

Vasco de Gama

Ever since 1416, the dream of Prince Henry of Portugal (known as "the Navigator") had been to round the Cape of Good Hope to find an all water trade route from Portugal to India. However, he did not live to see his dream fulfilled in full. Exploring the southern extremity of the continent of Africa was not accomplished until 1488 when Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope showing that circumnavigating Africa was indeed a feasible way of reaching India. But who had the zeal to fulfill Prince Henry's great ambitious dream? Which Portuguese captain had the courage to sail all the way to India to trade for its valuable commodities? Inspiration from Prince Henry's expeditions and other pioneering voyages fifty years earlier, competition in oceanic exploration from Spain, and the great achievement of rounding of the Cape of Good Hope may have contributed to Vasco da Gama's desire to find an all-ocean route to India.



Vasco da Gama's birth in 1469 in Sines, Portugal is one of the few things known before the voyage to India. We also know that he was the town governor's son, he was educated as a nobleman, and served in the court of the King of Portugal, Joao II, the brother of Prince Henry the Navigator. Although little else is known about Vasco da Gama before his attempt to find a sea route to India, we do know that his father, Estevoa da Gama, was given the task to find the trade route to India but died before he could begin. Tradition has it that King Emanuel then asked Paulo da Gama, Vasco da Gama's brother, to undertake the mission, but Paulo refused. Since the trip was held in high priority because of competition in expansion from Spain's discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus, King Emanuel then looked to Vasco de Gama to complete the mission because of his former experience in the field as a naval officer and because of his merit in the wars against Castile. In 1492 (the same year as Columbus' discovery of the Americas), he had commanded a defence of Portuguese colonies from the French on the coast of Guinea.

Vasco da Gama set out on his historic expedition from Lisbon, Portugal on July 8, 1497 with 170 men and four ships: the *São Gabriel*, the *São Rafael*, the *Berrio*, and a storage ship of unknown name. Ironically, Paulo de Gama, who it is said refused to command the voyage earlier, commanded the *São Rafael*. De Gama's ships rounded the Cape of Good Hope on November 22, 1497. Most of the first part of the trip was uneventful except for one episode when a group of native Africans attacked and wounded five men. However, after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, he narrowly avoided a mutiny because his men wanted to return home. When January came, da Gama's small fleet came into Muslim-controlled water off the coast of East Africa near Mozambique where he employed the help of a pilot from Malindi named Ahmad Ibn Majid who helped to guide them the rest of the way to Calcut, India. At other points along the coast of Mozambique, the Muslims reacted with hostility towards da Gama seeing him as a threat to their trade with India and tried to seize his ships. Finally, on May 20, 1498, Vasco da Gama arrived on India's western shore in Calicut, India (now known as Kozhikode). What had been attempted and dreamed by so many, like Columbus and Prince Henry, had finally been accomplished. At first, he was received well by the Zamorin (Hindu ruler of India) and was taken to the Hindu temple. But after da Gama presented the Zamorin what he felt were inferior gifts, the attitudes towards the newcomers quickly changed; the trade goods that had been accepted in Africa were of little worth in the high-class Indian market. The Muslims' attitude towards the Portuguese

interference also contributed towards the hostility. "Da Gama's arrival aroused the hostility of the Arab traders at Calicut. He was jailed as a pirate and narrowly escaped death. Finally he was allowed to assemble a rich cargo of spices and precious stones."⁶ Finally, the Zamorin agreed to trade spices and gems for Portuguese gold, silver, coral, and scarlet cloth. After his release, he set sail for Lisbon, Portugal in August, 1498 with only 55 of his 170 men - most of whom had died of scurvy. Da Gama and his remaining crew arrived back in Portugal in September, 1499 to be hailed as heroes. King Emanuel made Vasco da Gama a Lord and supplied him with a large income. Economically, the trip was well worth the effort earning a 3000% profit due to inflated prices back in Portugal.⁸

Vasco da Gama returned twice more to India: once to avenge Portuguese merchants who were killed by Muslim traders in 1502 and another time to become the viceroy of India in 1524. When da Gama returned to avenge the deaths of the traders, the King made him an admiral and sent a well-armed fleet of twenty ships.

When Vasco da Gama went out on his second expedition on February 12, 1502, he was prepared for an encounter with the Muslim traders. He set sail with 20 well-armed ships, hoping to force his way into the market and to get revenge on the Muslims for the opposition in 1498. Da Gama killed many innocent Indians and Muslims. In one instance, da Gama waited for a ship to return from Mecca, a Muslim trading and religious center. The Portuguese overtook the ship and seized all the merchandise. Then they locked the 380 passengers in the hold and set the ship on fire. It took four days for the ship to sink, killing all men, women, and children. When da Gama arrived in Calicut on October 30, 1502, the Zamorin was willing to sign a treaty. Da Gama told him that he would have to banish all of the Muslims. To demonstrate his power, da Gama hung 38 fishermen; cut off their heads, feet, and hands; and floated the dismembered corpses onto the shore. Later da Gama bombarded the city with guns and forced his way into the trading system. This led the way for other Portuguese conquests in the East Indies.

Da Gama returned in February, 1503. In 1519, da Gama was made a count. When he was appointed the viceroy of India in 1524, he returned to India for his third and last time. However, he died soon after arriving in Goa in September, 1524. Supposedly, his remains were taken back to Portugal to be buried in the chapel where he had prayed before his first voyage to India.

