

VASCO DA GAMA

Vasco da Gama was a Portuguese explorer and one of the most successful explorers in the European Age of Discovery. Da Gama was the commander of the first ships to sail directly from Europe to India. He went south from Europe, staying close to the African coastline until he sailed around the southern tip of Africa. Da Gama and his crew then turned north toward India.

This eventually began a lucrative trade route between India and Europe that brought great wealth to Portugal. For a short time in 1524 Da Gama was made Governor of Portuguese India under the title of Viceroy.



Map of Da Gama's Voyage to India and Back

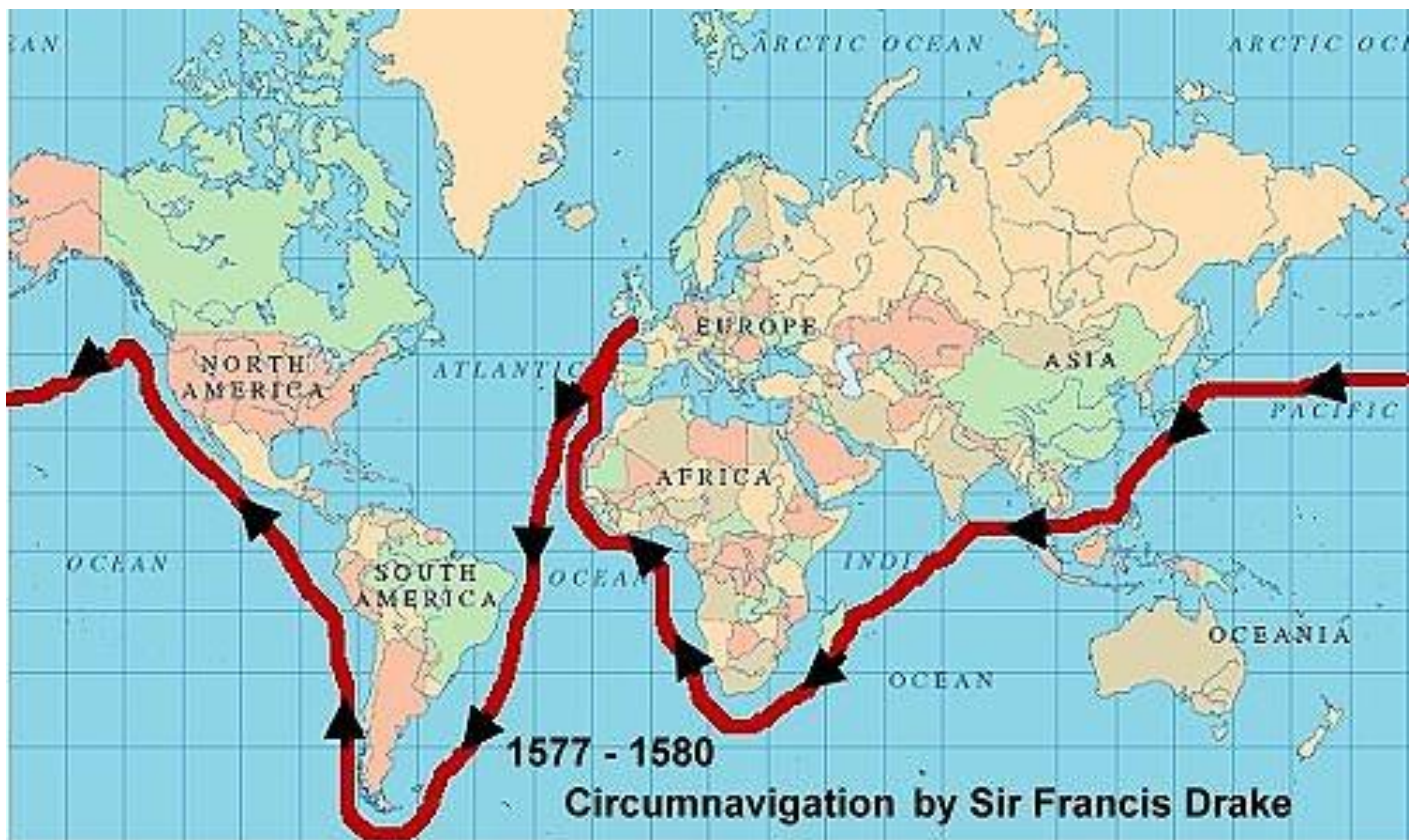


FRANCIS DRAKE



Francis Drake was an English sea captain, privateer, and pirate of the Elizabethan era. Elizabeth I of England awarded Drake a knighthood in 1581. He was second-in-command of the English fleet when it famously defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588. This forever made England dominant of Spain on the seas. His exploits were legendary, making him a hero to the English but a pirate to the Spaniards to whom he was known as El Draque, 'Draque' being the Spanish pronunciation of 'Drake'. He is most famous for being the first Englishman to successfully sail around the world from 1577 to 1580.

