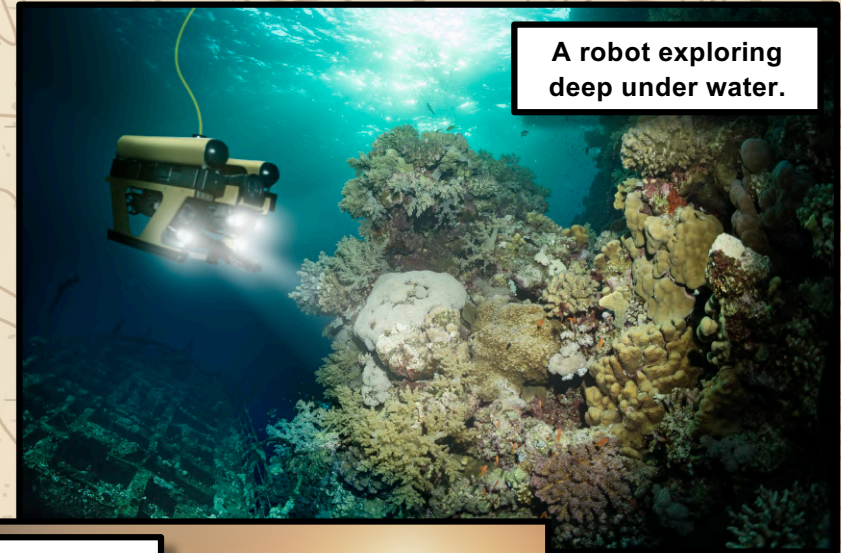


# Explorers

## What is an explorer?

An explorer is a person who sets out to discover something by going to a place they do not know much about. Today we know a great deal about the world, for which we can thank those men and women who have been brave enough to set out into the unknown. We can easily view a digital map of the entire planet, but consider how much courage it took to set off in a ship to sail unknown seas or to be one of the first people to go into space.



A robot exploring deep under water.



A group exploring Lapland.

People have always explored to find out more about the world around them. As technology has advanced, humans have been able to cover greater distances and explore hostile environments (such as space and under the sea).



Exploring a glacial cave in Iceland.



A space shuttle taking off on a mission.



A ship sailing on the ocean.

# Marco Polo



A statue of Marco Polo in Villa Borghese park, Rome.

Marco Polo was born into a family of jewel traders. At that time, Venice was the most important city for trade in the world, the point where the West connected with the East. Spices, grain, wine, salt and textiles flowed through it. Polo's mother died when he was young and his father spent most of his time away from home, trading in Asia, so he was brought up by members of his extended family.

When Polo was around 15 years old, he joined his father and uncle in an expedition to the court of the Mongol leader Kublai Khan, in modern day China. For the next four years, they travelled across the Middle East. The journey was difficult and they experienced many hardships, including crossing the Gobi desert, and Marco suffering a serious illness in Afghanistan.

An illustration of Kublai Khan.





An illustration of Marco Polo departing Venice.

Kublai Khan sent Polo on missions throughout the Mongol Empire, the largest the world has ever seen, inherited from his grandfather, Genghis Khan. Polo travelled all over Southeast Asia and China in the Khan's service.

Eventually, Polo went back to Venice after a diplomatic mission, this time escorting a Mongol princess to her marriage in Persia. He had been away from home nearly 20 years.

He was imprisoned after being captured during a naval battle with neighbouring city-state Genoa, and following his release in 1299, he married and had three daughters, remaining in Venice for the rest of his life.