What was the overall importance of Vasco's voyage and what effect does it have on us today? Not only did it help Portugal's economy, but it helped all of Europe's economy and trade. William Durant asserts that his voyage was one of the causes that helped end the Medieval Ages: "What put an end to the Middle Ages? Many causes, operating through three centuries: the failure of the Crusades; the spreading acquaintance of nascent Europe with Islam; the disillusioning capture of Constantinople; the resurrection of classic pagan culture; the expansion of commerce through the voyages of Henry the Navigator's fleet, and Columbus, and Vasco de Gama; the rise of the business class, which financed the centralization of monarchical government; the development of national states challenging the supernational authority of the popes; the successful revolt of Luther against the papacy; printing."¹¹ Durant also claims that Vasco da Gama's voyage helped one of the greatest commercial revolutions before the invention of the airplane: "The discoveries begun by Henry the Navigator, advanced by Vasco da Gama, culminating in Columbus, and rounded out by Magellan effected the greatest commercial revolution in history before the coming of the airplane."¹² Another outcome of da Gama's voyages was the Muslims' loss of control of the Indian Ocean to the Portuguese in trade. Because of this, many Arab nations entered a state of economic decline. This may have contributed to the period of stagnation that Islam experienced in the seventeenth century. In conclusion, Vasco da Gama's voyage, which sailed from Portugal to navigate around Africa to

find an all ocean trade route with India, had major effects on Europe's economy because of newly opened trade with the riches of India. It also helped to bring an end to the Middle Ages, stopped Muslim superiority in trade in the Indian ocean, and was a significant revolution in trade.

Hernan Cortes



CORTES, Hernan, or Hernando, soldier, born in Medellin, province of Estremadura, Spain, in 1485 ; died near Seville, 2 December, 1547. His parents, Martin Cortes and Catalina Pizarro Altamirano, were both of good family, but in reduced circumstances. He was a sickly child, and at the age of fourteen was sent to the University of Salamanca, but returned home two years later without leave. He then determined upon a life of adventure, and arranged to accompany Nicolas de Ovando, likewise a native of Estremadura, who was about to sail for Santo Domingo to supersede Bobadilla in his command. An accident that happened to him in a love adventure detained him at home, and the expedition sailed without him. He then sought military service under the celebrated

Gonzalo de Cordova, but on his way to Italy was prostrated by sickness in Valencia, where he remained for a year, experiencing great hardship and poverty. Returning to Medellin, he was able in 1504 to sail from San Lucar for Santo Domingo. Ovando received him cordially, and he obtained employment under Diego Valasquez in the suppression of a revolt, on the termination of which he was assigned the control of a large number of Indians, and appointed a notary. He was at this time remarkable for a graceful physiognomy and amiable manner as well as for skill and address in military matters, and he held successively various important offices. In 1511 he accompanied Diego Velasquez, who was sent out by Diego Columbus to subdue and colonize Cuba. Later he held the office of alcalde of Santiago in the new colony, and meanwhile he married Catalina Juarez, a Spanish lady who had come over in the suite of Maria de Toledo, the vice-queen. After his marriage he employed himself and his Indians in getting gold. "How many of them died in extracting this gold for him, God will have kept a better account than I have," says Las Casas. Grijalva, a lieutenant of Velasquez, had just discovered Mexico, but had made no attempt at its settlement.

This displeased the governor, and Cortes was given the command of a new expedition about to start for the conquest of the newly discovered province. At the last moment, Velasquez appears to have regretted the appointment, possibly fearing that Cortes would carry off all the glory as well as the profit of the enterprise, and endeavored to recall the expedition; but Cortes hastened his preparations, and on 18 :Nov., 1518, left Santiago with 10 vessels, 550 Spaniards, nearly 300 Indians, a few Negroes, 10 brass guns, a dozen horses, and some falconets. Collecting stores on his way, he arrived at Trinidad, and later at Havana, at both of which places he found orders from Velasquez depriving him of his command, but in neither place could they be enforced, so, after writing a letter of remonstrance to the governor, he sailed, on 10 February, 1519, for the island of Cozumel, on the coast of Yucatan. On 4 March he first landed on the shores of Mexico, in the province of Tabasco, advancing slowly along the gulf. Sometimes taking measures to conciliate the natives and sometimes spreading terror by arms, he finally reached and took possession of the City of Tabasco. The noise of the artillery, the appearance of the floating fortresses that had transported the Spaniards over the ocean, and the horses on which they fought, all new objects to the natives, inspired them with astonishment, terror, and admiration. At San Juan de Ulua, Cortes first learned that the native ruler was called Montezuma; that he reigned over an extensive empire, which had lasted for three centuries; that thirty vassals called

caciques obeyed him; and that his power and riches were very great. These facts induced him to undertake the conquest of the empire. He laid the foundation of the town of Vera Cruz, and caused himself to be chosen captain-general of the new colony, then burning his ships so as to make retreat impossible, and to augment his army by the seamen, and taking the part of several native tribes against the tax-collectors of Montezuma, thus gaining allies, he set out for the City of Mexico, the residence and capital of Montezuma. The republic of Tlascalala, a province between the coast and the capital, although hostile to Montezuma, opposed Cortes with its forces. After four severe battles, in each of which he defeated large numbers of Tlascalans, he entered the capital City of Tlascalala on 18 September, 1519, and, dictating peace on moderate terms, converted the natives into powerful allies. He endeavored to persuade the Tlascalans to abjure their religion, but in vain, although he succeeded better in prevailing upon them to own themselves vassals of the king of Spain. After a stay of twenty days in this capital he pushed on toward Mexico by Cholula, accompanied by several thousand of his new allies. An attempt was made to check his advance by an ambuscade prepared by the Cholulans at the instance of the Mexicans; but this he escaped, although not until after he had taken vengeance on the Cholulans. He then continued his march, and reached the City of Mexico early in November, at the head of a force consisting of 6,000 natives and a handful of Spaniards. Ambassadors from Montezuma had met Cortes before he entered Tlascalala, and he was now received with great ceremony by the Mexican monarch. The natives, believing him to be a descendant of the sun, prostrated themselves before him, and he was assigned quarters in one of the beautiful palaces of this magnificent city. This he at once fortified so as to prevent surprise or capture, and was considering what plans to pursue in order to possess the wealth of the empire when he was informed that an attack had been made on the garrison at Vera Cruz. The importance of this event was very great, for hitherto the Mexicans had believed the Spaniards to be immortal, and the receipt of the head of one of the soldiers only undeceived them.

