erosion through the centuries have left a jumble of jagged buttes. The sides of these buttes expose the various strata, each the testimonial of one age in the geological history of the area.

Undoubtedly the Missouri and Little Missouri were navigated by many an Indian hunter in search of the big game that once roamed the region, and by many a brave seeking the scalp of some unwary opponent; but Baptiste Le Page, the French explorer who made the voyage from the Black Hills (which title then designated all the rough upland country W. of the Missouri here) to the mouth of the Knife River in 45 days in 1804, is believed to have been the first white man to journey down the tortuous Little Missouri into the Missouri, called Wakpa Hehanka (*elk river*) by the Sioux. Le Page joined the Lewis and Clark expedition at one of the Indian villages near the mouth of the Knife River.

While Le Page drifted down almost the entire course of the Little Missouri, the modern would-be explorer following this route ships his boat into the historic waters more than halfway down the stream at MEDORA (2,265 alt., 200 pop.) (*see Tour 8*), and heads downstream with the current.

North of Medora the river flows through a comparatively wide flood plain dotted with groves of cottonwood, box elder, and ash trees, with high, many-colored buttes rising on both sides to form the deep valley.

At about **1 m. (R)** is SHEEP CREEK, an intermittent tributary named for the bighorn mountain sheep that were found in the Badlands when white men first visited them. Along Sheep Creek are a few bull pines, *Pinus ponderosa scopulorum*, probably the northern limit of the species in the State.

At about **1.5 m.** (L) is ANDREWS CREEK, and at about **1.8 m.** downstream from Medora the river crosses the southern boundary of the South Roosevelt Regional State Park (*see* ROOSEVELT REGIONAL STATE PARK). At **2.8 m.** the park highway fords the Little Missouri, and at times of low water caution is necessary here in navigating the ford. To the R. after passing the highway is one of the park picnic areas, and just below these grounds is the mouth of KNUTSON CREEK (L), at about **4.3 m.**

Below the buildings (R) of the PEACEFUL VALLEY RANCH (*see* SOUTH ROOSEVELT REGIONAL STATE PARK) is the mouth of PADDOCK CREEK (R), **5.8 m.**, and at about **8.8 m.** the route passes JUEL CREEK (R). At about **11.5 m.** is GOVERNMENT CREEK (R), and at about **17 m.** WANNAGAN CREEK (L), the northern boundary of the park.

A few miles below the boundary is the PARKER RANCH (L), formerly the Wadsworth, said to be the first cattle ranch in the Badlands. Downstream from these buildings is ASH COULEE CREEK (R), named for the many ash trees that line its broad valley. It should be reached in a day of ordinary drifting. (*Good camping place for first night is opposite the mouth of this little stream.*)

During the entire first day's journey the unusual beauty of the Badlands formations is revealed, but even more detail is evident as the setting sun lengthens the shadows cast by the hills and intensifies the reds, ochers, grays, greens, and taupes that form the weird color combinations of the region.

At **40 m.** is the SITE OF THE CABIN OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S ELKHORN RANCH (L). Only a few foundation stones and a depression in the flat river flood plain show where the cabin stood. The Rough Rider President, who ran cattle on two ranches in the Badlands in the 1880's (*see Tour 8*), spent the greater share of his time at the Elkhorn, using it as headquarters for hunting expeditions into the surrounding country.

Nearest neighbor of the future President was Howard Eaton, whose VI Ranch at **48 m.** was near the mouth of BEAVER RIVER, the Little Missouri's largest tributary. (*Opposite confluence here is good camping place.*) Beaver River was first called Big Beaver Creek to distinguish it from Little Beaver (*see Tour 9*).

North of Beaver River the stream pursues its way in a meandering course, winding 14 m. to cross a single township, and passing MAGPIE and BEICEGEL (Bicycle) CREEKS. Magpie receives its name from the long-tailed black and white bird that is found in the area, while Beicegel (despite the spelling) is named for the Beisigl brothers who were early ranchers along its banks. They still (1938) live in North Dakota near Lemmon, S. Dak. (*Bet. Beicegel Creek and a point 2 m. farther down river are many places suitable for camp.*)

Thus far the river current has been anything but swift, and the stream has been flowing between banks quite widely separated. As the trip is resumed on the fourth day the river soon narrows and becomes a swiftly rushing stream. Snags and submerged tree trunks that heretofore were

easily avoided now become a danger to the unwary voyager. The added speed makes navigation more difficult, and a snag through the bottom of the boat at this point would precipitate disaster, the probable loss of equipment adding to the hardships of getting out of the rough country on foot.

In the vicinity of REDWING CREEK are some of the finest views of the entire journey.

Grotesque formations carved in the wind-blown, rain-washed buttes are set off by cedar-dotted slopes and river flats covered with sage.

