



Ferdinand Magellan

1480? - 1521

Portuguese Navigator and Explorer

Led First Expedition to Circumnavigate the World

FERDINAND MAGELLAN WAS BORN around 1480 in Portugal. His father was Rui de Magalhaes and his mother was Alda de Mesquita. His father served in the court of King John II of Portugal.

Magellan grew up as a page at the court of Queen Leonor of Portugal. When he was seven, he started school. By the age of 15 he

had studied math, geography, and mapmaking. It was the perfect background for a young navigator.

At this time, Portugal was a major sea power. Since the time of **Prince Henry the Navigator**, several Portuguese navigators, including **Bartholomew Dias** and **Vasco de Gama**, had established sea routes to the East. They traveled south around the tip of Africa, then headed north and east. Using these routes, Portuguese traders brought gold, spices, and other goods from Asia to Europe.

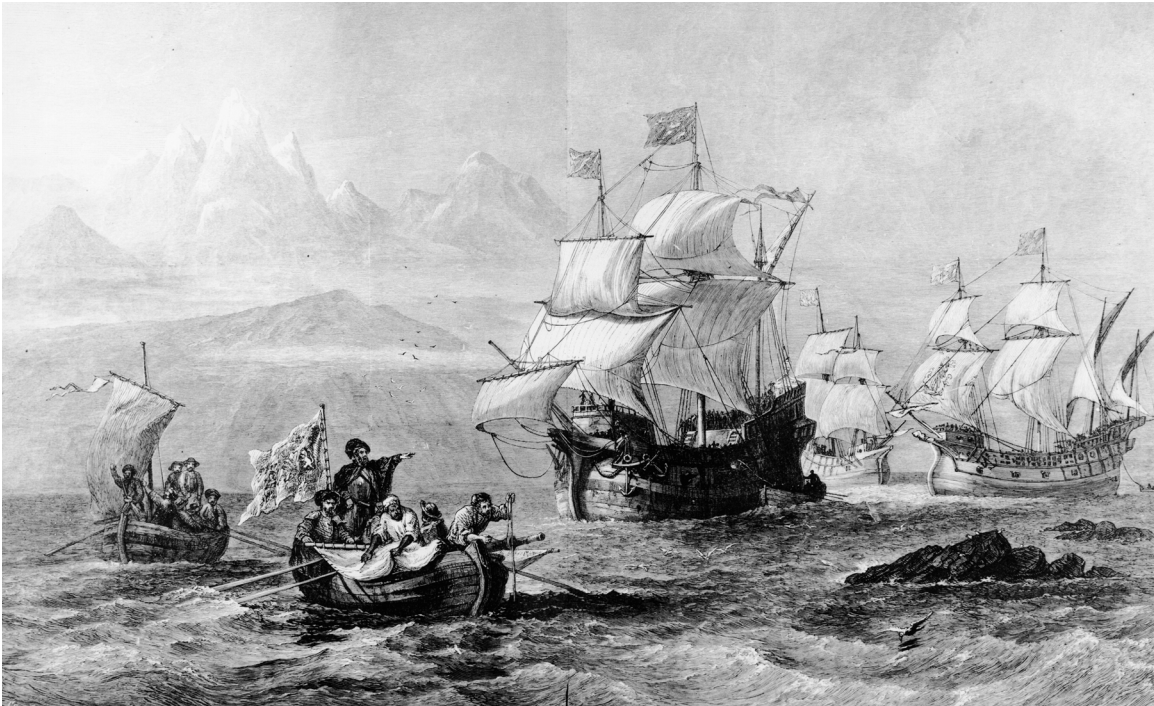
FIRST VOYAGE: It was along this route that Magellan took his first voyage. In 1505, when he was about 15, he sailed from Portugal to India. The expedition was led by Francisco de Almeida. The purpose of the voyage was to strengthen Portuguese trade in India.

They reached the west coast of India and landed at Cannanore. There, Magellan fought in a battle and was wounded. The expedition moved on to Africa. Trade on the east coast of Africa was controlled by Arab merchants. The Portuguese attacked and took over several of their ports.

