

# 19 Sailing Around the World



**Magellan had been to the Spice Islands, sailing around the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean. Now he wanted to find the way west.**

Exploring can be a dangerous business. It certainly was dangerous for Ferdinand Magellan (muh-JELL-un). His voyage was perhaps the most remarkable of all. Magellan was the explorer who actually found China by sailing west from Spain. He discovered a passageway—a strait—near the tip of South America, sailed through it, and went on across the Pacific Ocean. That southern passageway is so treacherous and stormy that even now only the most skilled sailors attempt it. It may be called a strait, but it is crooked, with steep, rocky walls. It took Magellan 38 days to get through the strait

that was later named for him. But the worst was yet to come. No one guessed that the Pacific was as huge as it is. Magellan headed on, right across that ocean. His expedition would make it around the world.

But that wasn't what he intended when he left Seville, Spain, in 1519, with 5 ships and about 270 men. He was heading for the Spice Islands. The Spice Islands are also known as the Moluccas (muh-LUH-kuz). If you look at a map, you'll see them in Indonesia, just south of the Philippine Islands and west of New Guinea.

Europeans had been to the Spice Islands by heading south, going around the tip of Africa, and then sailing east. Magellan was convinced he would find a shortcut if he went in the other direction—west—away from Africa and across the Pacific. He thought the Pa-

**Magellan's name** in Spanish was Hernando de Magallanes. In Portuguese, he was called Fernão de Magalhães.

cific was a calm ocean, much smaller than the Atlantic. (Remember Ptolemy's mistake? Magellan had studied Ptolemy, too.) Magellan's original plan was to go to the Spice Islands by the new "short" route, across the Pacific, and then turn around and come back the same way. (The best maps of the day showed Japan a few hundred miles west of Mexico.) Magellan was in for a big surprise.

Right from the beginning the voyagers had adventures. When they first reached South America they met a tribe of cannibals. What would you do if you met cannibals? Magellan and his men sailed away quickly. They went down the unknown South American coast, landed again, and finally made camp for the winter. Here is how one of them described what happened next:

*One day [without anyone expecting it] we saw a giant who was on the shore, quite naked, and who danced, leaped, and sang, and while he sang he threw sand and dust on his head. Our captain sent one of his men toward him, asking him to leap and sing like the other in order to reassure him and show him friendship. Which he did.*

*Immediately the man of the ship, dancing, led this giant to a small island, where the captain awaited him. And when he was in front of us, he began to marvel and to be afraid, and he raised one finger upward, believing that we came from heaven. And he was so tall that the tallest of us came up only to his waist.... He had a very large face, painted round with red, and his eyes also were painted round with yellow, and in the middle of his cheeks he had two hearts painted. He had hardly any hairs on his head, and they were painted white.*

*The captain caused the giant to be given food and drink, then he showed him other things, among them a steel mirror. Wherein the giant seeing himself was greatly terrified, leaping back so that he threw four of our men to the ground....The captain named the people of this sort Patagoni.*

*Patagones* is what the Spanish actually called them. Magellan and his men stayed five months with the Patagonians. When they left, they took two of the giants with them—in chains. They wanted to display them when they returned to Spain.

Now the vast Pacific was ahead of them. Had they known what they would encounter, they might have turned back. Look at a map of the Pacific Ocean (you will find one on page 92 of this book). Now imagine yourself in a small ship, perhaps 70 feet long, heading west from the tip of South America and not knowing where you are going.

**The Pacific** Ocean covers a bigger area than all the earth's land combined. It stretches across more than a third of the globe. *Pacific* means "peaceful" or "peace-loving." Naming an ocean "pacific" is an example of what's known as wishful thinking.

**Patagon** was a dog-headed monster in a 16th-century Spanish novel that Magellan may have read. The South American natives wore bushy furs and had painted faces; maybe, at first, they seemed like monsters. Magellan's crew thought the Patagonians' feet were especially big. But what really made their feet look big were their roomy moccasins, stuffed with straw to keep out the cold! (Don't forget, the tip of South America is only 500 miles from the Antarctic Circle.)



This map of the Strait of Magellan was made 100 years after Magellan's voyage. By then people knew what Magellan did not: that Tierra del Fuego, the "land of fire" at the tip of South America, was an island and that you could sail around it from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Magellan thought the Land of Fire was the edge of a huge Antarctic continent.