Cortes conceived and executed a most brilliant and daring project, which, being successful, doubtless prevented the massacre of the entire Spanish force. Accompanied by his officers, he went at once to the palace of Montezuma, and, taking him prisoner, threatened him with instant death if he in any way appealed to his people; then, having captured the Mexicans who had participated in the attack on Vera Cruz, he burned them alive in front of the imperial palace. Meanwhile he placed Montezuma in irons, and compelled him to acknowledge himself a vassal of Charles V. Caminatzin, the bravest of Montezuma's nephews, was likewise made prisoner, and, with many of the nobles of the empire, induced to take the oath of allegiance to the king of Spain. Soon after the Mexican ruler was restored to a semblance of liberty, but not until he presented Cortes with 600,000 marks of pure gold and a large quantity of precious stones. Scarcely had he accomplished all this when he received intelligence that an army under Narvaez had been sent by Velasquez to compel him to renounce his command. Leaving 200 men in Mexico under the command of a lieutenant whom he recommended to the care of Montezuma as a vassal of Charles V., he marched with 70 men, and, after being joined by 150 more, whom he had left at Cholula, captured Narvaez, who had encamped near the City of the Cempovallans with a force of 900 men, 80 horses, and 10 or 12 pieces of artillery. The defeated troops, after the death of their leader, readily joined the army of Cortes and returned with him to Mexico, where he found that the people had risen against the Spaniards. Montezuma, still a prisoner, endeavored to pacify his subjects, but was attacked by the mob and so injured by stones that he died in a few days. A new emperor was chosen, under whose leadership they attacked the Spaniards and drove them out of the city. Cortes's rear-guard was cut to pieces, and, after a harassing retreat of six days, the Mexicans offered battle on the plains of Otumba.

With the advantages offered by his artillery and fire-arms, Cortes, on 7 July, 1520, gained a great victory, which decided the fate of Mexico. The celebrated nochetriste (or "unhappy night") tree, shown in the illustration, is in the village of Popotla, near an old church in the environs of Mexico. Cortes is said to have sat under this tree lamenting his misfortune after the retreat of the Spaniards during the night of the evacuation. The tree is known by the Indians as the "ahuehuete," and in Spanish is called "sabino." It is a species of cedar and is ten feet in diameter at the base, about forty feet in height, and surrounded by a substantial iron railing. After his success, Cortes proceeded to Tlascala, where he collected an army of natives, and again marched against the City of Mexico, which, after a gallant defense of seventy-seven days, was retaken on 13 August, 1521. The extent of his conquest, due entirely to his genius, valor, and profound but unscrupulous policy, caused his irregularities to be forgiven by his sovereign, who, disregarding the pretensions of Velasquez, appointed Cortes governor and captain-general of Mexico, also conferring on him the marquisate of Oajaca with a considerable revenue. His course of conquest, however, was not such as to conciliate the natives: he was over-zealous to destroy their idols, and anxious to convert them to Christianity, even using force for this purpose. These actions so embittered the Mexicans that, reduced to despair, they again revolted, but in vain. The arms, valor, and zeal of the Spaniards succeeded everywhere. Guatimozin, the new emperor, a man of much greater force than Montezuma, was, with a number of the caciques, accused of conspiring against the conquerors, and was publicly executed with circumstances of great cruelty by Cortes. Meanwhile his successes produced jealousies in Madrid, his ambition and great popularity with the soldiers caused him to be feared, and commissioners were sent to watch his conduct and thwart his proceedings.

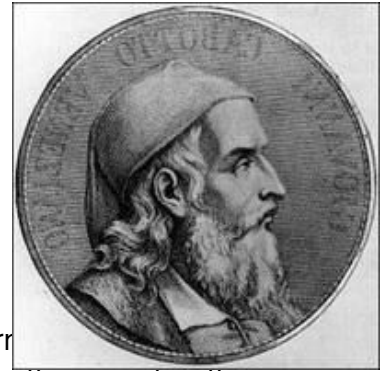
While he was engaged in conquest, his property was seized and his retainers imprisoned and put in irons. Indignant at such treatment, Cortes returned to Spain to appeal to the justice of his master, and presented himself with great splendor before the court. He was received by Charles with every distinction, and decorated with the order of Santiago. Cortes returned to Mexico with 750 new titles and honors, but with diminished power, a viceroy having been intrusted with the administration of civil affairs, although Cortes still retained military authority, with permission to continue his conquests. This division of power led to continual dissension, and caused the failure of several enterprises in which Cortes was engaged; but in 1536 he discovered the peninsula of California and surveyed part of the gulf that separates it from Mexico. Subsequently, however, tired of struggling with unworthy adversaries, he returned to Europe, hoping to confound his enemies. Charles coldly received him; but, concealing his feelings, he served in the disastrous expedition to Algiers in 1541. During this unfortunate campaign, which was his last, he served with great bravery; and, had his advice been heeded, the Spanish arms would have been saved from disgrace, and Europe delivered nearly three centuries earlier from the scourge of organized piracy. On his return he was utterly neglected, and could scarcely obtain an audience. On one occasion he forced his way through a crowd that surrounded the emperor's carriage, and mounted on the doorstep. The emperor, astounded at such audacity, demanded of him who he was. "I am a man," replied Cortes proudly, "who has given you more provinces than your ancestors left you cities." This declaration of services could scarcely fail to offend the proud monarch, and Cortes retired to Seville, where he passed the remainder of his days in solitude. Five letters addressed to Charles V., detailing his conquests, are his only writings.

