**Central North Dakota is rich in archaeological remains of prehistoric and historic villages occupied by peoples known today as the Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras.**

Most of these sites were communities where people lived from the AD 1200s until the 1800s. Populations numbered between 300 to 2,000 or more people depending on the village and period in time.

Together, these villages chronicle the history of the tremendously rich farming and bison hunting cultures that once dominated the Missouri River valley. This way of life eventually gave way to the tide of change brought by Euroamerican explorers, traders, and settlers. Prehistoric village sites along the Missouri River number in the hundreds. On their famous journey, Lewis and Clark spent the winter of 1804-1805 near the last five independent Mandan and Hidatsa settlements at the Knife River, and the ruins of several older Mandan villages near the Heart River. Several of these significant sites are now preserved on state or federal land and are open to public visitation. We encourage you to use this guide as you travel along your historic journey.

To travel the Highways to Prehistory, two routes are suggested, the Northern Tour and the Southern Tour. All sites are easily accessible by highway. Both tours begin at Menoken Village in northwest Bismarck.

### Northern Tour
- **Menoken to Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village**
- **Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village to Double Ditch Village**
- **Double Ditch Village to Fort Clark**
- **Fort Clark to Fort Clark Trading Post**
- **Fort Clark Trading Post to Cross Ranch Preserve**
- **Cross Ranch Preserve to I-94/Mandan**

**Legend**
- Menoken Indian Village
- Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village
- Double Ditch Indian Village
- Fort Clark
- Knife River Indian Villages
- Cross Ranch Preserve
- On-A-Slant Village
- Huff Indian Village

**TIMELINE OF EVENTS AND SITE OCCUPATION SINCE AD 1100**

- **1100**
  - Plains Woodland, Nonfarming Lifeway

- **1200**
  - Earliest Plains Village Settlements

- **1300**
  - On-A-Slant Village and other Heart River Mandan Villages

- **1400**
  - Lewis and Clark Expedition 1804-1806

- **1500**
  - Like-A-Fishhook Late Plains Village

- **1600**
  - Fort Berthold Reservation, Three Affiliated Tribes

- **1700**
  - Fort Berthold Reservation

- **1800**
  - Like-A-Fishhook Late Plains Village

- **1900**
  - Huff Indian Village

- **2000**

**Arts’ rendition of Double Ditch at AD 1550. The painting is featured at the ND Heritage Center in the Innovation Gallery: Early Peoples.**

**Explore the archaeological remains of prehistoric and historic villages occupied by the Mandans, Hidatsas, Arikaras, and their ancestors. This guide provides a map and detailed information about multiple sites throughout the Missouri River valley. We remind visitors to please respect and protect the resources as you visit these historic treasures.**

**For the Northern Tour, from Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village proceed to Double Ditch Indian Village, then Fort Clark, and finally to Knife River Indian Villages. For variety and a beautiful view of the last unflooded segment of the Missouri River valley, you may return to the Bismarck/Mandan area by way of Highway 1806 that passes thorough Cross Ranch Nature Preserve on the west side of the river. This tour can easily take a full day, or two if you wish to hike at Cross Ranch.**

**For the Southern Tour, after leaving Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village take I-94 to Mandan (exit 155), go south on Highway 1806 (6th Ave NE) within the city of Mandan, and visit On-A-Slant Village and then Huff Indian Village, farther south. Plan on at least a half-day to see these two sites, and longer if you wish to visit the cavalry and infantry posts at Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park.**

**Northern Tour**
- Menoken to Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village (15.5 miles)
- Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village to Double Ditch Village (6.6 miles)
- Double Ditch Village to Fort Clark (45 miles)
- Fort Clark to Cross Ranch Preserve (10.5 miles)
- Knife River to Cross Ranch Preserve (31 miles)
- Cross Ranch Preserve to I-94/Mandan (29.6 miles)

**Southern Tour**
- Menoken to Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village (15.5 miles)
- Chief Looking’s (Ward) Village to On-A-Slant Village (2.5 miles)
- On-A-Slant Village to Huff Village (15.3 miles)
Menoken Indian Village State Historic Site

This small settlement is tucked away on a bluff overlooking an abandoned meander of the Missouri River. The most prominent feature at the site is a fortification ditch that encloses a small group of lodge depressions. The ditch forms a highly regular arc around a center point at one corner of the village, and has four prominent bastions along its arc. Oval-shaped lodges occur in the village, and we know from recent study that many lodges burned at the time of abandonment. Once thought to have been the site where the French explorer Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de la Verendrye, first made contact with the Mandan people in 1738, Menoken Village is now known to date in the AD 1200s. Menoken is one of the oldest fortified sites in the region. Research has revealed important details about the origins of the Plains Village lifeway in the Missouri Valley.