Magellan happened to be a man of vision. When he realized the vastness of the ocean he was crossing, he didn't change his plans. He decided to go for it. He decided to sail around the world.

Like it or not, his crew was stuck with his decision. They were men from nine different nations. One was an Englishman, and another was a slave captured in the Moluccan Islands (who was expected to be an interpreter). One crew member kept a journal.

He was Antonio Pigafetta, and some say he was a spy from Venice. We wouldn't know the details of Magellan's voyage if it weren't for his written record. One of the things Pigafetta said in his journal was that no one should ever attempt the voyage again. It was just too dangerous. What he didn't realize is that it is the unknown that is most frightening. The knowledge he brought back allowed people to sail off with confidence.

But for Magellan and his men it was a terrible voyage. The course they steered missed every island between South America and Guam. By the time they reached land, near China and the Spice Islands,

most of them were almost dead of hunger. Many did die. They ate rats and chewed leather straps and drank putrid water. Pigafetta wrote:

*We were three months and twenty days without getting any kind of fresh food. We ate biscuit, which was no longer biscuit, but powder of biscuit swarming with worms, for they had eaten the good. It stank strongly of the urine of rats...And of the rats ...some of us could not get enough.*

Finally, after a battle with angry natives on an island that may have been Guam, they landed in the Philippine Islands. Enrique, the Moluccan slave, spoke to the islanders. The Filipinos understood him. Magellan realized he had crossed the Pacific! (Enrique had been captured by Spanish traders and taken from the Moluccas around Africa to Spain. He was the first person to sail around the world.)

In the Philippines the famished sailors found fresh water, food, and the King of Cebu. Magellan told him about the Spanish king and said he was the greatest in the world. Then Magellan told the king of his God and converted him to Christianity.

"The king said he was content," wrote Pigafetta, "and that if the captain wished to be his friend, as a greater token of love he would send him a little of his blood, from the right arm, and that the captain should do likewise."

Magellan stayed in the Philippines, had many adventures, and learned the ways of the people. He spoke kindly to the islanders, and many became Christians because of him. Then he faced a problem other explorers would face: how do you deal with your new friends' enemies?

Magellan chose to fight them. It was the wrong choice. Pigafetta described what happened when they joined the Philippine Islanders' war against a chieftain named Lapu Lapu:

*[The enemy forces] followed us, hurling poisoned arrows four or six times; while, recognizing the captain [Magellan], they turned towards him...[and] hurled arrows very close to his head. But as a good captain and a knight he still stood fast with some others, fighting thus for more than an hour. And as he refused to go back, an Indian threw a bamboo lance in his face, and the captain immediately killed him with his lance....Then, trying to lay hand on his sword, he could draw it out only halfway, because of a wound from a bamboo lance that he had in his arm. Which seeing, all those people threw themselves on him, and one with a large javelin...thrust it into his left leg, whereby he fell face downward. On this, all at once rushed upon him with lances of iron and bamboo and with javelins, so that they slew our mirror...our comfort, and our true*

**Putrid** (PEW-trid) means disgusting or rotten.



*Ferdinand Magellan*

### Magellan

**M**agellan was born into a noble Portuguese family. When he was a boy, he served as a page in the royal household. Then he went to India, where Portugal was powerful. But when he asked the Portuguese ruler to let him sail west from Europe to the Spice Islands, he was turned down. He went to Spain instead. He set out from Seville and headed into the Atlantic at Sanlucar; today it's a seaside resort.



Have you ever gotten lost and not known where you were going? Think of that feeling, and then think of Magellan and his men, sailing on over the endless ocean with no sight of land until they reached the island of Guam.

guide....Then, seeing him dead, as best we could we rescued the wounded men and put them in the boats which were already leaving.

Those 15th- and 16th-century explorers were brave and determined. Few men could have accomplished what Magellan did. In his journal Pigafetta said he hoped future generations would not forget his captain:

*For among his virtues he was more constant in a very high hazard and great affair than ever was any other. He endured hunger better than all the others. He was a navigator and made sea charts. And that that is true was seen openly, for no other had so much natural talent, boldness, or knowledge to sail once around the world, as he had already planned.*

Finally, Magellan's voyagers reached Spain—18 men on one battered ship. (How many men and ships were there when Magellan started out?) They had been gone almost three years and had circled the globe. Imagine a ship from a distant galaxy landing on earth today. That was how amazed people were in Spain when Magellan's ship returned. The voyagers brought news of an unknown world—it just happened to be their own world.