A page of  
*The Travels of Marco Polo.*

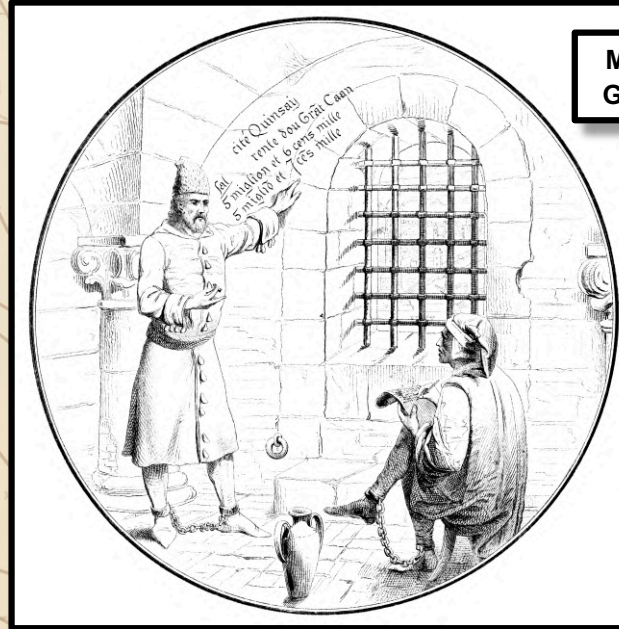


Et des manuelles ... 58

**Cy dit de la bataille qui fu entre loit et le mandral au grant haun et le roy de moer.**

Et quant le duc d'avein ce loit as tartars tot occisamment que ce roy lui tenoit leure a li grant gent d'ombra pour ce que il n'avoit que .xij. hommes a cheval. mais sans faille il estoit moult vaillant homme d'armes et sages et acoustumez y d'armes et de bataille et moult bons d'avein ce loit. Et avint ce moer d'avein. Il ordonna moult et amonesta bien sa gent. et bien pourvint pour defendre lui et sa gent car il avoit moult bons gens d'armes avec lui. Et pourquoy vous sçavez loncompte. Sçavez que loit des tartars lui dit deit tout ensemble .xij. a cheval ou plain de vean. a leurs ennemis et leurs les attendoient a bataille. Et ce firent y par grant sens et par bon d'avein que il avoient. car de moult et plain avoit un plain moult grant et moult y plain tartars. en tale maniere attendoient les tartars tous ennemis. Or l'avein un peu a parir des tartars car bien y avoient prou d'avein. et par d'avein de leurs ennemis. Or sçavez que quant le roy men fu le comte au son oit. a le parir de dit ou il estoit et le mistrent ala voie et vindrent au plain de vean. la ou les tartars estoient tout appareille. Et quant il furent venus en ce plain pres de leurs ennemis a une mille. ly fist appareille le roy les d'aveins a tous les d'aveins et les hommes deus pour combatre. Et puis ordonna les hommes a cheval et a pie moult sagement et bien come sages roys que il estoit et quant il ot ordonne et adrepe tout son affaire ly commença a aller contre les ennemis a bataille. Et quant les tartars les

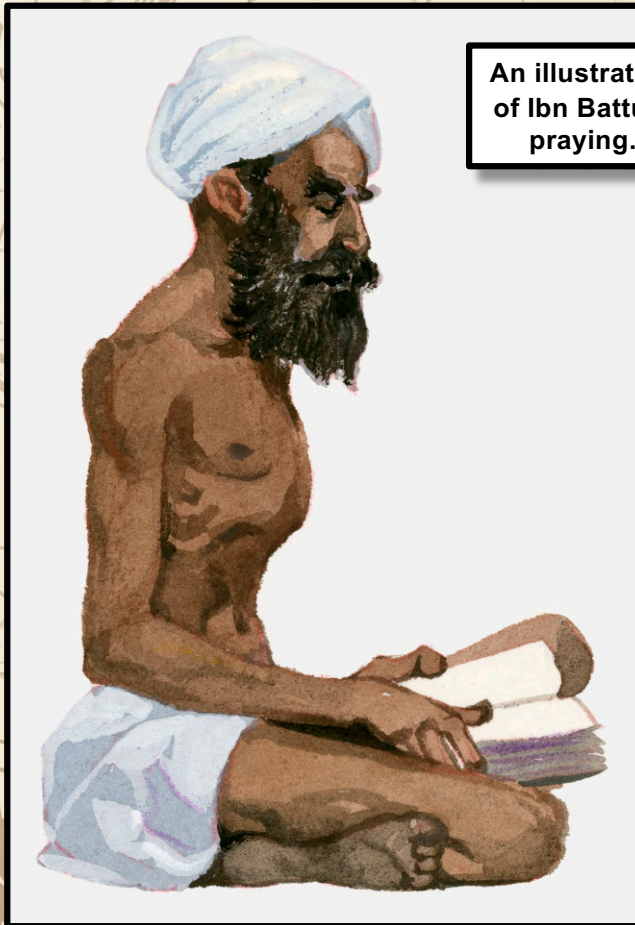
Marco Polo in  
Genoa Prison.



While he was in prison, he dictated the story of his travels to a fellow prisoner, a work now known as *The Travels of Marco Polo*, or *Il Millione*.

At the time of its publication, many people were of the opinion that Polo had not travelled as extensively as he had claimed and that much of the book was actually made up. None the less, the book became a best seller and was translated into French, Italian and Latin. Subsequent accounts prove that much of what he said was true, whether he saw it himself or learnt of it from other travellers.

# Ibn Battuta



An illustration of Ibn Battuta praying.

Battuta was born and brought up in Tangiers. At the age of 22, he left his home to undertake Hajj. He travelled alone and used the journey to study with scholars in Egypt and Syria, as was the custom at the time. He completed his studies and became qualified as a judge. Once the Hajj was completed, Battuta decided to continue his travels and did not return home for nearly 30 years. He explored most of the known Islamic world, with his rule to “never travel any road a second time”. His extensive travels included visits to India, China, Tanzania, Yemen, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

