**Ferdinand Magellan Biography**

While in the service of Spain, the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan led the first European voyage of discovery to circumnavigate (travel around) the globe. His voyage provided clear proof that the Earth is round.

**Early life and travels**

Ferdinand Magellan was born in Oporto, Portugal, in 1480. His parents were members of the Portuguese nobility. Young Magellan found himself in the service of royalty. He was only twelve when he began serving the queen of Portugal as a page, a position of employment for youths in royal courts. Magellan was encouraged to learn subjects that would aid him greatly later, such as cartography (mapmaking), astronomy, and celestial navigation .

**Fighting for Portugal**

Magellan joined the Portuguese service to sail with the fleet in 1505. He went to East Africa and later was in a battle in which the Portuguese destroyed the Egyptian fleet's dominance in the Arabian Sea.

In 1513 Magellan was wounded in a battle in North Africa. But all of his services to Portugal brought him little favor from the Portuguese king, and in 1517 he went to Seville, Spain, to offer his services to the Spanish court.

**Exploring for Spain**

Spain and Portugal were both great powers at this time. They were in great competition over the rights to claim and settle the newly "discovered" regions of the Americas and the East.

In 1494 the Treaty of Tordesillas divided the overseas world of the "discoveries" between the two powers, essentially splitting the globe in half from pole to pole. Portugal acquired everything from Brazil eastward to the East Indies, while the Spanish hemisphere of discovery and conquest ran westward from Brazil to an area near the Cape Verde Islands. The parts of this area that lay furthest east of Spain had not yet been explored by the Spaniards, and they assumed that some of the Spice Islands, a sopurce of great spices, might lie within their half of the globe. They were wrong, but Magellan's scheme was to test that assumption. He decided that the best way to reach these islands was to sail in a westward

Other explorers had paved the way for Magellan by making key mistakes and discoveries. Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) had badly underestimated the distance between Europe and the East Indies, sailing westward from the European coast and "discovering" North America and the Caribbean islands (West Indies).

Vasco Núñez de Balboa's (1475–1517) march across the Panamanian isthmus had revealed the existence of the Pacific Ocean, which he had claimed for Spain. Thereafter, explorers eagerly sought northern and southern all-water passages across the Americas to reach the spice-rich East. Magellan also sought such a passage.

**Magellan's great voyage**

King Charles V of Spain approved Magellan's proposal. On September 20, 1519, Magellan led a fleet of five ships into the Atlantic. Unfortunately, the ships were barely adequate to sail, and the crew were not all firmly loyal to their leader. Arriving at Brazil, the fleet sailed down the South American coast to the region called Patagonia. They stayed there from March to August 1520. During this time an attempted mutiny was put down, with only the top leaders being punished. Afterwards, however, one ship was wrecked, and its crew had to be taken aboard the other vessels.

**Crossing the Pacific**

The fleet sailed southward and entered what is now called the Strait of Magellan (the channel of water between the southern tip of South America and the island of Tierra del Fuego). The fleet proceeded cautiously, taking over a month to pass through the strait. During this time another ship deserted and sailed back to Spain, and so only three of the original five ships entered the Pacific. A three month voyage through the Pacific followed filled with great hardship finally reaching the island of Guam.

**The Philppines**

Magellan then headed eastward to the Philippines, where, in an effort to gain the favor of a local ruler, he became involved in a local war and was killed in battle on April 27, 1521. The remaining crew was forced to return on one ship. They picked up a small cargo of spices, crossed the Indian Ocean, and traveled around the Cape of Good Hope (at the southern tip of Africa) from the east.

They finally reached Seville on September 8, 1522.

**Magellan's legacy**

Magellan's project brought little in the way of material gain to Spain. The Portuguese were well established in the East. Their route to the east, by way of Africa, had proved to be the only practical way of getting by sea to India and the Spice Islands. Yet despite nearly destroying itself in the process, the Magellan fleet for the first time revealed in a practical fashion the full extent of the globe. As a scientific effort, it proved to be the greatest of all the "conquests" undertaken by the overseas adventurers of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Europe

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1. From what country was Magellan?
2. What subjects did he study that would help his with his navigation later?
3. What kind of military experience did he have?
4. Why did Magellan sail for Spain?
5. In what ways did other explorers pave the way for Magellan?
6. How many ships did he take on his voyage?
7. What problems did he have on his voyage as he reached Brazil?
8. Why did Magellan call the ocean he explored "Pacific?"
9. What hardships did he suffer while crossing this ocean?
10. What happened to Magellan in the Philippine Islands?
11. When did his crew return? How long was the voyage?