Magellan sailed back to India. In 1509, he was once again wounded in combat. That same year, Magellan sailed for Malacca, an empire in what is now Malaysia. There, he fought in battles again.

In 1510 Magellan was given command of his own ship. He returned to Malacca. There, Magellan supposedly bought a boy slave who was 13 years old. From there, he may have visited the spice-rich Moluccas. He also sailed to the Philippine Islands.

In 1512, Magellan returned to Portugal. He spent several more years in the military and fought in Morocco. In 1516 he went to King Manuel. He wanted to sail to the west, and he wanted more money for himself and his voyage. The king refused.



Magellan discovering the Strait.

SAILING FOR SPAIN: Magellan went to the court of King Charles V of Spain. He told the king of his idea to travel west, like **Christopher Columbus**, to reach the Moluccas and the riches of the East. He wanted to sail across the Atlantic and circle the continent at its southern tip. The plan was bold, but Magellan knew he could do it. The king agreed to his plan.

Magellan sailed from Spain in September 1519. The expedition included five ships, more than 270 men, and two years' worth of supplies. The ships were named *Trinidad*, *San Antonio*, *Concepcion*, *Victoria*, and *Santiago*. Magellan captained one of the ships. The others were commanded by men chosen by the king, not by Magellan.

MUTINY: They sailed south to the Canary Islands, then southwest across the Atlantic. During the crossing, one of the captains, Juan

de Cartagena, led a mutiny (rebellion). He tried to take control of the expedition from Magellan. Magellan fought back and regained control. He arrested Cartagena and put him in the ship's jail.

They reached what is now Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in December. Then, they sailed south to what is now Argentina. Magellan saw the entrance of what is now the Rio de Plata. He explored it, looking in vain for a way to reach the Pacific.

A WINTER IN PATAGONIA: Magellan continued down the coast of South America. Winter was coming, and he decided to have his expedition wait out the severe weather on land. That winter, the men were the first Europeans to see penguins. The local natives visited them. Magellan noted that the animal skins they wore on their feet looked like paws. He called them "Patagonians," from the Spanish word for "paws." That area is still called Patagonia.

But Magellan faced mutiny again. In April 1520, Gaspar de Quesada led a rebellion against Magellan. The majority of the crew defended their leader, and the mutiny didn't succeed. Magellan had Quesada executed. Cartagena, who had aided Quesada, was put ashore.

That would not be the end of Magellan's troubles with his crew. The expedition started off again in October 1520. Magellan sent the *San Antonio* down the coast in search of a pathway to the Pacific. But the ship took another route: home to Spain. Then the *Santiago* ran aground. Magellan was down to three ships.