John Cabot

Giovanni Caboto (Cabots Italian name, other spellings are used as well) was born in Genova, probably around 1451. However, already when he was a child, or maybe a young man, he moved to Venice.

It was probably on hearing of Columbus's discovery of 'the Indies' that he decided to find a route to the west for himself. He went with his plans to England, because:

1. He incorrectly thought the spiceries were coming from northern
2. Because a degree of longitude is shorter the further one is from the equator, the voyage from western Europe to eastern Asia would be shorter on higher latitudes.



King Henry VII gave him a grant *"full and free authoritie, leave, and power, to sayle to all partes, countreys, and seas, of the East, of the West, and of the North, under our banners and ensignes, with five ships ... and as many mariners or men as they will have in saide ships, upon their own proper costes and charges, to seeke out, discover, and finde, whatsoever iles, countreyes, regions or provinces of the heathen and infidelles, whatsoever they bee, and in what part of the world soever they be, whiche before this time have beene unknowen to all Christians."*

Cabot went to Bristol to make the preparations for his voyage. Bristol by then was the second-largest seaport of England, and during the past years (from 1480 onwards) several expeditions had been sent out to look for Hy-Brasil, an island that would lay somewhere in the Atlantic according to Celtic legends. Some people think Newfoundland may have been found on (one of) these voyages.

Cabot left with only one vessel, the *Matthew*, a small ship (50 tuns), but fast and able. The crew consisted of only 18 people. He departed on 20 May, 1497 (he had also made a voyage in 1496, but got no further than Iceland). He sailed to Dursey Head, Ireland, from where he sailed due west to Asia - or so he thought. He landed on the American east coast at 24 June, 1497. I would have liked to be more precise, but his landing-place is a matter of much controversy. He went ashore to take possession of the land, and explored the coast for some time, probably departing at 20 July. On the homeward travel his sailors thought they were going too far north, so Cabot sailed a more southerly course, reaching Brittany instead of England. At 6 August he arrived back in Bristol.

Back in England Cabot got well rewarded (a pension of 20 pounds a year), and a patent was written for a new voyage. The next year, 1498, he departed again, with 5 ships this time. Except for one of the ships, that soon after depart made for an Irish port because of distress, nothing was heard of the expedition, or of John Cabot, ever since.

As I said before, Cabot's landfall is still unknown, because of lack of evidence. Many experts think it's on Cape Breton Island, but others look for it in Newfoundland, Labrador or Maine. We'll probably never know the truth.

John's son Sebastian later made a voyage to North America, looking for the northwest passage (1508), and one to repeat Magellan's voyage around the world, which ended up looking for silver along the River Plate (1525-8). About the 1508 voyage little is known, and Morison doubts whether it really has taken place, suggesting it might be nothing more than bluff.

In 1498-1500 a few Portuguese travels, Miguel and Gaspar Corte-Real being the most famous participants, visited Greenland, Labrador and Newfoundland. In 1501-5 an English syndicate,

consisting of 3 Azoreans and 2 English traders, made voyages to Newfoundland. From 1504, if not before, Breton, Basque, Portuguese and English fishermen crossed the ocean to catch fish on the Newfoundland banks.

Jacques Cartier



Jacques Cartier was born in St. Malo (France) in 1491. Not much is known of his life before 1534, when he departed on his first voyage. He was looking for a passage through or around North America to East Asia, as some had done before him, and many would after him.

He made the crossing of the Atlantic in only twenty days, and landed on an island near the coast of Newfoundland, by then already much frequented by Breton fishermen. He sailed north, and entered the Strait of Belle Isle. He sailed into the Bay of St. Lawrence and along the westcoast of Newfoundland, and crossed the Bay to the Magdalen Islands and Prince Edward Island, both of which he thought part of the

mainland. He explored the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Bay of Fundy, the Miramichi Bay and Gaspé peninsula. There he saw 50 canoes filled with Indians who seemed friendly and greeted him with the words *napeu tondamen assanran* (we want to make friendship). The next day the French and the Micmac traded and celebrated. Cartier explored the bay, being disappointed that it was not the straight to China he had hoped it to be. He also met a fishing party of 200 Hurons, led by their chief, Donnacona. His sons, Domagaia and Taignagny, went to France with Cartier to become interpreters. Cartier explored Anticosti Island and returned to France.

As he had heard of a large river further to the west, and hoped it to be the sought-for northeast passage, Cartier departed on a second voyage in the next year. He sailed through the Strait of Belle Isle again, but this time followed the coast westward, and reached the St. Lawrence. He sailed upriver until the Huron village of Stadacona (at the location of present-day Quebec). Donnacona first greeted him friendly and solemnly, but refused to let him sail further west. Three medicin men dressed up as devils, and warned Cartier not to go further, but Cartier just laughed at it. He went further upriver, leaving the two Huron boys behind.