He died of dysentery in January 1596 after unsuccessfully attacking San Juan, Puerto Rico.



JACQUES CARTIER



Cartier was a French explorer who claimed present-day Canada for France in 1534. He was the first European to describe and map the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and the shores of the Saint Lawrence River, which he named “The Country of Canadas”, after the Iroquois names for the two big settlements he saw at Stadacona (Quebec City) and at Hochelaga (Montreal Island).

Cartier eventually made 3 separate trips that explored the eastern coast of modern-day Canada. Cartier was also one of the first explorers to formally acknowledge that the New World was a separate land mass from Europe/Asia.



CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS



Columbus was a navigator, colonizer, and explorer from Genoa, Italy whose voyages across the Atlantic Ocean led to general European awareness of the American continents in the Western Hemisphere. He was unable to get funding for his voyages from Italy so he turned to Queen Isabella of Spain. The Spanish gave him money for 4 voyages of exploration and several attempts at establishing a settlement on the island of Hispaniola, . He initiated the process of Spanish colonization which foreshadowed general European colonization of the "New World".

The anniversary of Columbus's 1492 landing in the Americas is usually observed as Columbus Day on October 12 in Spain and throughout the Americas, except Canada. In the United States it is observed annually on the second Monday in October.



FERDINAND MAGELLAN



Magellan was a Portuguese explorer. His expedition of 1519–1522 became the first expedition to sail from the Atlantic Ocean into the Pacific Ocean and the first to cross the Pacific. It also completed the first circumnavigation (meaning going all the way around) of the Earth.

Magellan himself did not complete the entire voyage. When his ship stopped in the Philippines, Magellan was killed during the Battle of Mactan. His crew escaped and finished the voyage, however, and became the first ship to sail around the world.



QUEEN ELIZABETH

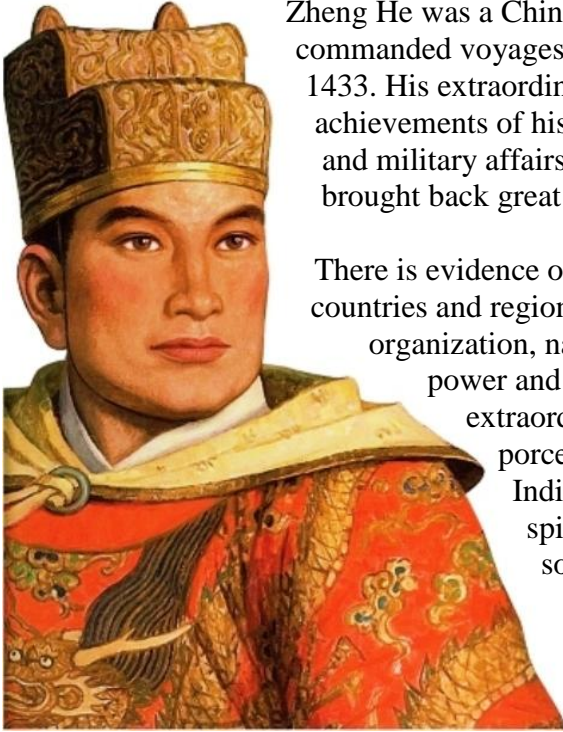
Queen Elizabeth was Queen of England from November 1558 until her death in 1603. Sometimes called The Virgin Queen, Elizabeth was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty. The daughter of Henry VIII, she was born a princess, but her mother, Anne Boleyn, was executed two and a half years after her birth.

Elizabeth supported exploration and funding for the navy. Her leadership and guidance led to the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 associated her name forever with what is popularly viewed as one of the greatest victories in English history. Within 20 years of her death, she was celebrated as the ruler of a golden age, an image that retains its hold on the English people.



She valued exploration and the conquering of new lands. She funded the voyages of Sir Francis Drake that went around the world. In fact Drake was the first English explorer to circumnavigate the world and set the stage for the powerful British empire – which one day would be so vast that “the sun would never set” on it.