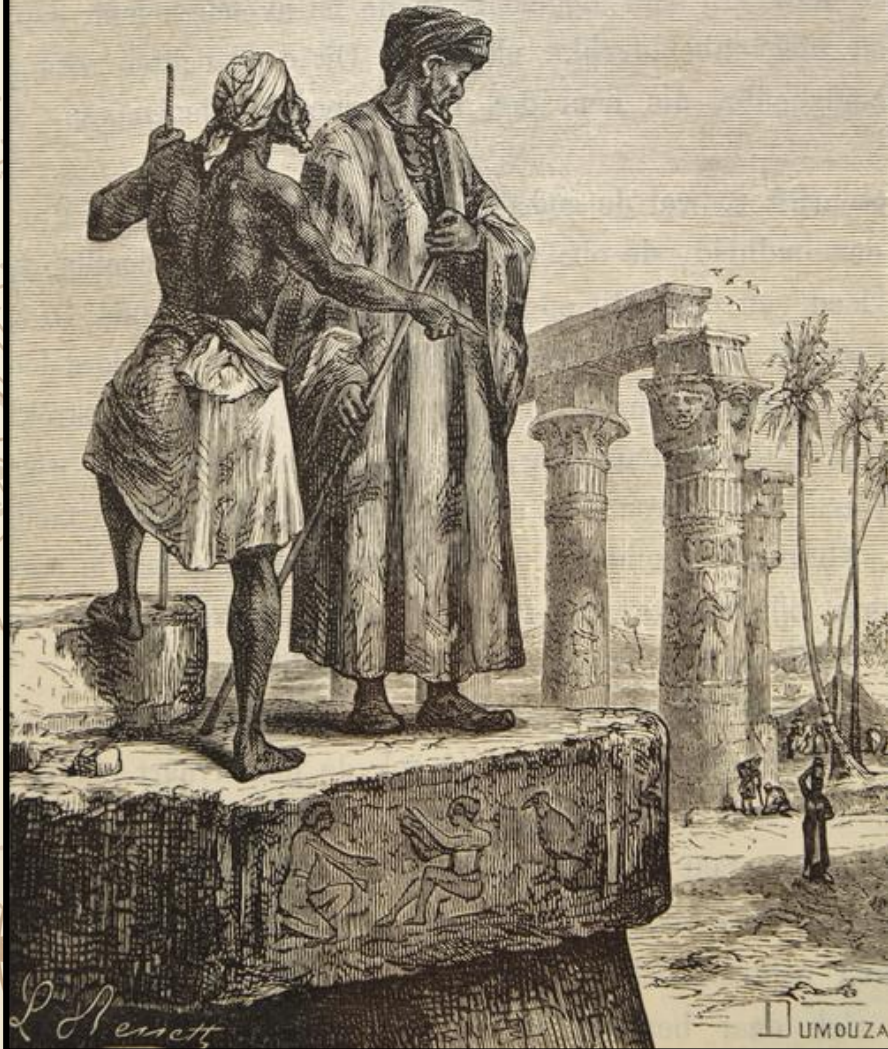
**Battuta travelled much further than Marco Polo, covering an estimated 73,000 miles (117,000 km). During his travels, he had many adventures; he was kidnapped and robbed, he became shipwrecked on the coast of India, and he married ten wives. His travels brought him great fame, and he gathered a large group of people who travelled with him. Royal courts welcomed him because of his popularity.**

**In 1334 he settled for a while in Delhi, becoming a judge there, before being sent to the Mongol court of China in 1341. He continued to travel, with his last trip taking him to Mali across the Sahara desert.**

**An illustration of Ibn Battuta leaving Mecca.**



An illustration showing Ibn Battuta, from Jules Verne's book 'Discovery of the Earth'.



In 1353 Battuta returned to his native Morocco, where he again worked as a judge. The Sultan (ruler) there ordered him to write an account of his travels, which he dictated to a writer. By this time he had visited all but three of the Muslim countries in the world, as well as many nearby non-Muslim ones. This makes his account, known as the Rihla (the journey) very valuable as a historical document. He met at least 60 rulers in his lifetime, and is known as “The Traveller of Islam”.

# Zheng He

Zheng He was born Ma He in the Chinese province of Yunnan. His family was noble and he was educated and naturally inquisitive. He would question pilgrims returning from the Hajj about what they had witnessed on their travels.

Luoping, in Yunnan province, China.



When he was 11 years old, his province was attacked by the Ming army and he was taken to the Imperial court as a servant.

He soon came to the notice of the Emperor, Hong Wu, who spotted his potential and sent him for military training.



A painting of the Hongwu Emperor.

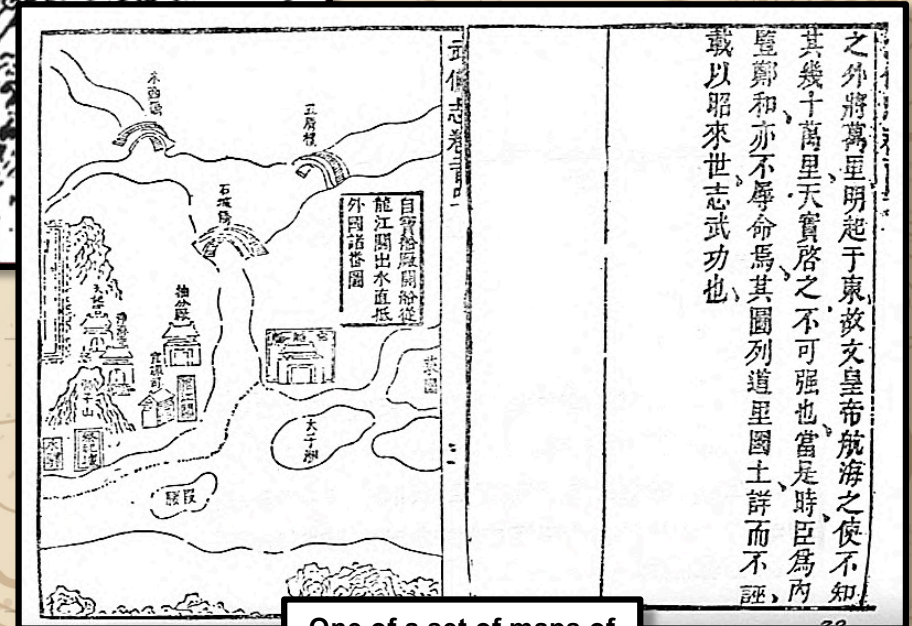


His military career was extremely successful, and he was assigned as a bodyguard to Prince Zhu Di, protecting him during battles against the Mongols. When Zhu Di became emperor, Ma He was promoted and given the name Zheng. In 1403, Zhu Di ordered a Treasure Fleet of 300 ships to be built and sent to travel the China Sea and the Indian Ocean. Zheng He was its commander. He was also given the title of official ambassador to foreign courts for the fleet.

For several years, Zheng commanded the fleet, making three successful trading voyages and visiting countries such as Vietnam and India.



This woodblock print is thought to represent Zheng He's ships.



One of a set of maps of Zheng He's missions.