He reached Hochelaga, another Huron village. Again their coming resulted in extensive festivities. Cartier climbed a mountain he called Mount Réal (royal mountain), and was appointing when he saw the rapids a bit upriver, which told him that this was not the passage to China. He spent the winter in Stadacona. During the winter his men suffered from scurvy, less than ten of his 110 men remained strong enough, and had to get food and water for all. Because he was afraid that the indians would attack if they learned that the French were ill, Cartier ordered his men to make noise when they were near. The expedition might well not have survived if it were not for Domagaia. Domagaia had scurvy too, but ten days later Cartier saw him healthy and well. Domagaia told him he had cured from the bark and needles of the white cedar tree. Just over one week later the tree was bare, but all Cartier's men were healthy again. The Hurons told him stories about a land in the north, called Saguenay, full of gold and other treasure. None of this was true of course, but the Hurons liked telling stories, and when they found the French liked stories of riches, they were happy to give them these. Willing to let king Francis I to hear about these stories, Cartier kidnapped Donnacona and his sons, and took them with him to France.

He wanted to make another expedition, this time to look for Saguenay, but because of a war with Spain, and the difficulties of preparing the voyage, he was not able to do so until 1541. This time Cartier would not be the sole leader of the expedition, but had to serve under Jean-Francois de la Rocque, sieur de Roberval. He visited Stadacona, and built a fort near the mouth of the Saguenay. His men collected what they thought were diamonds and gold, but in

reality were only quartz and iron pyrite (fool's gold). Cartier himself went west, looking for Saguenay, but got no further than Hochelaga.

Back at his fort (called Charlesbourg-Royal) he spent the winter. Some thirty-five of his men were killed in sporadic Indian attacks (the Hurons had become hostile when they realized the French had come to stay), and Cartier was worried about the fact that Roberval did not show up. The next spring he met Roberval on Newfoundland. Roberval wanted him to return, but Cartier refused, and sneaked back to France. Roberval built a fort near Stadacona, wintered there, went looking for Saguenay but also got no further than Hochelaga, and returned to France. Cartier spent the rest of his life in St.-Malo and his nearby estate, and died in 1557, aged 66.

Francisco Vázquez de Coronado

Spanish, born in Salamanca, ca. 1510, died in Mexico City, 1554.

Coronado was governor of New Galicia (contemporary Sinaloa and Nayarit, Mexico). As such he had already sent out Fray Marcos de Niza on a voyage to the north, to New Mexico. When Marcos returned he told about a wealthy, golden city, called Cibola. Of course this raised Coronado's interest, and he decided to try to get that gold. He set out in 1540, joined by a large expedition of 340 Spanish, 300 Indian allies, and 1000 slaves, both native Americans and Africans.

He followed the coast of the Gulf of California northward to the Sonora, then the Sonora, and crossed the Gila to Cibola, in the west of present-day New Mexico. He was met by disappointment. Cibola was nothing like the great golden city Fray Marcos had described, it was just a simple pueblo of the Zuni Indians. Marcos was sent back to Mexico in disgrace.

Coronado conquered Cibola, and explored the other six Zuni pueblos. He also sent out various expeditions. Melchior Diaz was sent out to the mouth of the Colorado, to meet Hernando de Alarcón who would be shipping supplies for Coronado. Pedro de Tovar was sent northwest, and heard of a great river further west. Garcia Lopez de Cardenas was sent out to find this river, and found himself being the first European to see the magnificent Grand Canyon. Hernando de Alvarado was sent east, and found villages around the Rio Grande. Coronado set up his winter quarters in one of them, Tiguex (present-day Bernalillo near Albuquerque). During his wintering he suffered from fierce attacks by the Indians.

He met an Indian, which he called "the Turk", who told him about Quivira, a rich country in the northwest. He decided to look for Quivira, taking the Turk as his guide. He traversed the Texan panhandle, and marched on further north. However, the Turk was found lying about the route, or at least Coronado thought he did so, and was executed. Other guides led him further to Quivira, and he reached a village near present-day Lindsborg, Kansas. But his disappointment was repeated: The Quivira Indians (later known as Wichita) were no rich people at all, the village consisted mostly of thatched huts, and not even small amounts of gold could be found. Coronado returned to Tiguex, where his main force had remained behind. Here he spent another winter.

In 1542 he went back to Mexico through roughly the same route he had come. Only 100 of his men came back with him. Although the expedition was a complete failure, he remained governor of New Galicia until 1544, then retired to Mexico City, where he died in 1554.



Henry the Navigator



Henry was born in 1394 as one of the sons of the Portuguese King John I, founder of the Aviz dynasty. In 1415 he and his brothers led the Portuguese army in the conquest of Ceuta, a Muslim stronghold in Morocco. There he learned about the riches of Africa. He started studying the geography, riches and trade of western Africa.

Prince Henry decided to try to give Portugal a share in these riches. Holding Ceuta did not work - it used to be one of the richest caravan cities, but that was lost once it had become christian. The only way would be to go around the Muslim territory, directly to the lands where the gold, silver, and many more products came from themselves.

Henry was looking for a sea route to India, but, although he might have seen, this certainly wasn't the main reason for his expeditions. Far more important was the wish to take part of the West-African trade. Another important goal was to find Prester John, a christian king that was rumoured to hold a large empire somewhere in Africa. If he would contact Prester John, perhaps together they could gain a decisive victory over the muslims. Prince Henry was a crusader at least as much as a discoverer.

Henry established himself in Sagres, on the southwestern tip of Europe, far away from the court in Lisbon. There he brought together several important cartographers and instrument-makers. New, more precise maps were created, sailors got lessons in navigatory techniques, and a new type of ship was developed, the caravel, that combined cargo capability, manoeuverability and seaworthiness, and thus was the ideal ship for exploring. Lagos, near Sagres, became a center for shipbuilding. The Age of Discovery was ready to get started.