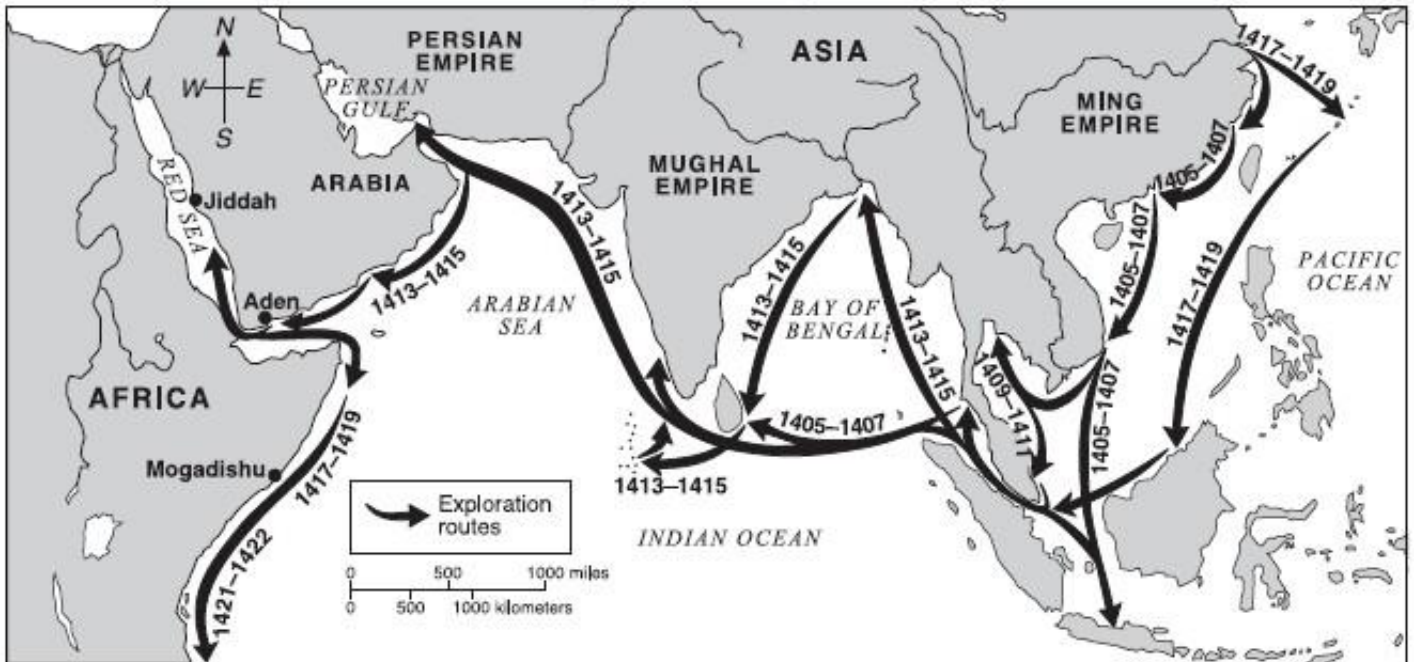
ZHENG HE



Zheng He was a Chinese mariner, explorer, diplomat and fleet admiral, who commanded voyages to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and East Africa from 1405 to 1433. His extraordinary ability and vision found brilliant expression in the great achievements of his life, including maritime exploration, foreign diplomacy, and military affairs. He sailed huge treasure ships to Africa and India and brought back great wealth from these empires for the emperor of China.

There is evidence of Zheng He's visits in over thirty Asian and African countries and regions. These seven voyages, unprecedented in size, organization, navigational technology, and range, demonstrated not only the power and wealth of the Ming Dynasty, but also Zheng He's extraordinary command ability. Loaded with Chinese silk, porcelain, and lacquerware, his ships visited ports around the Indian Ocean. Here, Arab and African merchants exchanged the spices, ivory, medicines, rare woods, and pearls so eagerly sought by the Chinese imperial court.

Voyages of Zheng He



PRINCE HENRY THE NAVIGATOR

Prince Henry the Navigator was not himself an explorer. He was Prince of the Kingdom of Portugal and an important figure in the early days of the Portuguese Empire. He was responsible for the early development of European exploration and maritime trade with other continents.

Henry encouraged his father to conquer Ceuta (1415), the Muslim port on the North African coast across the Straits of Gibraltar from the Iberian peninsula. He learnt of the opportunities from the Saharan trade routes that passed through there, and became fascinated with Africa in general.

Henry opened a school for navigators and map-makers in Portugal to help exploration. He employed cartographers to chart the coast of Mauritania after the voyages he sent there. It was thanks to his efforts that Portuguese explorers were able to achieve so much.