Access - The site is directly off I-94, 11 miles east of Bismarck. At Exit 157, go south for 0.1 mile, turn right (east) at the sign for Double Ditch State Historic Site on the frontage road (30th Ave NE); go one mile, then turn left (north) on Hwy 1804 for 3.9 miles; Double Ditch is on the west (left) side of this road.

On-Site Interpretation - Signs are in place. The site is open to the public year-round.

On-Site Interpretation - Interpretive signs relate findings from excavations. This site is open to the public year-round.

Double Ditch Village State Historic Site

Here is the location of one of the most significant historic locations in the Northern Plains. After the Mandans left their homeland at the Heart River, they resettled near the Hidatsa at the Knife River. One Mandan subgroup established the village of Mih-tutta-hang-kusch, known to us as Fort Clark Village, at this location in the early 1820s. They resided there until decimated by smallpox in 1837. The abandoned Mandan village was taken over in 1838 by the Arikaras, who lived here until 1861. Fort Clark Trading Post, one of several important Upper Missouri trade centers, was built near the Mandan village by 1830 and was in continuous operation until 1860. A second trading post-Primeau’s Post-was also built near the village. On the site grounds are remains of 86 circular earthlodges, probably from the Arikara period of occupation, portions of a fortification system, trails, and the foundations and outlines of structures and enclosures that were part of each trading post. For many of the lodges, remains of the entryways are visible on the ground. Like many earthlodges and historic sites, this location should be respected as a cemetery, containing the remains of hundreds of people who lived and died there.

Access - From Double Ditch turn north (left) on ND Hwy 1804 for 22.9 miles. At ND Highway 83 turn left; Washburn is 7.1 miles from this point. Turn left on ND Hwy 200; proceed west for 14 miles. Turn right on ND Hwy 1804; Fort Clark is one mile north.

On-Site Interpretation - Interpretation includes signs with information from past and recent excavations. The site is open to the public year-round.

Indeed, the Missouri Valley area is a very large, well-planned community where perhaps 1,000 or more people once lived. The site’s linear configuration and the community layout is clearly seen on the surface. Depressions marking the locations of more than 100 lodges are arranged roughly in rows, paralleling the rows of their rectangular outlines. The village was sited away from the depressions on the horizon. A large ceremonial lodge faces an open plaza near the center of the settlement. The entire settlement is surrounded by a fortification system consisting of a ditch more than 2,000 feet long with 10 well-defined bastions.

Huff Indian Village State Historic Site

This is a prehistoric Mandan settlement dating to about AD 1450, perhaps the last site before relocating to the Missouri Valley area. The village is a large, well-planned community where perhaps 1,000 or more people once lived. The site’s linear configuration and the community layout is clearly seen on the surface. Depressions marking the locations of more than 100 lodges are arranged roughly in rows, paralleling the rows of their rectangular outlines. The village was sited away from the depressions on the horizon. A large ceremonial lodge faces an open plaza near the center of the settlement. The entire settlement is surrounded by a fortification system consisting of a ditch more than 2,000 feet long with 10 well-defined bastions. Huff Village was probably occupied for a short time after construction of a surrounding fortification system consisting of a ditch more than 2,000 feet long with 10 well-defined bastions. Huff Village was probably occupied for a short time after construction of a surrounding fortification system consisting of a ditch more than 2,000 feet long with 10 well-defined bastions. Huff Village was probably occupied for a short time after construction of a surrounding fortification system consisting of a ditch more than 2,000 feet long with 10 well-defined bastions. Huff Village was probably occupied for a short time after construction of a surrounding fortification system consisting of a ditch more than 2,000 feet long with 10 well-defined bastions. Huff Village was probably occupied for a short time after construction of a surrounding fortification system consisting of a ditch more than 2,000 feet long with 10 well-defined bastions. Huff Village was probably occupied for a short time after construction of a surrounding fortification system consisting of a ditch more than 2,000 feet long with 10 well-defined bastions.

Access - Leaving Fort Abraham Lincoln turn left (south) on ND Hwy 1806; Proceed south for 15.3 miles. The site is on the east side of the highway just south of the Huff. On-Site interpretation - Interpretation includes signs with information about the site from excavations. The site is open to the public year-round.