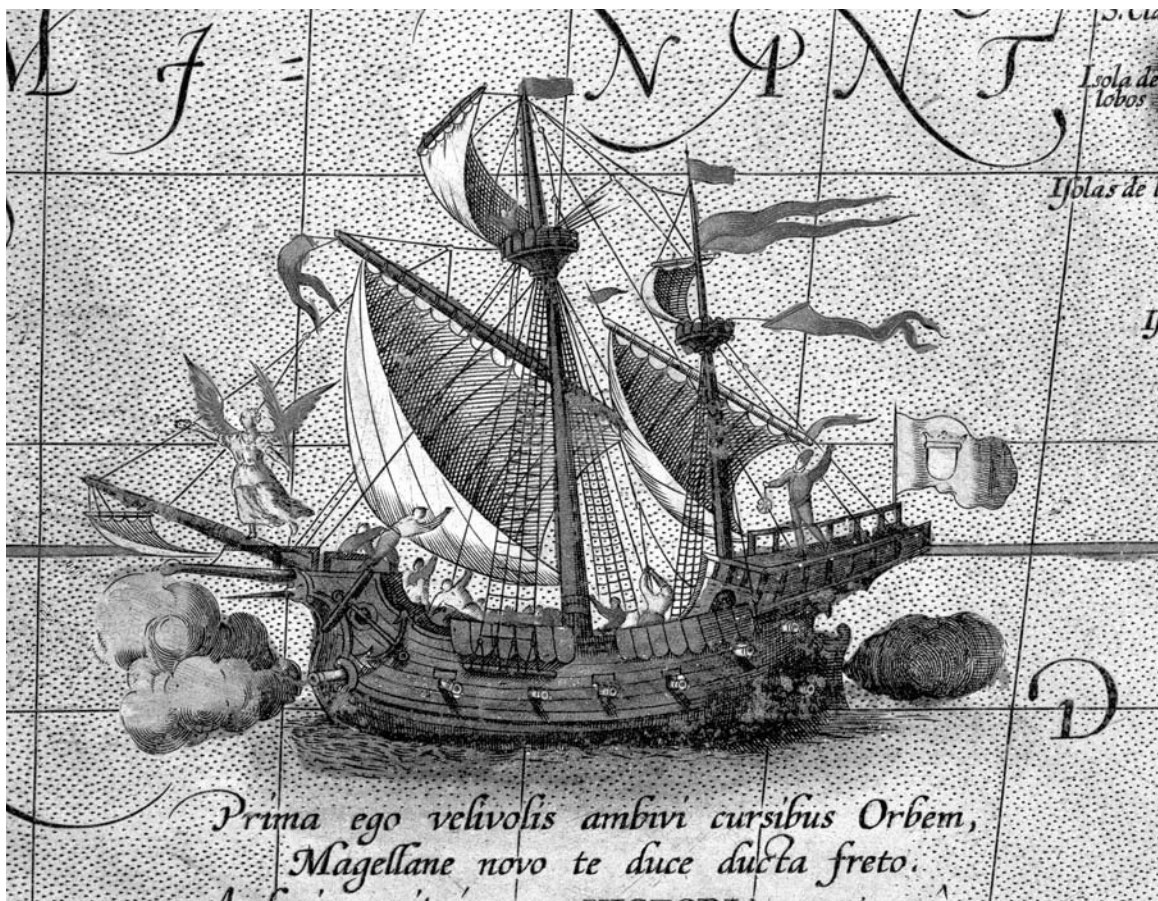
THE STRAIT OF MAGELLAN: At last, Magellan reached the passage to the Pacific. He entered what he called the Strait of Saints (now the Strait of Magellan) in late October. At night, they saw fires on

FERDINAND MAGELLAN

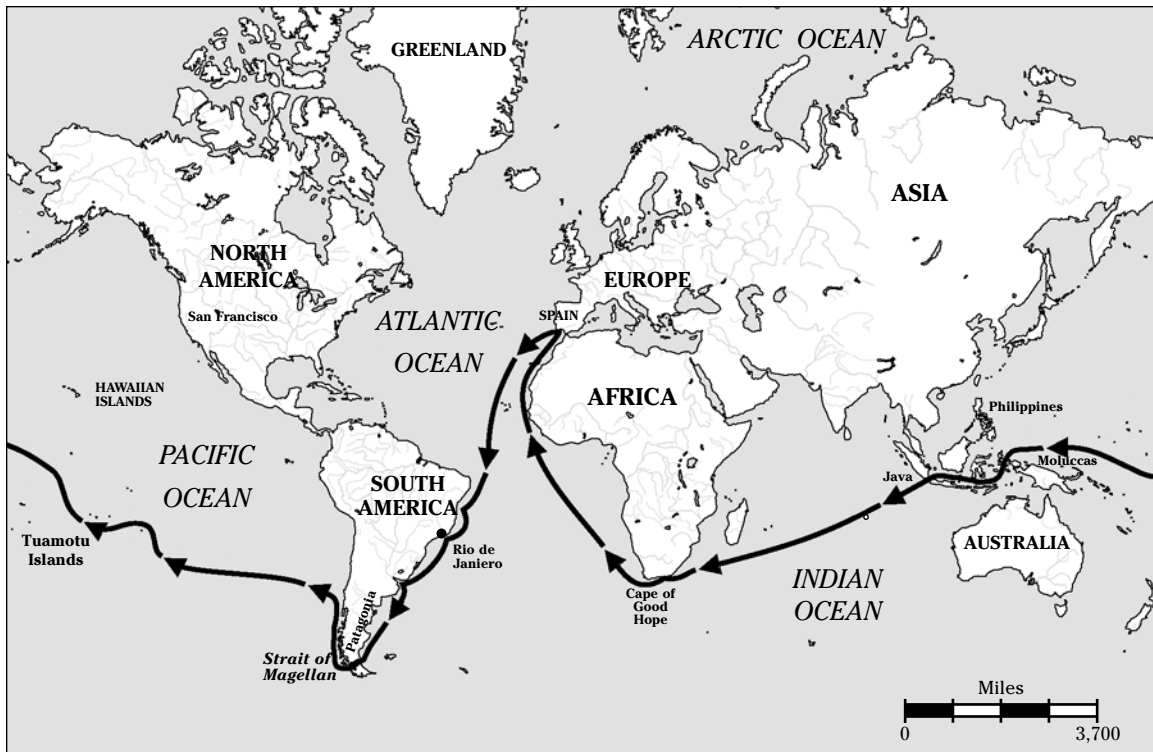
the land. Magellan called it “Tierra del Fuego,” which means “land of fire” in Spanish.

