

Age of Exploration Timeline for Kids

About 1420 to 1534

Long ago, people in Europe did not know how big the world was. Brave sailors set out in small wooden ships to find out. This timeline shows where they went and what they found.



About 1420

Prince Henry's Sailors

Prince Henry of Portugal sends ships south along the coast of Africa. His sailors make maps of what they see.

Why it matters: Each trip went a little farther. Sailors learned to trust their ships on the open sea.



1488

Around the Tip of Africa

Bartolomeu Dias sails all the way around the southern tip of Africa. Storms push his ships far out to sea first.

Why it matters: Now sailors knew there was a way to sail from Europe to Asia.



1492

Columbus Crosses the Ocean

Christopher Columbus sails west across the Atlantic Ocean with three ships. He lands on islands near North America. He thinks he is in Asia.

Why it matters: People called the Taino already lived there. Life changed for them, and many were harmed. Europe now knew about lands it had never seen.



1498

A Sea Road to India

Vasco da Gama sails around Africa and reaches India. The trip takes about ten months.

Why it matters: Ships could now carry spices and cloth from Asia to Europe by sea.

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1519

Magellan Sets Out

Ferdinand Magellan leaves Spain with five ships. He wants to reach Asia by sailing west.

Why it matters: No one had ever tried to sail all the way around the world.



1522

Around the World

One ship from Magellan's trip, the Victoria, comes home to Spain. Magellan died on the way, and only 18 sailors return.

Why it matters: It was the first trip all the way around the world. It showed how big the Earth is.



1534

Up a Great River

Jacques Cartier sails from France to what is now Canada. He explores the land near a great river, the St. Lawrence.

Why it matters: France later built towns there. Many people in Canada speak French today.

Words to know

explore: to travel to a place to learn about it

coast: the land next to the sea

voyage: a long trip by ship

spices: parts of plants, like pepper, used to flavor food