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In 1413 Zheng He was dispatched to the Persian Gulf and brought back representatives from various countries to the court. After they had spent some time with the Emperor, he returned them in 1417 and then continued on his travels, finally returning to the court in 1422. By this time Zhu Di had died, and the new emperor did not share his enthusiasm for trade, instead assigning Zheng He to work on the construction of a new temple.

He began his final voyage to India in 1431. During this trip, he was able to make his Hajj to Mecca. He fell ill and died in 1433, possibly while still travelling.

In China, the 11th of July is celebrated as National Maritime Day, commemorating his first voyage.

A map showing the Persian Gulf.



This temple in Vietnam was built to show respect to Zheng He.



# Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus was born in the city-state of Genoa. His father was a wool weaver, and Columbus was his apprentice. He also studied mapmaking and seamanship. As a teenager, he joined the Genoese fleet, on a merchant ship sailing the Mediterranean. In 1470, the boat that he was on was attacked and sunk off the Portuguese coast. He made his home in Portugal, along with his brother Bartholomew, who was a mapmaker by trade.

Columbus had read Marco Polo's book and was eager to explore the world. At the time, there was great interest in finding a quicker trading route to India, and he believed that by sailing west, he would be able to discover it. He presented his plans to the monarchs of Portugal, England and France, all of whom turned him down.



A portrait of Christopher Columbus.

**At last, in 1491, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain agreed to fund the trip. Columbus set sail in 1492 with a small fleet of just three ships; the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria. They headed west and two months later landed on an island in the Bahamas. Columbus believed that he was in Asia, but in fact, he was in the Caribbean.**

**He made his return voyage in 1493, leaving around 40 men to build a settlement on Hispaniola (modern day Haiti and the Dominican Republic).**



**An illustration of the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria.**



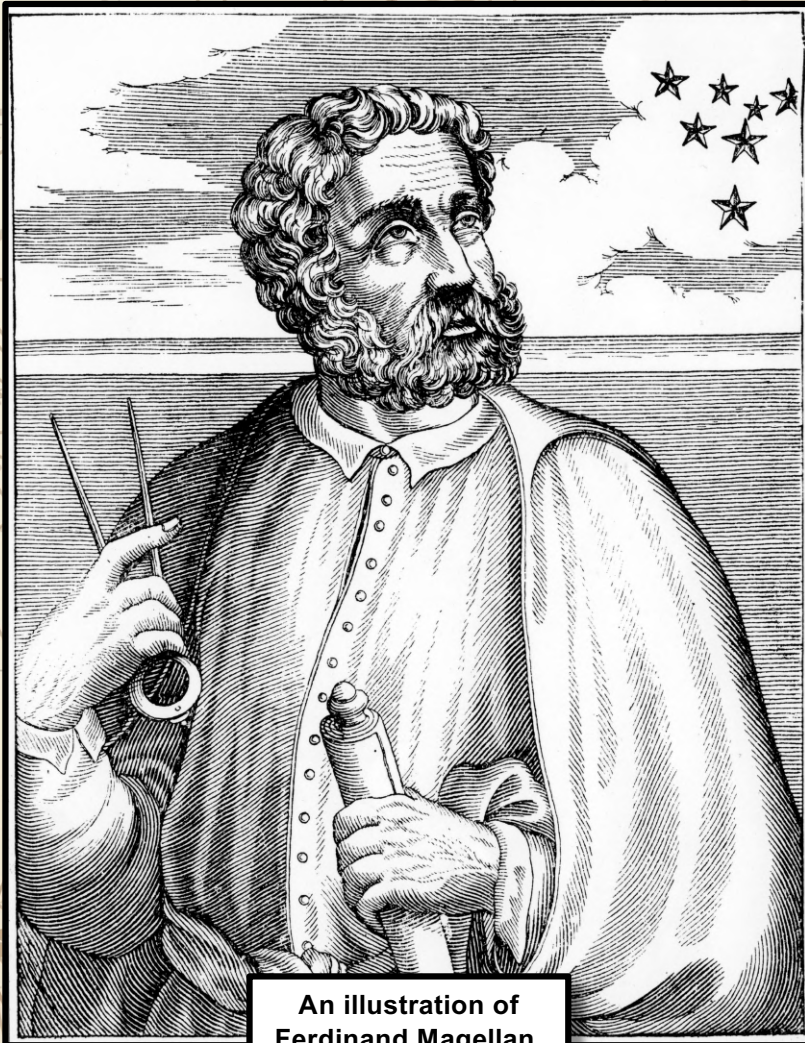
**Christopher Columbus  
landing on shore of  
North America.**

**Columbus was able to make three further voyages to the Caribbean and also visited the South American coast. He was a great explorer but a terrible governor; in 1502 he was arrested following a revolt on Hispaniola.**

**He is mistakenly credited with having “discovered” America, even though there is evidence of trade between America and Europe since at least Viking times.**

**In 1504 Columbus returned to Spain, his health failing. He died at Valladolid and went to his grave never knowing that he had not been to Asia.**

# Ferdinand Magellan



An illustration of Ferdinand Magellan.

Ferdinand Magellan came from a noble Portuguese family and was a page in the royal court. He later joined the Portuguese Navy as a soldier and was involved in sea battles in the Indian Ocean.

In 1509 he was seriously injured while in Morocco, which left him walking with a limp for the rest of his life. He was also falsely accused of stealing, but later cleared.

He tried to raise funding for the westward voyage to find a route to India but was refused three times by the Portuguese king. Determined to make the trip, he applied to Charles I of Spain, who agreed to pay for it.

In 1517, Magellan became a Spanish citizen and set about planning for his voyage, setting sail on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1519, with a fleet of five ships.

