



Why European Explorers Sailed Around the World

KS3

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

The Age of Exploration Begins

Between the **1400s and 1500s**, European explorers set sail on incredible voyages across unknown oceans. Famous sailors like **Christopher Columbus**, **Vasco da Gama**, and **Ferdinand Magellan** risked their lives on dangerous journeys. But why did they leave the safety of home? The answer involves three big reasons: money, power, and curiosity.

Finding New Trade Routes and Spices

The biggest reason explorers sailed was to find new routes to **Asia**, especially to lands rich in **spices** like cinnamon, cloves, and pepper. In Europe, these spices were incredibly valuable and expensive because they had to travel thousands of kilometres overland through the **Middle East**. European merchants wanted to sail directly to Asia by sea to buy spices cheaply and sell them for huge profits back home.

Think of it like finding a shortcut to the sweet shop. If you normally have to walk through three busy towns, but you discover a path straight there, you can get your sweets faster and cheaper!

Gold, Glory, and God

Explorers also sailed for three other reasons often called "**Gold, Glory, and God.**" **Gold** meant they wanted to find treasure and become rich. **Glory** meant they wanted fame and wanted their country to be powerful and respected. **God** meant they wanted to spread **Christianity** to new lands they discovered.

European kings and queens supported these voyages because they wanted their countries to grow richer and more powerful than rival nations. A country that discovered new lands could claim them as **colonies** and control their resources and trade.

Better Ships and Navigation Tools

Explorers could only sail these long journeys because of new technology. Improvements to **ship design**, better **navigation tools** like the **compass** and **astrolabe**, and more accurate **maps** made long ocean voyages possible. These inventions gave explorers the courage and ability to venture into unknown waters.

Think of it like getting better equipment for a camping trip. With a map, torch, and tent, you can safely explore further than you could with nothing!

Changing the World

These voyages changed history forever. Explorers discovered new lands, connected continents through trade, and unfortunately, brought disease and conflict to indigenous peoples. The **Age of Exploration** marked the beginning of **European colonialism** and global trade networks that still exist today.