In the Redwing Creek area the river enters the southern boundary of the North Roosevelt Regional State Park (*see* ROOSEVELT REGIONAL STATE PARKS), and a short hike left of the Little Missouri leads to one of the largest areas of PETRIFIED FOREST in the Badlands. Great silicified stumps, weighing many tons, are found perched atop slender pillars of gray, yellow, and ocher sandstone, and logs, sometimes several feet long and 12 to 14 inches in diameter, are found here.

Downstream from the Redwing, in a sharp bend of the river, SPERATI POINT rises to the L. The point is named for Dr. Carlo A. Sperati, director of the Luther College (Decorah, Iowa) Band at the time it visited here in 1927. From the summit is an exceptional view of the GRAND CANYON OF THE LITTLE MISSOURI. The river makes an almost right-angle turn to the E. here toward its confluence with the Missouri, and its flood plain again widens and the current is less swift.

The SQUAW CREEK PICNIC AREA (*see* NORTH ROOSEVELT REGIONAL STATE PARK) is the only man-made camping place on the entire trip. It was at a sheep ranch on Squaw Creek that the "vigilantes" of 1884 dropped in for one of their raids, and burned 500 tons of hay, the barn, harnesses, and all machinery, and set fire to the prairie, burning a large area.

The glistening silver steel of the ROOSEVELT BRIDGE spans the Little Missouri, over which US 85 passes, and just E. of which is the eastern entrance to the North Roosevelt Park (*see Tour 4*). US 85 is the eastern boundary of the northern park.

CHARLIE BOB CREEK (R) drains the area N. and W. of the Killdeer Mountains (*see Side Tour 8D*). Here the buttes R. of the river rise 500 to 600 ft. above the stream bed, and the noonday shadows cast by the scattered groves of cedar on the northern slopes are cool and inviting. A climb to the butte tops reveals their precipitous, barren southern slopes.

The wide valley (L) of CHERRY CREEK (*good overnight camping place opposite mouth*), together with Tobacco Garden Creek (*see Tour 6*), which drains N. into the Missouri, in pre-glacial times was probably the bed of the Little Missouri, the present valley of which was formed when the glacier blocked the former course and diverted the waters in an easterly direction.

At about a half-day's journey below Cherry Creek a climb to the high river bluffs, through thickets of red birch, aspen, and oak trees, leads to a superb view. Southward from the butte tops a blue haze outlines the Killdeer Mountains, from which the Sioux fled after the Battle of

Killdeer Mountains (*see Side Tour 8D*) to take refuge in this very section of the Badlands, the rough terrain of which prevented the army from pursuing. It was in this vicinity in 1886 that young Theodore Roosevelt and two of his ranch hands captured three thieves who had stolen a boat from his Elkhorn Ranch and had plundered almost every ranch house along the river. Roosevelt and his men pursued the three for several days before surrounding their camp and taking them completely by surprise. He then sent his men home and took the culprits overland to Dickinson, where he preferred charges against the two leaders, who were tried and subsequently served their sentences; one was later hanged for horse stealing in Montana. The third marauder, an elderly man, Roosevelt said was the "kind of person who was not capable of doing either much good or harm." When the old man thanked him profusely for thus befriending him, the future President remarked that it was the first time he had been thanked for calling a man a fool.

Between ELK and JIM'S CREEKS (R) the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation lies to the L. (*Good camping places bet. Elk and Jim's Creeks.*)

Below Jim's Creek the river widens, its flood plain covers a large area on either side of the stream, broadening the valley along which the hills begin to be more grassy and less rugged and colorful. At the confluence with HANS CREEK (r) the river makes an abrupt right-angle turn L., and while the valley still remains wide, the stream itself narrows and runs more swiftly. (*Good overnight camp sites in the Indian reservation.*)

Below the North Roosevelt Park ranches are fewer and people are seldom seen from the river.

The wider, majestic Missouri is soon reached, and forms the route for the remainder of the voyage. Up this avenue of exploration came Lewis and Clark, Maximilian, Catlin, Ashley, Lisa, and other adventurous explorers and traders; first in the round, unwieldy, skin bullboats of the Indians, and later in the chugging steamboats, plying the river in search of trade between the tribes and forts established along its course.

