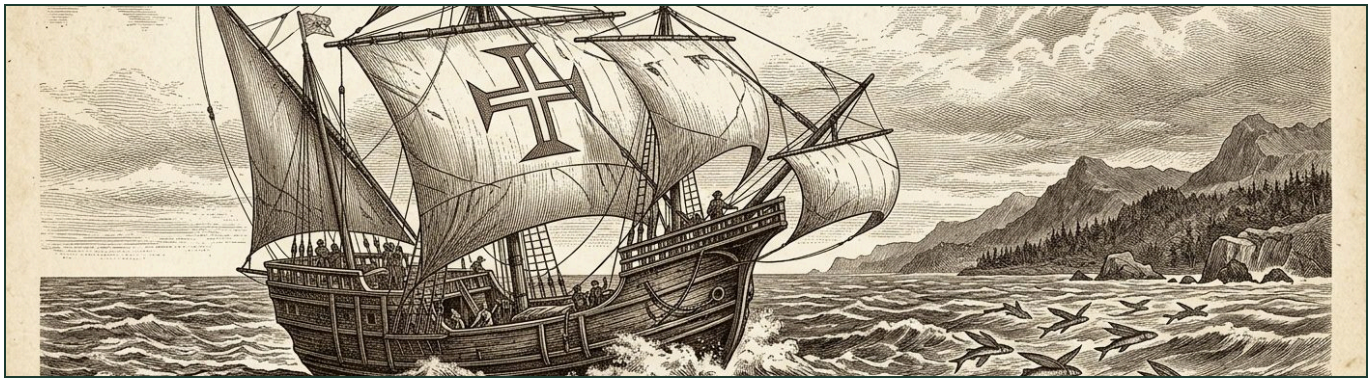


1400 – 1600

Age of Exploration Timeline

The Age of Exploration was the period when European sailors mapped the world, opening sea routes to Asia, reaching the Americas, and beginning a new era of global trade — and colonization.

1418 — **Portugal Pioneers Exploration**

Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal establishes a school of navigation and funds expeditions down the African coast.

> **Why it mattered:** *Portugal pioneered ocean exploration, developing the ships, charts, and navigational tools that made long sea voyages possible — an investment over many decades that changed the world.*

1488 — **Dias Rounds Africa**

Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias becomes the first European to sail around the southern tip of Africa.

> **Why it mattered:** *Rounding the Cape of Good Hope proved that Europe and Asia could be connected by sea — breaking the Arab monopoly on the spice trade and launching a new age of commerce.*

1492 — **Columbus Reaches the Americas**

Christopher Columbus, sailing for Spain, crosses the Atlantic and reaches islands in the Caribbean on October 12.

> **Why it mattered:** *Columbus's voyages opened permanent contact between Europe and the Americas — transforming both worlds and beginning two centuries of European colonization of the Western Hemisphere.*

1498 — **Da Gama Reaches India**

Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama sails around Africa and reaches India, completing the first sea route from Europe to Asia.

> **Why it mattered:** *Da Gama's route made Portugal enormously wealthy and broke the overland trade monopoly, opening a new era of direct European commerce with Asia.*

Age of Exploration Timeline *continued*

1507 — **America Named**

German mapmaker Martin Waldseemuller publishes a map naming the new continents America, after Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci.

> **Why it mattered:** *The name stuck — the continents that Columbus had called the Indies were now called America in print, fixing the word permanently in world geography.*

1513 — **Balboa Sees the Pacific**

Spanish explorer Vasco Nunez de Balboa crosses Panama and becomes the first European to see the Pacific Ocean from the Americas.

> **Why it mattered:** *Seeing the Pacific from the Americas suggested the true scale of the globe — between Europe and Asia lay two enormous continents and an ocean no European had yet crossed.*

1519–22 — **Magellan Circumnavigates the Globe**

Ferdinand Magellan's expedition sets sail to circle the world; Magellan is killed in the Philippines, but his crew completes the voyage.

> **Why it mattered:** *Circumnavigating the globe showed the true size of the Earth and that its oceans are connected — one of the most transformative voyages in human history.*

1521 — **Conquest of the Aztec Empire**

Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes conquers the Aztec Empire in Mexico, claiming it for Spain.

> **Why it mattered:** *Spain gained vast wealth, but millions of indigenous people died from war and European diseases — the conquest was the beginning of the end for pre-Columbian civilizations.*

1532 — **Conquest of the Inca Empire**

Francisco Pizarro conquers the Inca Empire in South America with a small force of Spanish soldiers.

> **Why it mattered:** *Spain now controlled most of Central and South America, extracting enormous wealth while devastating indigenous civilizations through war, disease, and forced labor.*

~1600 — **A Connected World**

European nations have established trade routes and colonies across Africa, Asia, and the Americas, linking the world economy for the first time.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Age of Exploration created the first truly global economy — but also brought colonization, disease that devastated indigenous peoples, and the Atlantic slave trade.*