

Fur Trade Itinerary

1. Maple Creek Crossing State Historic Site, Chaffee

Maple Creek Crossing recognizes a stream crossing important to travel in the days before bridges. With its gently sloping banks and firm bottom, this ford across the Maple River was a landmark in the early days of the exploration and settlement of Dakota Territory. Euro-American use of the crossing may have occurred as early as 1822 when discouraged members of the Selkirk Colonies moved from the Pembina area to the Mississippi River near Fort Snelling. By 1843 oxcart brigades were fording the Maple River on an established trade route between St. Paul and the Canadian border settlements. Military expeditions, explorers, freighters, and immigrants used the crossing as well. The actual stream crossing is approximately one-half mile northwest of the site marker.

2. Fort Abercrombie State Historic Site, Abercrombie



The fort guarded the oxcart trails of the fur trade era, military supply wagon trains, stagecoach routes, and steamboat traffic on the Red River. Fort Abercrombie once served as a gateway to the West and the spear point of the army's advance to the northern Plains. The original guardhouse and the reconstructed blockhouses and stockade attest to the bloody conflict that spilled into the Dakotas from Minnesota. Explore the buildings and visitor center.

3. Pembina State Museum and Visitor Center

After the early ocean drained and glaciers left the area, people found a rich landscape in the Red River Valley. Bison hunters, fur traders, and farmers made this land their home. Visit the Pembina State Museum to experience 100 million years of history. View the vast expanse of what was once glacial Lake Agassiz from the observation deck.

4. Kittson Cabin, Walhalla State Historic Site, Walhalla

Norman W. Kittson was sent by Henry H. Sibley of the American Fur Company to become head trader in the Red River Valley. Kittson arrived in 1843 and established three new posts, including one in the vicinity of present-day Walhalla. In 1899 the Kittson store and warehouse were reportedly serving as stables for the Bellevue Hotel in downtown Walhalla. In hopes of preserving a relic of the fur trade, one of the buildings was dismantled, moved, and rebuilt on its current location at Walhalla State Historic Site in 1904.

5. Gingras Trading Post State Historic Site, Walhalla

Visit an 1840s home and trading post. Gingras Trading Post was the home and business of Antoine Gingras, international mover and shaker of his time, and one of the wealthiest men of the Northern Plains in the 1840s.

Gingras's hand-hewn oak log store and home are among the few tangible remains of the fur trade in the Red River Valley. Both buildings have been restored to their original appearance.



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6. David Thompson State Historic Site, Velva

David Thompson was an explorer, fur trader, and the first European to explore the entire length of the Columbia River. At the age of 14 he became an apprentice to the Hudson's Bay Company to learn clerking, surveying, and hunting. After finishing his apprenticeship, he joined the Northwest Company, a formidable fur trade competitor of his former employer. To honor his accomplishments as a geographer and astronomer, the David Thompson State Historic Site is marked by a granite globe atop a rectangular granite base.

7. Fort Clark State Historic Site, Center

A center of global trade and an exotic travel destination, Fort Clark was the site of a fur trading post and a thriving Indian village until a series of devastating epidemics arrived with the steamboats. Walk the pathways along the impressions left by the village and the post. The archaeological remains of the large earthlodge village, cemetery, and two fur trade posts (Fort Clark Trading Post and Primeau's Post) are protected at the site.

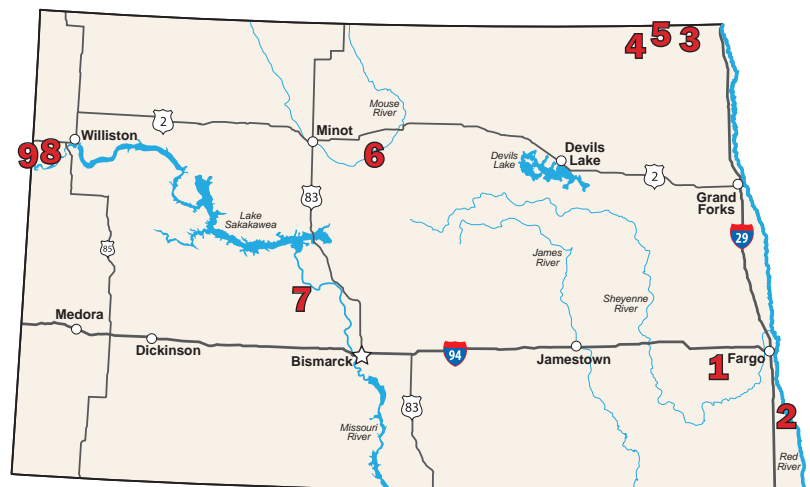
8. Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center and Fort Buford State Historic Site, Williston

Here where two great rivers meet, people have gathered for thousands of years. At the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center, take in the history of a place little changed since Lewis and Clark visited two centuries ago. At nearby Fort Buford, tour original and reconstructed buildings of the military post where Sitting Bull laid down his rifle.

****Bonus site****

9. Fort Union National Historic Site, Williston

Fort Union dominated the fur trade on the Upper Missouri River from 1828 to 1867. Built near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers by the American Fur Company, the post controlled the trading economy of the Northern Plains. In its heyday, Fort Union employed up to 100 men, many of whom were married to Indian women and had families living with them. A wide range of visitors came to Fort Union including adventurers, scientists, artists, and priests, including George Catlin, Prince Maximilian of Wied, Father Pierre De Smet, John James Audubon, Karl Bodmer and Rudolph Frederick Kurz. Today it features a reconstruction of the Bourgeois House containing a museum, book store, and a reconstructed Indian Trade House where you can purchase replicas of actual trade items that were bartered with the Native Americans.



Learn more about North Dakota's past at ndstudies.gov.