The seasonal rising and lowering of the Missouri's water level continually changes the channel, leaving shoals, sand bars, and snags, and these offered a problem to river pilots as long as steamboat traffic flourished on the river. When a flat-bottomed steamer ran aground it took hours, and sometimes days, to release it. It was from the odd device used to work the boats off sand bars that the term "grasshoppering" came into use. Each steamer carried two long, heavy spars, similar to telephone poles, near the bow ready for use. Capt. Grant Marsh, an old river pilot, describes the operation of these spars in Joseph Mills Hanson's *Conquest of the Missouri*:

“When she became lodged on a bar, the spars were raised and set in the river bottom, like posts, their tops inclined somewhat toward the bow. Above the line of the deck each was rigged with a tackle-block over which a manila cable was passed, one end being fastened to the gunwale of the boat and the other end wound around the capstan. As the capstan was turned and the paddlewheel revolved, the boat was thus lifted and pushed forward. Then the spars were re-set farther ahead and the process repeated until the boat was at last literally lifted over the bar. From the grotesque resemblance to a grasshopper which the craft bore when her spars were set, and

from the fact that she might be said to move forward in a series of hops, the practice came to be called 'grasshoppering.'”

From the beginning river steamers were dependent on wood for fuel, and as traffic increased woodyards became more numerous along the stream. At first they were operated only by the hardiest of white frontiersmen, but as the agency Indians absorbed the white man's civilization they too began to cut wood to sell. Steamers usually burned either cedar or cottonwood, although the latter was suitable for fuel only when fully dried, while cedar burned readily either green or cured. Boat captains took all the cedar the Indians could stack, but would not stop their boats when they saw only green cottonwood corded. The Indians soon learned a subterfuge to surmount the difficulty of having only cottonwood on hand. They smeared the freshly hewn ends of cottonwood cuttings with vermilion so that it resembled cedar, stacked the wood with the painted ends toward the river, and trusted that when a boat stopped she would take the camouflaged cottonwood rather than waste more time.

The Missouri passes beneath the black steel span of FOUR BEARS BRIDGE, the bridge with 19 Indian names (*see Side Tour 3A*.) Approximately 2 m. below the bridge the river passes within 2 m. of ELBOWOODS (*see Side Tour 3A*), inland to the L., the first town neared in the more than 200 m. of drifting since Medora was left behind. (*Good camp site on the Elbowoods side of the Missouri.*)

On the bluffs opposite Elbowoods is the SITE OF A HIDATSA INDIAN VILLAGE, which

according to tradition was once besieged by the Sioux, who expected to win an easy victory by curtailing the village water supply. Hidatsa scouts, however, had learned of the planned attack, and the people in the village made rock-filled reservoirs and carried water from the river to fill them. Repulsing the first attack of the Sioux, the besieged rolled a skin of water down the hill toward their enemy, which, the legend says, so discouraged the besiegers that they abandoned their efforts to capture the village and withdrew.

The reservation borders both sides of the river from here to a point a short distance downstream from Ree.

Below Elbowoods the river passes the sites of GRANDMOTHER'S LODGE, FORT BERTHOLD, REE, and NISHU (*see Side Tour 3A*). EXPANSION (R) consists of a post office and store marking the site of a formerly active river town. (*Good camp site bet. Ree and Expansion.*)

Just upstream W. of Expansion is a large, easily detected sandstone promontory known as MANUEL ROCK (R), used as a landmark by old river pilots, and named for the fur trader Manuel Lisa.

Below Expansion are (L) the mouth of GARRISON CREEK and the SITE OF FORT STEVENSON. The site was selected by Gen. Alfred H. Sully in 1864 on his trip down the Missouri during his second campaign, but the fort was not established until 1867. A two-

company post named for Brig. Gen. Thomas G. Stevenson, the fort was abandoned in 1883 and the military reservation turned over to the Interior Department. For a short time the buildings were used as a school for Indian children from the Fort Berthold Agency. Garrison Creek was originally called Douglas Creek, but the name was changed when the Stevenson garrison began using it for bathing purposes.

A few miles below Garrison Creek is SNAKE CREEK (L), called Ma po ksa a ti a zi (Hidatsa, *snake house river*), where a cave along the banks of the Missouri near the mouth of the creek, according to legend, swarmed with snakes at certain seasons.

A short distance downstream from the Fort Stevenson site the course of the Missouri turns S. and passes MANNHAVEN (R), remnant of a once thriving river town. Near the present village in 1809 the Missouri Fur Co., directed by Manuel Lisa, erected a trading post known variously as Fort Manuel Lisa and Fort Lewis, the latter for Reuben Lewis--brother of Meriwether Lewis, coleader of the Lewis and Clark expedition--who operated it until its abandonment in 1812. Under the name of Fort Vanderburgh, the site was later occupied briefly in 1822 or 1823. Lisa, born in New Orleans of Spanish parents, is said to have had more influence over the Indians with whom he dealt than any other trader to enter the Missouri area, although his activities in the Missouri basin were of only 13 years duration. He died in St. Louis at the age of 48.