THE PACIFIC OCEAN: It took them more than one month to make the passage. Finally, on November 27, 1520, they entered the calm waters of the Pacific Ocean. Magellan named it, too, for the Spanish word for “peaceful.”

A LONG JOURNEY ACROSS THE PACIFIC: Magellan led his ships to the north, along the coast of what is now Chile, then out to sea. He had no idea how large the Pacific was. He thought he would



The Victoria.



Magellan's circumnavigation route, 1519-1522.

reach the Moluccas in about one month. Instead, it took five months. The crew ran out of food and water. The men began to die of starvation. Some had scurvy, an illness brought on by lack of Vitamin C.

At last, they saw an island. They had reached the Tuamotu Islands. They found food and water. Traveling on, they reached Guam, in the Mariana Islands. From there, they sailed to what are now the Philippine Islands. They had traveled more than 13,000 miles.

ARRIVING IN THE PHILIPPINES: Magellan and his crew visited several islands in the Philippines. On the island of Cebu, they met with the native leader. Magellan convinced him to swear allegiance

to the Spanish king and to accept Christianity. Next, he traveled to the Phillipine island of Mactan to try to persuade more tribal leaders. When they refused to accept his demands, Magellan attacked.

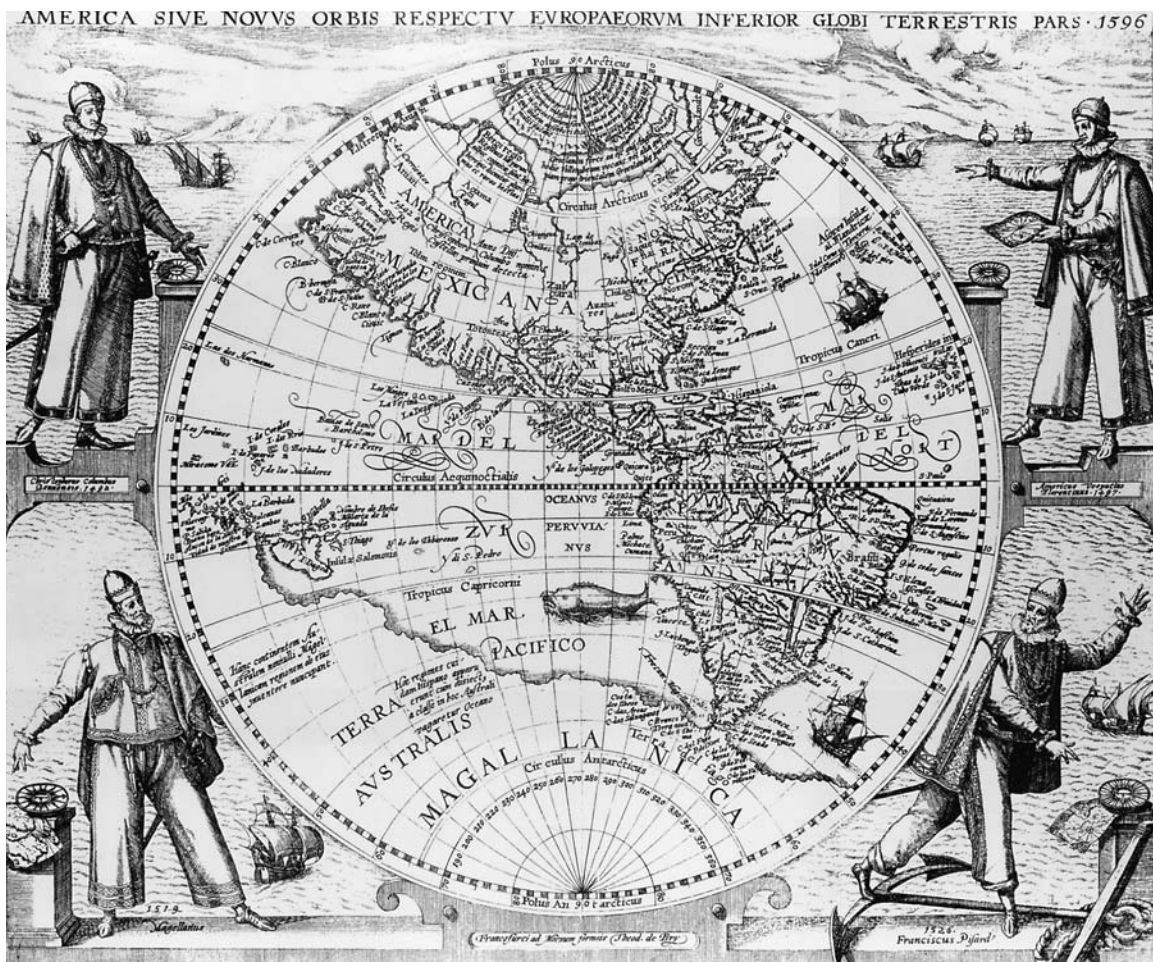
THE LAST BATTLE OF MAGELLAN: In the battle, Magellan was severely wounded. He died on April 27, 1521, without reaching the Moluccas. New leaders were appointed to the expedition, but they were killed in another skirmish with natives.

The crew next came under the command of Juan Sebastian Elcano and Gonzalo de Espinosa. They took one ship each, Elcano took the *Victoria*, and Espinosa the *Trinidad*. Because the crew was so small, they didn't need the third ship, so it was burned.