The voyage was punishingly hard, and with the terrible conditions onboard there were constant threats of mutiny. The exploration took them down the coast of South America, where they began to run short of food and water. Finally, at Port St Julian in Patagonia (modern-day Argentina), the captains of three of the ships led a mutiny against Magellan. The mutiny was crushed, and the rest of the fleet continued onwards. Despite losing one of their vessels along the way, they finally found the passage they were seeking at the tip of South America. It is now known as the Strait of Magellan.



A monument to Ferdinand Magellan in Chile.



This map shows part of South America. Can you find the Strait of Magellan?

The remaining ships pressed on, reaching the Philippines in April 1521. Here they converted some of the population to Christianity, but got into conflict and Magellan was killed during the fighting. The rest of his crews sailed on to the Spice Islands and eventually just one of the five ships that set out returned to Spain. The route took them around the continent of Africa, and thus they became the first humans to complete a circumnavigation of the world.

This map shows the route taken by Ferdinand Magellan.



Magellan's voyage was crucially important in developing the European understanding of the geography and size of the globe. The account written by his crew member, Pigafetta, was a rich source of information for the scholars and scientists of the time.



# Abel Tasman

Nothing is known of Tasman's early life, apart from his birthplace, Lutjegast, in the Netherlands. As a young man, his first wife died, and he swiftly remarried. Soon after his second marriage, he sailed for the East Indies as an employee of the Dutch East India Company. His job was to patrol the area, looking for smugglers. He was almost killed at Ceram (now Seram, Indonesia) after landing and getting into conflict with the indigenous population. He returned to the Netherlands in 1637.

The following year, he and his wife set sail for the Indies. The next few years were spent on trading voyages, including trips to Japan and Vietnam.



A stamp printed in Australia showing a portrait of Abel Tasman and his ship Heemskerck.

In 1642, he was appointed the Commander of an exploratory trip, charged with exploring the seas to the south and east of Batavia (modern day Jakarta). On this trip, he found an island that he named Van Diemen's Land (later renamed Tasmania in his honour), as well as New Zealand, Tonga and Fiji. He sailed all the way around Australia without seeing it! His crew were the first Europeans to encounter Māori people, and the first people to eat a Christmas dinner in New Zealand.

When he returned, the company did not consider that he had made enough effort to investigate the lands he had discovered.



Freycinet Park in Tasmania.



A map of Tasmania.

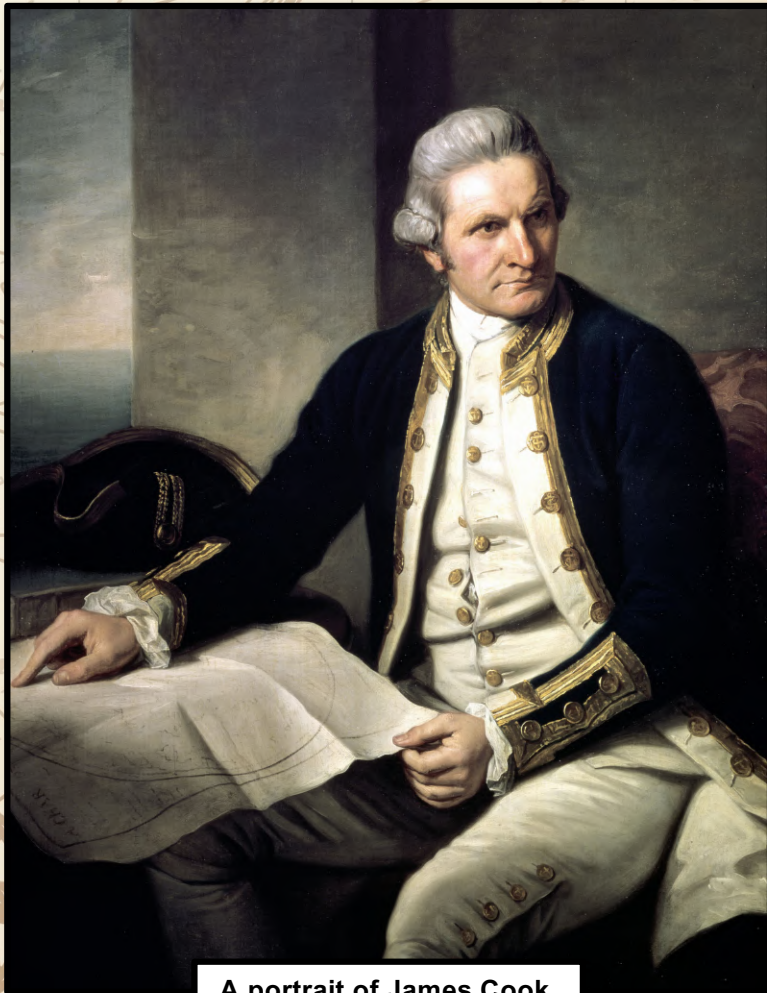
He set off again in 1644 to explore the North and West coasts of Australia and try to find a passage to South America. During this voyage, they mapped the north coast of Australia before returning to Batavia.

Tasman continued his seafaring career for some years, including leading a fleet to raid Spanish ships that were carrying silver, before retiring to Batavia and becoming a merchant. In Tasmania and New Zealand, many geographical features are named after him, such as the Tasman Glacier.



A view of the Tasman  
Glacier Lake.

# James Cook



A portrait of James Cook.

The son of a farm worker, James Cook, was brought up near Middlesbrough, England. At the age of 17, he moved to Whitby, on the coast, to work for a coal merchant. In 1755, he enlisted in the Royal Navy and was sent to North America, where he learnt how to make sea charts and undertake surveys.

