

The Missouri River



AT 2,540 MILES LONG, the Missouri River is the longest river in the United States. The Missouri River is actually a tributary of the Mississippi, as it joins the Mississippi at St. Louis. From there it passes through cities like Kansas City, Omaha, and Bismarck. It begins in the Rocky Mountains of Montana, where three streams join together, and has several major tributaries such as the Cheyenne and Big Sioux rivers.

The Missouri River played a big part in Westward Expansion, when the U.S. was looking to grow the country. Because its course points away from the Mississippi, toward the West, it was an easy route for Lewis & Clark to follow, and their party became the first explorers to travel the course of the river. The river soon became an important route for fur traders, as many animals with desirable pelts, like beavers and otters, lived in the area; plus, the river provided easy transportation of the furs.

People have depended on the Missouri for food and transportation for thousands of years. The Lower Missouri, or the area closer to St. Louis, is a booming industrial and agriculture region, but the water in most areas of the river is too dirty to be of much use to people.

FACT FILE

Name: _____ Length: _____

Source: _____ Mouth: _____

Cities Along It: _____

Tributaries: _____

Importance to Communities Near It: _____