

South Pass



South Pass was the most important landmark on the Oregon Trail; the key to westward migration. Without South Pass, wagon travel across the continent would have been impossible--and Oregon

and California would probably not have become a part of the United States.

South Pass, elevation 7,550 ft, is a mountain pass on the Continental Divide in the Rocky Mountains in southwestern Wyoming. South Pass marks the halfway point of the Oregon Trail

The pass is a natural gap in the Rockies that is miles wide, filled with prairie and sagebrush, allowing a broad and nearly level route between the Atlantic and Pacific watersheds. The Sweetwater River rises on the east side of the pass and flows into the Atlantic Ocean while Pacific Creek rises on the west side and flows to the Pacific.

At South Pass, emigrants crossed the Continental Divide and the eastern boundary between the United States and Oregon Territory. Before 1849, it was at this point that emigrants left the territory controlled (more or less) by the United States.

Even though the emigrants were now in Oregon Country, there was no reason to celebrate. They were still only half-way to their destination. There were a thousand miles yet to travel.