He started sending out ships southward along the African westcoast. However, none of his men dared to go beyond Cape Bojador, a tiny cape somewhat south of the Canaries. They were afraid that beyond Cape Bojador the sea was so undeeep that even one league (almost 5 kilometres) out of the coast, the sea was only 1 fathom (2 metres deep), that the currents were so strong that no ship would ever return and that the sun would burn so hot that no life could survive on the land. From 1424 to 1434 Henry sent out 15 expeditions, all of which did not dare to pass the Cape.

Then, in 1433, a squire called Gil Eannes made an attempt. He too was too afraid, however, and returned empty-handed. Finally Henry's patience had run out, and he made Eannes swear to go south again, and this time not to return without having passed the infamous cape. This time Eannes succeeded into doing what so many before him failed to do. To avoid the shallows near the Cape, he sailed westward into the open sea, and when he turned east again, he found himself on the south side of the Cape. He found the country desolate, but not deprived of all living. Finally the barrier of fear had been broken. Eannes deserves to have his name to be among those of the most important explorers of our world.

From this time on Henry's men reached further south, every year (well, not really, sometimes one or more years were missed when troubles within the Portuguese royalty or fights with the Muslims took too much of prince Henry's time) going a bit further south:

1435: Eannes and Afonso de Baldaya get 50 leagues further south, and see traces of people.

1436: Baldaya reaches Rio de Oro.

1441: Nuno Tristão and Antao Gonçalves reach Cape Blanco and capture two natives.

1444: Eannes captures 200 slaves near Cape Blanco. Beginning of the European slave trade.

1445: Dinis Dias rounds Cape Verde.

It was around this time that Henry's voyages began to bear fruit. Slaves and seals, and later other trade articles as well, began to be sailed from the African Coast to Portugal. An important view on the Portuguese trading voyages can be got from Alvise da Cadamosto, a Venetian trader who took part in the voyages to contemporary Senegal, and wrote a book on his voyages. He might also be the discoverer of the Capeverdeian Islands.

By the time Prince Henry died, in 1460, the Portuguese had reached Cape Palmas (Liberia), and a trading post had been established in Arguim (an island near Cape Verde).



Juan Ponce de León

Juan Ponce de León conquered the island of Puerto Rico, discovered Florida, explored its coast and made a failed attempt to start a settlement there.

Juan Ponce de León was born somewhere around 1460 in San Tervás de Campos, León, from impoverished nobility. He first visited the New World on Columbus's second voyage in 1493, and settled there in 1502.

After a governorship of Higüey (on Hispaniola), in 1508 he left to conquer an island further east, which he called *San Juan de Puerto Rico* (now Puerto Rico). He established a colony, and brought the island under Spanish rule. In 1509 he was named governor of Puerto Rico, but in 1511 he was relieved from this duty for political reasons.

For his next exploit, Ponce de León set out to find an island rumored to lie north of Cuba, called Bimini. About Bimini there were legends going around of a Fountain of Youth. Someone who drank from this fountain was said to be cured of all his illnesses and to retain his youth. Ponce de León may well have hoped to find this fountain.

Ponce de León left Puerto Rico on 3 March 1513, sailing in a northwestern direction, skirting the Bahamas. On 27 March, he first saw the mainland of Florida, which he called *Tierra La Florida*, because he discovered it on Palm Sunday (Pascua Florida in Spanish). On 2 April he landed, just north of present-day St. Augustine, and remained there for six days.

Ponce de León and his pilot, Antón de Alaminos, who would pilot several more voyages of discovery and in his time was the person best acquainted with the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, followed the coast southward, rounded the Florida keys, and explored Florida's west coast northward, possibly as far as Pensacola Bay, before returning to Puerto Rico.

The expedition was an important one. Not only was Ponce de León the first European of whom we are certain he visited the territory of what is now the United States, but also he had found the Bahama Channel, which gave a shorter route between Cuba and Europe. Alaminos, who had noticed the unusually strong contrary current at Florida's south coast, is now considered the discoverer of the Gulf Stream.

The king honored Ponce de León with a knighthood and governorship of Florida, but it would take until 20 February 1521 before he left from Puerto Rico with an expedition to colonize what Ponce de León still thought was the island of Florida. He landed on the west coast, and attempted to establish a colony, which was probably either near the mouth of Caloosahatchee River, or on Sanibel Island. However, the fledgling colony soon suffered from Indian attacks, and had to be abandoned. Ponce de León himself had been mortally wounded, and he died shortly after arrival back in Havana (Cuba), in July 1521.

Ferdinand Magellan



The first circumnavigation of the globe was led by Ferdinand Magellan. He was born in the spring of 1480 to a family of lower nobility. Educated in the Portuguese court, Magellan proved himself in many battles in the name of his country. Like Columbus before him, Magellan believed he could get to the Spice Islands by sailing west. He knew he would have to sail around or through the New World to do so. Like so many explorers before him, he thought the earth was much smaller than it actually is. Snubbed by the Portuguese king, Magellan easily convinced the teenaged Spanish king, Charles I (also known as the Holy Roman emperor Charles V) that at least some of the Spice Islands lay in the Spanish half of the undiscovered world.

King Charles I approved Magellan's plan and granted him generous funds on March 22, 1518. With money from the king, the explorer was able to obtain five ships (possibly *naos*) called the *Trinidad*, the *San Antonio*, the *Concepcion*, the *Victoria*, and the *Santiago*. In September [1519], he set sail with 270 men.

A good deal of what we know of the voyage of Magellan came from an Italian crewmember, Antonio Pigafetta. Pigafetta kept a diary of the voyage and remained a staunch supporter of the Portuguese explorer. Like Columbus, Magellan was a foreigner in charge of Spanish captains, and like Columbus, his voyage was fraught with problems. Spanish captains Juan de Cartegena of the *San Antonio*, Gaspar de Quesada of the *Concepcion*, and Luis de Mendoza of the *Victoria* were plotting to kill Magellan.