The mouth of the KNIFE RIVER is just upstream from STANTON (*see Side Tour 8D*). (*Camp can be made on R. river bank.*)

In the vicinity of the confluence of the Knife and Missouri are the sites of many Indian villages, Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara, the locations of which are easily traceable by the many round, dish-like depressions marking the sites of earth lodges in the villages. The Hidatsa had three villages here until 1837 when the smallpox epidemic reduced their population to only one village. Prior to their occupation of the Knife River vicinity the tribe lived near the mouth of the Heart River (*see Tour 8*), and in 1845, for Protection from the Sioux, they moved to Fort Berthold. The Mandans, whose two villages some miles below the Knife were reduced to little more than 100 persons by the smallpox epidemic of 1837, moved to a small village near the Hidatsa, and followed that tribe to Fort Berthold in 1845. Migrating up the Missouri at a later date, the Arikara built villages near the Knife as late as 1851, but they too, because of continued Sioux raids, moved to Fort Berthold.

It was at one of the Knife River villages that Charbonneau and his Shoshone Indian wife, Sakakawea, lived in 1804 when Lewis and Clark employed Charbonneau as interpreter of the expedition to the Pacific (*see BISMARCK*).

Below Stanton is DEAPOLIS (R), marked by a single grain elevator, all that remains of another of the towns that sprang up along the Missouri, flourished, and declined with the steamboat trade. The place was named by its founder, who replaced the first letter in the name of the ancient city Neapolis with the first letter of his own surname, Danielson.

Old residents tell the story that in the summer of 1894 the river at Deapolis was extremely low, exposing a huge boulder in the center of the stream. An interested group made their way to the stone, and found it carved with peculiar markings they were unable to decipher. Before leaving they added the date of their visit to the inscription. Forty years later the river stage again was low enough to bring the stone above water, and a second party visited it, and found the same undecipherable markings as well as the carving of the 1894 party.

Near the Deapolis elevator is the SITE OF BIG WHITE'S MANDAN INDIAN VILLAGE. Big White was the Mandan chief taken to Washington by Lewis and Clark on their return from the Pacific, and his village was one of two Mandan towns visited by the expedition on the journey up the Missouri in 1804-5. The other, Black Cat's Village, was on the L. bank of the river farther upstream. Lewis and Clark's Fort Mandan was built on the L. bank downstream from the Deapolis site, but the changing river channel has removed all trace of the fort, and Black Cat's Village has never been definitely located (*see Tour 3*).

South of Deapolis is the SITE OF FORT CLARK TRADING POST (R), for which the present village of FORT CLARK (1,726 alt., 46 pop.), downstream **1.5 m.**, is named. The post, a well stockaded fort 132 x 147 ft., was built in 1829 by James Kipp for the American Fur Co. and named for William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Because of its flourishing trade with the Mandans it was for several years second only to Fort Union in Missouri importance, but it was closed during the smallpox epidemic of 1837, and a few years later was abandoned by the company. The Arikara Indians reoccupied the site in the 1850's in their migration up the

Missouri. Today there are slight excavations and scars marking the outline of the fort stockade walls, and traces of the Indian habitation.

Scorched Village, according to Hidatsa legend, had its locale near the present city of WASHBURN (L) (*see Tour 3*), but the Indians say that the site of the legendary village has been swallowed by the ever-shifting channel of the river.

The river passes WILDWOOD LAKE and the PAINTED WOODS (L) (*see Side Tour 3B*), and the town (R) of SANGER (1,712 alt., 70 pop.), named for its first settlers, C.H. and George Sanger. (*Camp can be made in vicinity of town; L. bank more accessible.*)

The route passes (R) the post office of PRICE (1,700 alt., 10 pop.), named for William Price, the first homesteader in the vicinity. Price is on the northern slopes of the flat-topped formations known as SQUARE BUTTES (*see Side Tour 3B*). Below these bold buttes is (L) DOUBLE DITCH INDIAN VILLAGE STATE PARK (*see Side Tour 3B*), and a short distance below that the route passes (R) the mouth of SQUARE BUTTE CREEK (*see Side Tour 8D*).

The resting place of the last physical traces of steamboating on the upper Missouri, ROCK HAVEN (R), is passed almost in sight of the black steel link of railroad bridge spanning the river near Bismarck. The advent of the railroad spelled the decline of river traffic, but before its coming Rock Haven was a river dry-dock and boat yard, and today three old craft which have seen sporadic service in the last decade are resting on large skids, drawn up from the waters once

churned by their paddle wheels.

On the high bluffs across the river below Rock Haven are the reconstructed earth lodges of the LOOKING VILLAGE (L) of the Mandans, below which is the mouth (L) of BURNT CREEK (*see Side Tour 3B*).

Termination of the **350 m.** voyage is made at Bismarck at a boat landing (L) reached just after passing under the N.P. Ry. Bridge. Downstream from the landing is the LIBERTY MEMORIAL BRIDGE over which passes US 10 (*see Tour 8*).