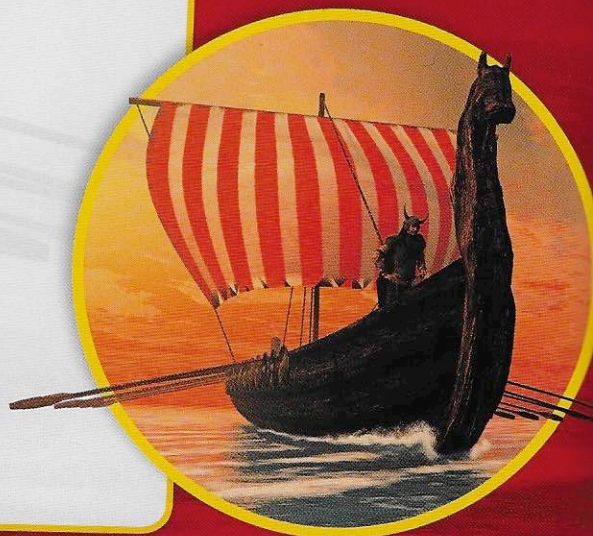


Leif Eriksson

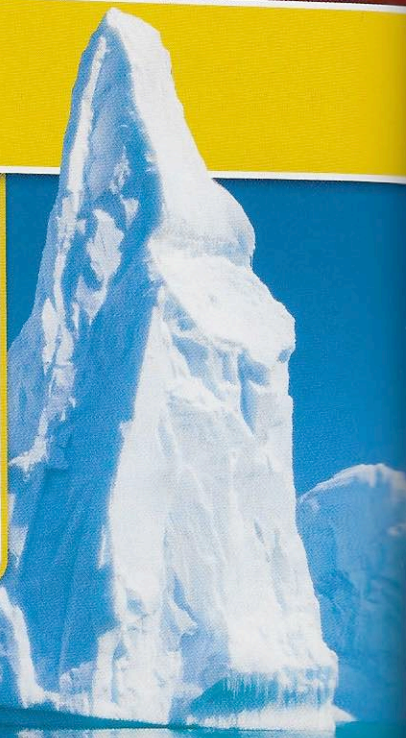
Son of the famous Viking 'Erik the Red', Leif Eriksson was the first European known to sail to America. Leaving Greenland in around AD 1000, he sailed first to Canada and then on to 'Vinland', or Newfoundland. His nickname ('the Lucky') came from his success in trading wood on his journey.



Leif Eriksson sailed in a Viking longship – a sturdy wooden boat with the warriors' shields hung over the sides.

Saint Brendan

Saint Brendan 'the Bold' was a 6th-century Irish monk who made many dangerous sea voyages in the Atlantic Ocean, possibly sailing as far as North America. His tales describe him seeing 'floating ice palaces' and coming across a giant sea monster.



Ibn Battuta

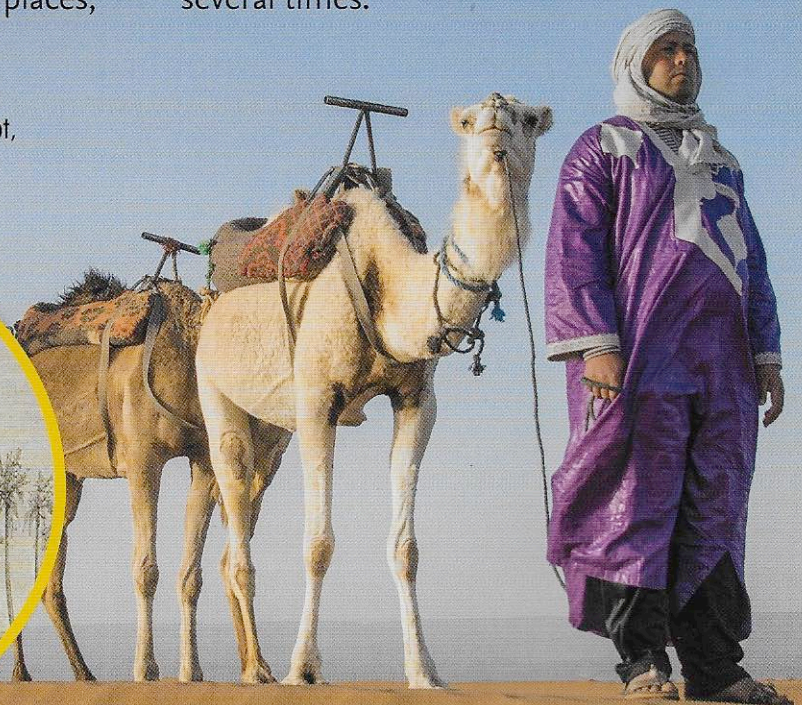
One of the earliest explorers was the Moroccan Muslim, Muhammad Ibn Battuta, who set off on a pilgrimage (or 'hajj') to Mecca in 1325 at the age of 21. Thirty years later he had travelled around 120 000 km (75 000 miles) through various countries of the world.

Greatest traveller of his time

During his travels, Ibn Battuta explored many countries including Egypt, Syria, Siberia, Arabia, India, China, and parts of Africa. Some people could not believe that one person could go to so many places,

especially in those days, when travel was so difficult and dangerous. Ibn Battuta had many adventures on his travels, including being shipwrecked and getting married several times.

When Ibn Battuta visited Cairo in Egypt, he called it the 'mother of cities'.



In order to have more protection from attacks, Ibn Battuta often joined a camel caravan instead of travelling alone.

Marco Polo

In 1271, 17-year-old Marco Polo travelled over 6400 km (4000 miles) with his father and uncle from his native city of Venice in Italy along the Silk Road to China. It took four years for them to complete the journey, arriving in China in 1275.

The Silk Road

The Silk Road was a route used by traders to travel between Europe and China so that they could swap silks and spices for silver and horses. They travelled on foot or by horse or camel. The route was dangerous, not just because of the difficult terrain, but there were often robbers lying in wait to steal their goods.

Did you know?

The Gobi Desert ('Gobi' means 'waterless') is the fifth largest desert in the world and is getting bigger every year. Although you think of deserts as hot places, the temperature can drop to as low as -40°C , which is the same temperature as at the North Pole in winter!



The Silk Road crossed through deserts and mountain ranges.



There is a monument to Marco Polo in Ulan Bator in Mongolia.



Travels around China

Marco Polo spent many years working in China for the Mongolian ruler Kublai Khan. While he was there he learned to speak four languages and became very rich. By the time he left in 1295, he had travelled over 24 000 km (15 000 miles). The journey back to Venice took two years by sea. Of the 600 passengers and crew that left China on the return voyage, only 18 were alive at the end.



Il Milione

Marco Polo was captured in 1298 during a sea battle and spent time in prison. While he was there he told another prisoner about his travels and these stories were made into a book called 'Il Milione', which is known in English as 'The Travels of Marco Polo'. This book inspired future explorers such as Christopher Columbus.