

FACTS ABOUT ASIA

TWO SIGNIFICANT MARITIME ACHIEVEMENTS

Editor's Note: During the fifteenth century, the Italian Christopher Columbus and the Chinese Zheng He led two major series of seafaring expeditions (with the exception of Columbus' last voyage that occurred early in the sixteenth century). "Facts about Asia" contains information about the voyages of both men.



Source: <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/columbus.htm>

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Purposes of the Voyages: The purposes of Columbus' four voyages were to find a trade route to the Indies, to expand and enrich both the Spanish empire and Columbus (who received a tenth of all riches acquired), and to convert the natives to Christianity, some of whom were also enslaved.

First Voyage: Columbus' first voyage departed from Palos, Spain, on August 3, 1492, on the ships the Pinta, the Santa Clara (called the Niña), and the Santa María. The total crew ranged from 90 to 120 men. Columbus sailed on the Santa María.

The ships stopped in the Canary Islands for repairs, and departed to sail west on September 6, 1492.

On October 2, 1492, Columbus landed at San Salvador, an island that he named after Jesus. This island was called Guanahaní by the natives, whom the Spaniards called Taínos (later Indians), and whose language was of the Arawak family. The landing place is disputed—perhaps Samana Cay or mod-

ern-day San Salvador (Watlings Island). The natives sported pieces of gold in their pierced noses, and told the Europeans that natives of other islands had gold arm and leg bands. Columbus mentioned the word gold 140 times in the log of the first voyage.

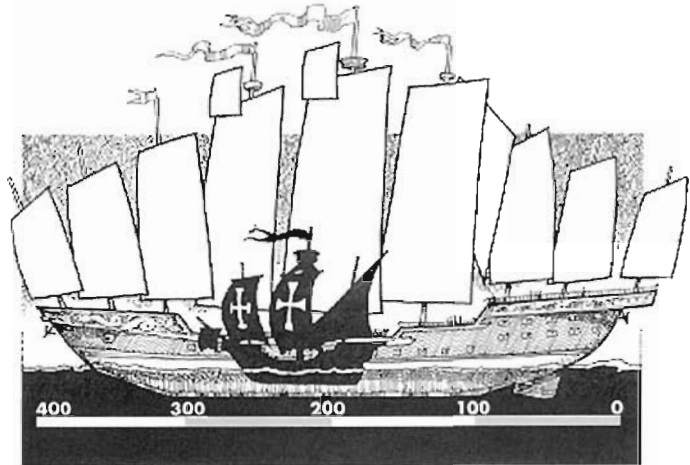
With six or seven natives as guides, Columbus set sail and found Cuba in late October, and then Hispaniola, where he left 39 men

in a settlement. He set sail for Europe in January, traveling to Lisbon, Portugal, and arrived in Palos, Spain, on March 15, 1493.

Second Voyage: On the second voyage, Columbus left Cadiz on September 25, 1493, with 17 ships and 1,200 colonists. He found Guadalupe and then St. Croix, where his crew skirmished with Carib—also called Caniba—Indians whom other Indians claimed ate their enemies. The Spaniards called them "cannibals." After discovering Puerto Rico, Columbus returned to Hispaniola where he found his men had been killed. After establishing another settlement and further explorations, Columbus returned to Spain in 1496 with gold and slaves.

Third Voyage: Columbus left Seville on his third voyage with six ships on May 30, 1498. Part of his expedition went to Hispaniola, and Columbus took the remaining ships to look for gold and gems. After further exploration, Columbus reached what is now Venezuela on the South American coast, which he speculated was the Garden of Eden. Upon returning to Hispaniola, Columbus encountered chaos in the settlement. An Imperial Spanish official arrested Columbus, and returned him to Spain in 1500 in chains, but Columbus was later freed. Columbus wrote a book saying God chose him to take Christianity to the ends of the earth.

Fourth (final) Voyage: On his final voyage, Columbus left Cadiz with four ships and 150 men on May 9, 1502, intending to find gold, gems, and spices, and to spread Christianity. He stopped in Gran Canary and re-departed



Comparison of Admiral Zheng's Ships with Columbus' Santa María. (Illustration by Jan Adkins, 1993.)

Source: <http://www.clearharmony.net/articles/200308/14384.html>

on May 25. Columbus was marooned for a year in Jamaica. Eventually he made his way to Santo Domingo, and then returned to Spain in 1504. Columbus died wealthy from his explorations.