By 1769, he had become a commander of a ship and was sent on an expedition to the southern hemisphere. The planet Venus was going to pass in front of the sun, a phenomenon that would only be visible south of the equator. The expedition was a scientific one, but there was also a secret mission; to look for the Southern Continent.

**Cook and his crew observed the astronomical event in Tahiti and afterwards continued to New Zealand. From there they set out to the Eastern Coast of Australia, which had not been explored by Europeans previously. Cook named the territory New South Wales.**

**After returning home in 1771, the following year Cook sailed south again and almost reached Antarctica before the perishing cold forced him to turn northwards. They carried with them a new sea watch, designed by John Harrison, which enabled them to fix longitude much more precisely than before, making navigation and mapping much more accurate.**



**A model of HMS Endeavour, a vessel commanded by James Cook on his voyage to Australia and New Zealand from 1769 to 1771.**



An illustration of Captain Cook arriving in Hawaii.

Cook's third voyage, in 1776, set out from Plymouth in the hope of finding a North West passage that joined the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. This voyage explored as far south as New Zealand and as far north as Alaska. With no luck in finding the route, Cook and his crew explored Hawaii. They set sail from the island, only to have to return due to a broken mast. A few days later, Cook was killed in a fight over the theft of a boat.

Cook is known for looking after his crew well, and his insistence on supplying fresh food, rather than dried rations, meant that his first voyage was completed without a single death from scurvy, which killed many sailors at the time.

# Matthew Flinders



A portrait of  
Matthew Flinders.

Matthew Flinders was the son of a surgeon. Aged 15, he joined the navy and was sent to the Southern hemisphere, where he explored Botany Bay and took out small boats to explore the area around Port Jackson, Australia.

His navy career took him on various expeditions and voyages. In 1803-05 he circumnavigated Van Diemen's land, thus proving for the first time that it was an island. He returned to England and published notes on his voyage. This brought him to the attention of the Admiralty.



Kangaroo Island,  
South Australia.

In 1801, as the Commander of the HMS Investigator, he set out to explore the South Australian coastline. The expedition visited Kangaroo Island, where they killed a large number of kangaroos as food for the voyage. They also sailed North and surveyed the coast of Queensland, collecting botanical specimens along the way.

Following a complete circumnavigation of Australia, Flinders set sail for England, but his ship was by now in a terrible state of repair, and he was forced to land at the French colony of Île de France (modern-day Mauritius).



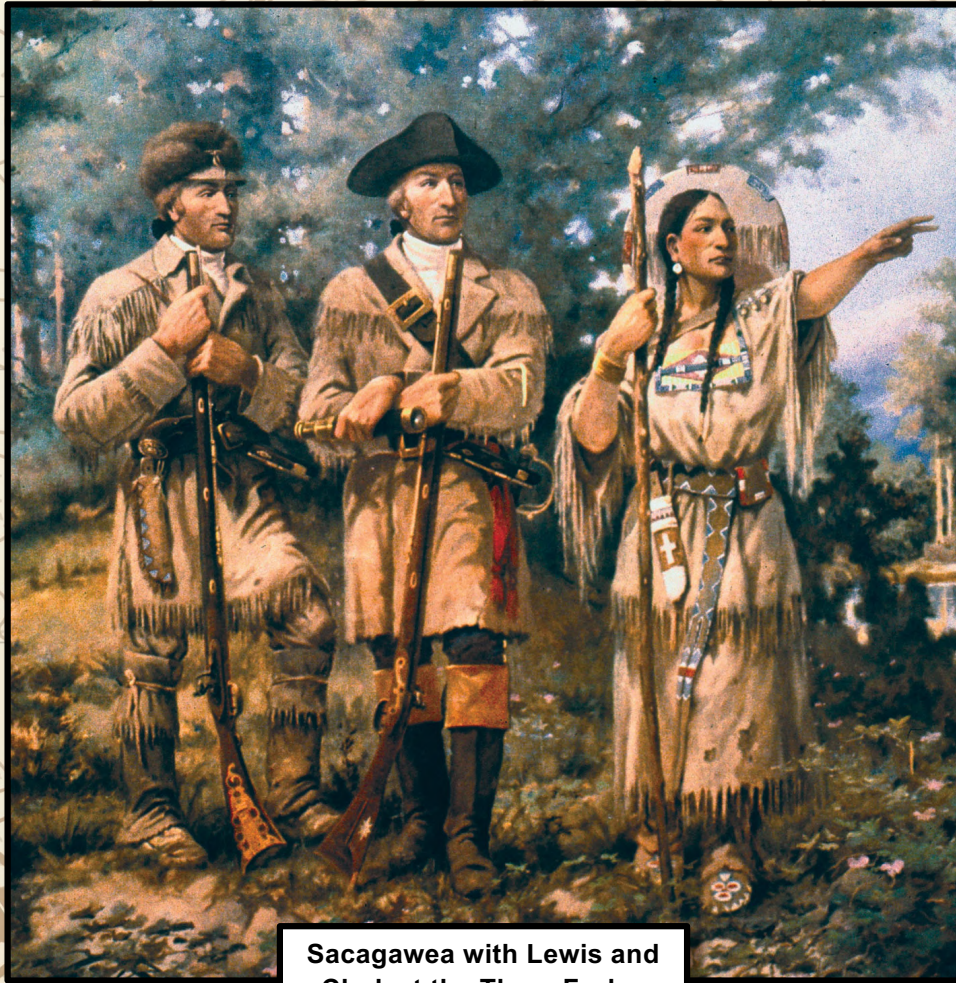
France and England were at war, so Flinders was swiftly arrested by the authorities on the island. Soon he was allowed to leave prison and live quietly, working on his writings about his voyage while efforts were made both in England and France to get him released. In 1806 the order came from the French Emperor, Napoleon, to free him but the governor of the colony still believed Flinders to be dangerous and he was not able to return to England until 1810.