After a brief stop at the Canary Islands, Magellan's fleet set sail for Brazil on a southwest course. Cartegena, the ringleader of a mutiny attempt, was relieved of his command of the *San Antonio* and held prisoner aboard the *Victoria*. After crossing the equator on November 20, 1519, the crew sighted Brazil on December 6. Magellan thought it unwise to go near the Portuguese territory since he was sailing under the Spanish flag. His fleet eventually anchored off the coast of present-day Rio de Janeiro, out of the way of the Portuguese, on December 13th. After stocking up on fresh food and water, the fleet made its way down the east coast of South America looking for a passage to the Pacific Ocean. The farther south they sailed, the colder the weather. The weather was so bad, the fleet decided to spend the winter in Patagonia. The area where they settled on March 31, 1520, was called San Julian.

When Magellan reached Patagonia (present-day Argentina), another mutiny was attempted. Cartegena, released by captain Mendoza, attempted once again to take over the fleet and have Magellan killed. The Portuguese explorer was able to put down the rebellion by marooning Cartegena in the barren Patagonia, imprisoning some, and having Quesada and other rebels executed.

The strait was a tricky passage that took the fleet 38 days to pass through. While sailing at night, the crew saw countless fires from distant Indian camps. They called the land Tierra del Fuego (land of fire). During the passage, the captain of the *San Antonio* sailed his ship back toward Spain, taking with him most of the fleet's provisions. The loss of the *San Antonio* was a severe

blow to the men on the remaining ships. They had to double their efforts to hunt game and fish to keep from starving.

During the last week of November the three ships emerged from the strait to the open sea of the Pacific. Magellan mistakenly thought the Spice Islands were a short voyage away. He had no idea of the immense size of the ocean and thought he could cross it in two to three days. The voyage took approximately four months.

Conditions aboard the ships were abominable. The crew began to starve as food stores were depleted. The water turned putrid and yellow in color. The crew survived on sawdust, leather strips from the sails, and rats. Without the benefit of vitamin C in fresh fruits and vegetables, the men also came down with scurvy.

Finally in January, 1521, the crew stopped off at an island to feast on fish, crabs, and seabird eggs, but without fresh fruit and vegetables, scurvy still plagued the crew. In March, the crew stopped in Guam and were able to supply the ships with food including fresh fruit, vegetables, and water. They sailed on to the Philippines, arriving on March 28. After befriending an island king, Magellan foolishly got involved in the natives' tribal warfare and was killed in battle on [April 27, 1521].

Sebastian del Cano took over the remaining three ships and 115 survivors. Because there were not enough men to crew three ships, del Cano had the *Concepcion* burned. The two remaining ships sailed from the Philippines on May 1 and made it to the Moluccas (Spice Islands) in November. Both ships loaded with valuable spices.

Francis Drake

The second circumnavigation of the globe was accomplished by a pirate-turned-explorer named Francis Drake. Born in 1540, Drake was destined to become an adventurer, pirate, and expert seaman.

During his lifetime, England and Spain were bitter rivals. Seeing Spain amassing a vast empire to the west, Queen Elizabeth I of England sent Drake on a mission to explore and to seek treasure and spices. This meant that the explorer would have to harass England's rivals in Spanish-held territory. He set sail from England in [1577] with 165 crewmen and five ships, the *Pelican* (later renamed the *Golden Hind*), the *Marigold*, the *Elizabeth*, the *Swan*, and the *Christopher*. Like Magellan, Drake and his crew suffered hardships such as storms at sea, starvation, illness, and attempted mutinies.



He abandoned two of his ships off the coast of South America and was separated from the other two ships in the Straits of Magellan. He was able to establish that the Tierra del Fuego area was an island and not a continent, as many Europeans believed following Magellan's expedition. Drake plundered Spanish shipping in the Caribbean and in Central America and loaded his ship with treasure to take back to Queen Elizabeth.

In June, 1579, Drake landed off the coast of present-day California and sailed as far north as the area that would become the United States-Canadian border. He then turned southwest and crossed the Pacific Ocean in two months time. It took another year to make his way through the Indies, across the Indian Ocean, around the Cape of Good Hope and back to England. Upon arrival, the queen knighted Drake aboard the *Golden Hind*.

Sir Francis Drake devoted the rest of his life to the harassment of the Spanish. He mounted another expedition to the Caribbean and led the attack on the Great Spanish Armada. He died from dysentery near Panama in 1596.

James Cook



James Cook was born on October 27, 1728, in Marton-in-Cleveland, Yorkshire, England. He was the son of a farmer of Scottish descent. As a young teenager, Cook was apprenticed to a seafaring family. In 1755, he joined Great Britain's Royal Navy and soon proved himself an expert navigator. Just after making officer rank, Lieutenant Cook was chosen by the Royal Society of London to undertake a scientific journey to Tahiti to observe and document the planet Venus as it passed between the earth and the sun. These observations would help scientists calculate the distance of the earth from the sun.

On October 12, 1769, Cook departed England aboard the *Endeavour* with 94 crewmen and scientists. He was carrying secret orders from the Royal Navy to be opened upon completion of his scientific mission.

Cook was determined to keep his crew healthy. He insisted his men eat onions and pickled cabbage every day, and made sure that the ship kept fresh fruit and vegetables on board. He ordered his men to bathe every day, to clean their clothing, and to air out their bedding. He did not know the scientific reasons behind these measures, but he knew they worked to prevent scurvy and other diseases in his crew.