Sources: "Christopher Columbus" by Thomas C. Tirado at: <http://muweb.millersville.edu/~columbus/columbus.htm>
"Columbus and His Four Fateful Voyages" by David Gelman at: <http://muweb.millersville.edu/~columbus/dtwa/his/GELMAN01.HIS>

Both articles are on Millersville University's Computerized Information Retrieval System (CIRS), and listed under Columbus and the Age of Discovery.



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ZHENG HE

Purposes of the Voyages: Chinese sources emphasize that the initial reason for launching the voyages was the Ming emperor's desire to locate the nephew from whom he had seized the throne but who had evaded

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capture. The more general reasons were to assert Ming military and political power. The expeditions brought many tributary envoys to the Ming court.

First Voyage: At the bidding of the Ming emperor, Zheng He left Nanjing in July 1405 with 317 ships and nearly 28,000 men, including sailors, soldiers, diplomats, astronomers, and scholars of foreign ways, especially Islam. About 60 vessels were treasure ships. The fleet stopped in Champa (central Vietnam), Siam (Thailand), Java, and points along the Straits of Malacca, sailing to Cochin and the kingdom of Calicut (now Kozhikode) on the southwestern coast of India. The ships carried silks, porcelain, and copper coinage for trading for spices, fragrant woods, gems, animals, textiles, and minerals. Zheng He defeated a pirate fleet in Palembang, Sumatra, and took the leader to China for punishment. He installed his informant in this battle as the new ruler of the city, which became a Chinese ally. Zheng He arrived home in Nanjing in 1407.

Second Voyage: Zheng He organized, but did not lead, the second voyage. The fleet left Nanjing in 1407, returning ambassadors who had ridden on the first voyage to Sumatra, India, and elsewhere. Fleet members attended the inauguration of the new king at Calicut, established the Ming dynasty's Indian Ocean trade links, and returned in 1409.

Third Voyage: In 1409, Zheng He embarked on the third voyage with 48 large ships and 30,000 troops, visiting many of the same places as before. He went to Malacca on the Malay Peninsula and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), where he fought a small kingdom and captured its king. A Muslim, Zheng He offered gifts to a Buddhist temple as an act of ecumenism. He returned home in 1411, bringing with him the captured Ceylonese king, who was freed by the emperor.

Fourth Voyage: Zheng He's fourth voyage departed in 1413 with 63 ships and an estimated 28,000 men. He visited many of the same sites as before, and also went to Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. He stopped in Sumatra to fight on the side of a deposed sultan, and brought the upstart back to China for execution when he returned to Nanjing in 1415. In the wake of the trip, 18 states sent tributes and envoys.

Fifth Voyage: Zheng He and his fleet left Nanjing in 1417 on their fifth voyage. They returned 17 heads of state from South Asia to their home countries, and sailed to Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea, the east coast of Africa (stopping at Mogadishu and Brawa, in today's Somalia), and Malindi (in today's Kenya). Zheng He frequently encountered hostilities, which he subdued. In Aden, the sultan presented gifts of zebras, lions, and ostriches. He returned home in 1419.

Sixth Voyage: The sixth voyage, which left Nanjing in 1421 with 41 ships, returned to places visited before in Southeast Asia and India, and returned 19 foreign ambassadors to their homes. Zheng He returned to China in less than a year and sent his fleet on several itineraries to perhaps as far south as Sofala in present-day Mozambique. Zheng He's expedition brought many foreign dignitaries back to China in 1422.

Seventh (final) Voyage: The Yongle emperor's successor, his grandson, the Xuande emperor, sent Zheng He on his seventh and final voyage in 1431. With more than 100 large ships and 27,000 men, he visited ports in the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, Aden and Hormuz, and went to Africa's Swahili coast. Part of the fleet took a side trip up the Red Sea to Jiddha, a few hundred miles from Mecca and Medina. Zheng He died on the return trip in 1433 and was buried at sea. In some Chinese communities abroad, especially in Southeast Asia, he continues to be revered as a god, and a symbolic grave was created for him in Nanjing.

Sources: Shirokauer, Conrad. *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations*. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1989). "China's Great Armada" by Frank Viviano in *National Geographic*, July 2005. "The Ming Voyages" at Columbia University's *Asia for Educators* Web site: http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/china/trad/disc_q.htm.