Flinders continued to work on his writings, and his book *Voyage to Terra Australis* was published the day before he died. Flinders' work was very important to science as he was extremely thorough in his observations and recordings. He also made very many advances in the science of navigation.



A statue of Matthew Flinders.

# Sacagawea



Sacagawea with Lewis and Clark at the Three Forks.

Sacagawea was the daughter of a Shoshone chief in Idaho. When she was only 12, she was captured by an enemy tribe and sold. Her buyer, a French Canadian Trapper, Toussaint Charbonneau, married her.

In 1804, the Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were sent by the President, Thomas Jefferson, to survey land west of the Mississippi. The area had recently been bought from France, a transaction known as the Louisiana Purchase. They invited Charbonneau and Sacagawea to join their expedition, knowing that her local knowledge would be invaluable to them in their work.

She was the only woman on the expedition and was pregnant with her first child.



A painting of Lewis and Clark Expedition depicting Sacagawea with arms outstretched.

When Sacagawea's son was born in February 1805, she remained with the expedition. Perhaps the presence of a woman and small child in the group made it easier to convince the indigenous people they met that their intentions were peaceful. Sacagawea was fully involved in decisions about the expedition, as a valued member of the group.

On one occasion, the group encountered a group of Shoshone, only to find that their chief was Sacagawea's brother. They were able to buy horses from the Shoshone, making their passage across the Rocky Mountains much easier.

When the group reached the Pacific Ocean, they built a camp. Illness spread through them, and Sacagawea nursed them all back to health.

A few years after the expedition, Sacagawea and her husband settled in St Louis where Clark was an official. She gave birth to a daughter, in around 1812, but died a few months later. Her children were cared for by Clark and his wife, Julia Hancock, as part of their own family. Her son, John Baptiste Charbonneau, went on to become an explorer himself.

In 2000, a commemorative Sacagawea dollar was minted, to celebrate her achievements.



A Sacagawea dollar coin.

A Sakagawea obelisk at the believed site of her death.



# Amelia Earhart



A photo of Amelia Earhart,  
taken in 1937.

Earhart was born in Kansas, but her family moved around a great deal during her childhood, due to her father's work. While at school she enjoyed playing basketball and studied vehicle repair, which was unusual for a girl at that time.

She attended college for a short while, and then joined the Red Cross to work as a nurses' aide in Toronto, Canada, during World War I. When she had some time off, she enjoyed watching the local pilots flying at the airfield.

In 1920 she had her first taste of flight, as a passenger, and in 1921 she began flying lessons with a female instructor, Neta Snook. By the end of that year, she had passed her flight test and bought herself a second-hand yellow plane, that she called The Canary.

Once Earhart had her wings, there was no stopping her, and over the next few years, she set many records, beginning in 1922 when she became the first woman to fly solo at the height of 14,000ft (4,260m).

She went on to be the first woman to cross the Atlantic in a plane as a passenger in 1928 (the pilot was George Putnam, who would later become her husband). Her most famous achievement came in May 1932 when she became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic, in a record time of 14 hours 56 minutes.

She tirelessly promoted women in aviation, forming the Ninety-nines, an organisation for women pilots, in 1929.



An illustration of Amelia Earhart standing on a red Lockheed Vega.

In August 1932 she made the first solo nonstop flight across the USA by a woman, from Los Angeles to Newark. She was also the first woman to fly solo from Hawaii to the US mainland, which she achieved in 1935.

In 1937 she and her navigator, Fred Noonan, left Oakland California in her 2nd attempt to circumnavigate the globe. They stopped to refuel at Lae, in Papua New Guinea on July 2. They never reached their next refuelling stop; the plane disappeared and it has never been found. Her husband published her letters as part of the book Last Flight.



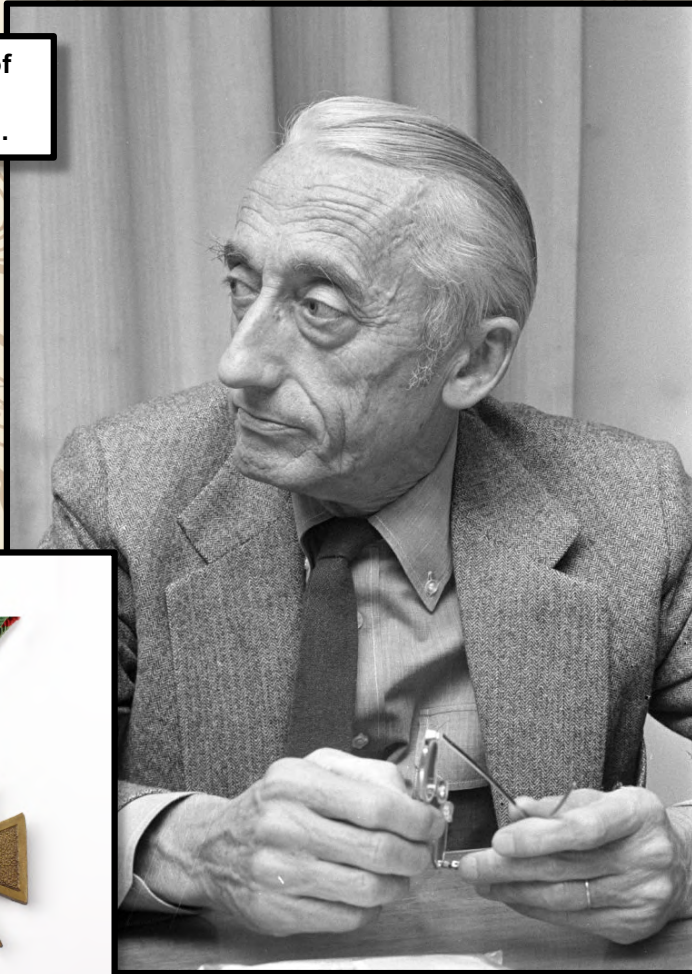
Amelia Earhart's  
Lockheed Electra 10E.