On April 11, 1769, the *Endeavour* arrived on the shores of Tahiti, seven weeks early. After viewing the passing of Venus between the earth and sun for several weeks, Cook opened a sealed envelope with the Royal Navy's orders. He was to seek out the fabled southern continent and claim it for England. Early mapmakers in the 1570s assumed there were two major continents at each of the earth's poles. Dutch explorers searched for the southern continent in the seventeenth century. Since the continents had not yet been found, the Royal Navy trusted that Cook would find the southern one if it existed. He left Tahiti on July 13 and headed southwest.

When Cook reached New Zealand on October 6, the native Maori people proved to be unfriendly and his crew was forced to fire on them. The *Endeavour* spent a few months exploring New Zealand and proved it was not part of the great southern continent. On April 9, [1770], Cook explored and documented the location of Australia. While sailing around this great continent, the *Endeavour* ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef (extending 150 miles from Australia's northeast coast and the largest reef in the world) on June 11. It took a day to free the ship after the crew threw fifty tons of ship's ballast, iron cannons, firewood, and barrels overboard. Once free, the crew quickly made repairs to the badly leaking ship to keep it from sinking. After months of exploring the coastline of Australia, Cook concluded that this continent was not the great southern continent.

The *Endeavour* made its way to Java in the East Indies in October, 1770. Once there, Cook's men became very ill with Malaria and dysentery. Despite all his efforts to keep his crew safe and healthy, they were no match for these diseases. He lost 30 men and had to sign on new crew in South Africa in order to make it back home to England. The *Endeavour* made it back to Dover, England, on July 13, 1771, after a three-year voyage. Cook was formally presented to his majesty, King George III following the historic journey and made a naval commander.

Cook's Second Voyage

Cook's second voyage began on July 13, 1772 from Plymouth, England. He took two *Whitby*

colliers (refitted coal ships), the *Resolution* and the *Adventure*. The *Adventure* measured 97 feet in length with 80 crewmen and scientists aboard. The *Resolution*, Cook's flagship, was 111 feet in length with 110 crewmen and scientists aboard. His orders were to find the southern continent. His plan was to search for the continent and circumnavigate the globe. He was bound to find the fabled continent this way.

Prior to Cook's day, an accurate measurement of longitude was virtually impossible. There was no way to determine the exact time of day, the ship's position, and the exact time at a fixed point on shore. After 1735, a device invented by Englishman John Harrison made this possible. He invented a sea clock called a chronometer, which kept perfect time under rough sea conditions. Because of this instrument, Cook was one of the first ship's commanders to know his exact position on the globe while sailing uncharted seas. He carried four chronometers aboard the *Resolution* and the *Adventure*.

The ships headed south around the Cape of Good Hope and toward Antarctica. They crossed the Antarctic Circle for the first time in January 1773. Too much ice blocked Cook's way to find the continent of Antarctica and eventually his ships headed for warmer waters to the east.

After stops in New Zealand and Tahiti, Cook discovered more islands in the south Pacific. By November 1773, the *Resolution* was underway once again in search of the southern continent. After reaching the Antarctic Circle in January 1774, Cook had sailed farther south than any other explorer. But he never sighted the continent of Antarctica. Having been separated from its sister ship, the *Adventure* made its way back to England. Cook returned to warmer waters and continued explorations of the Pacific. He arrived back in England on July 29, 1775.

Cook's Final Voyage

Cook's final voyage began on July 12, 1776. He was aboard the *Resolution* with a crew of 112. His sister ship was the *Discovery* with 70 men aboard. The purpose of his third voyage was to find the fabled Northwest Passage. Unlike other explorers who attempted to find this area of the world, Cook attempted a route from the Pacific side. Cook visited some of his favorite islands in the Pacific and made stops in New Zealand and Tahiti.

On January 18, [1778], Cook sighted the Hawaiian Islands for the first time. He named them the Sandwich Islands after his friend, the Earl of Sandwich. The natives rowed out to meet his ships and were very friendly. After discovering so many islands in the Pacific where the people had a common language and similar customs, Cook marveled at how the Polynesian people had spread themselves from island to island. Europeans were not the only ocean-faring people. Indeed, the Polynesians had made their own explorations thousands of years before. The Hawaiians thought that Cook was a god and that his men were supernatural beings.

After two weeks of trading and good relations, the ships departed heading north. By March 7, Cook reached the coast of present-day Oregon and followed the coastline north to Alaska and west through the Bering Strait. By August, Cook concluded there was no Northwest Passage and decided to head for warmer waters for the winter.

By January 17, [1779], the two ships once again landed off the shores of the Hawaiian Islands. The Englishmen appeared to have worn out their welcome with the natives. Tensions were increasing as Captain Cook decided to depart the islands on February 4. As fate would have it, a storm broke the foremast of the *Resolution* and Cook was forced to return to the Hawaiian Islands on February 11 to make repairs. The natives were not happy to see the visitors once again. One of the ship's boats was stolen, and Cook took a Hawaiian chief as hostage until the boat was returned.

On February 14, Cook was heading back to his ship with his hostage when he and his men were surrounded by shouting, angry natives. As Cook signaled his boats off shore to come in to assist, he was stabbed in the back by one of the natives. As he fell, dozens of natives attacked his body with knives and clubs.

The contributions of James Cook were extraordinary. He was the first explorer to map the coastline of Australia. He charted much of the Pacific Ocean and discovered several island groups. He used a chronometer to chart his exact position on the globe. He was one of the first sea captains to discover the cure for scurvy. He sailed farther south than any other explorer before him, and he proved once and for all that there was no Northwest Passage.