CONTINUING THE QUEST TO CIRCLE THE GLOBE: The two ships sailed for the Moluccas, finally reaching them in November 1521. There, taking a load of spices, they planned to sail for home. Elcano sailed west, following the path across the Indian Ocean and around the Cape of Good Hope, as Magellan had planned. Espinosa's ship needed repairs, and once they were done, he planned to sail east, back across the Pacific.

Elcano finally returned to Spain on September 8, 1522, having "circumnavigated," or circled the earth. It had taken nearly three years to complete the journey. Of the original crew of 270, only 18 survived. Luckily for history, one of the survivors was a man named Antonio Pigafetta. He kept a journal of the journey that is still used today to study the expedition.

Elcano received both riches and glory for completing the journey. He was given a globe on which was written, "The First One to Circle Me."



Map of the Americas from 1596 with portraits of Columbus (upper left), Vesputti (upper right), Magellan (lower left), and Pizarro (lower right).

Espinosa's ship never returned to Spain. He and his crew were captured by Portuguese traders and Espinosa was imprisoned. He finally returned to Spain many years later, by land, not sea.

FERDINAND MAGELLAN'S HOME AND FAMILY: In 1517, before his famous voyage, Magellan married Beatriz Barbosa. They had one son, Rodrigo.

HIS DISCOVERY: Although he never lived to complete his mission, Magellan is renowned as the leader of the first expedition to circum-

navigate the Earth. It is considered one of the most important achievements in the history of exploration.

WORLD WIDE WEB SITES:

<http://campus.northpark.edu/history/WebChron/WestEurope/Magellan.CP.html>

<http://www.mariner.org/age/magellan.html>