An illustration of Amelia  
Earhart sitting in the  
cockpit of an aeroplane.

# Jacques Cousteau

A photo of Jacques Cousteau.



The Croix de Guerre.



From a young age, Cousteau loved water, learning to swim at age 4. He was not very successful at school but he did show an aptitude for mechanics.

In 1933 he graduated from the French Naval Academy, planning a career as a navy pilot. His plans changed when he was almost killed in a car accident. As part of his recovery, he swam daily, and when a friend gave him a pair of goggles, he became increasingly interested in the rich variety of life to be found under the sea.

During World War II, Cousteau was a member of the French Resistance and after the war was awarded a medal, the Croix de Guerre, for his bravery.

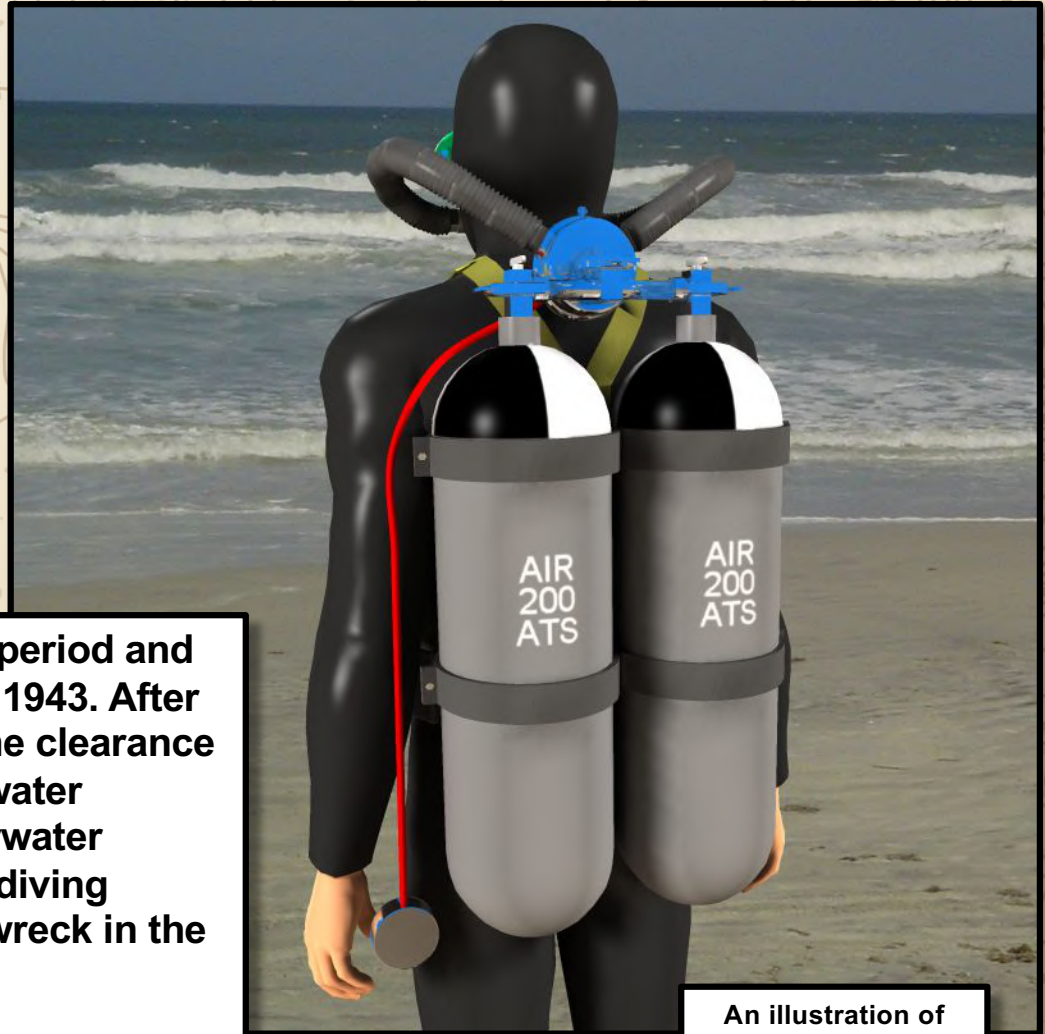




Cousteau on the Calypso.

He also began underwater filming during this period and was in a team that developed the Aqualung in 1943. After the war, he worked for the French navy, in mine clearance and marine research. Many interesting underwater expeditions followed, including the first underwater archaeology expedition to use self-contained diving equipment, which investigated a Roman shipwreck in the Mediterranean.

In 1950 he converted a British minesweeper, the Calypso, into a research boat. Realising that he needed to generate publicity to finance his work, he wrote a book about scuba diving and began making films, which soon began to win awards (he won three Oscars during his career).

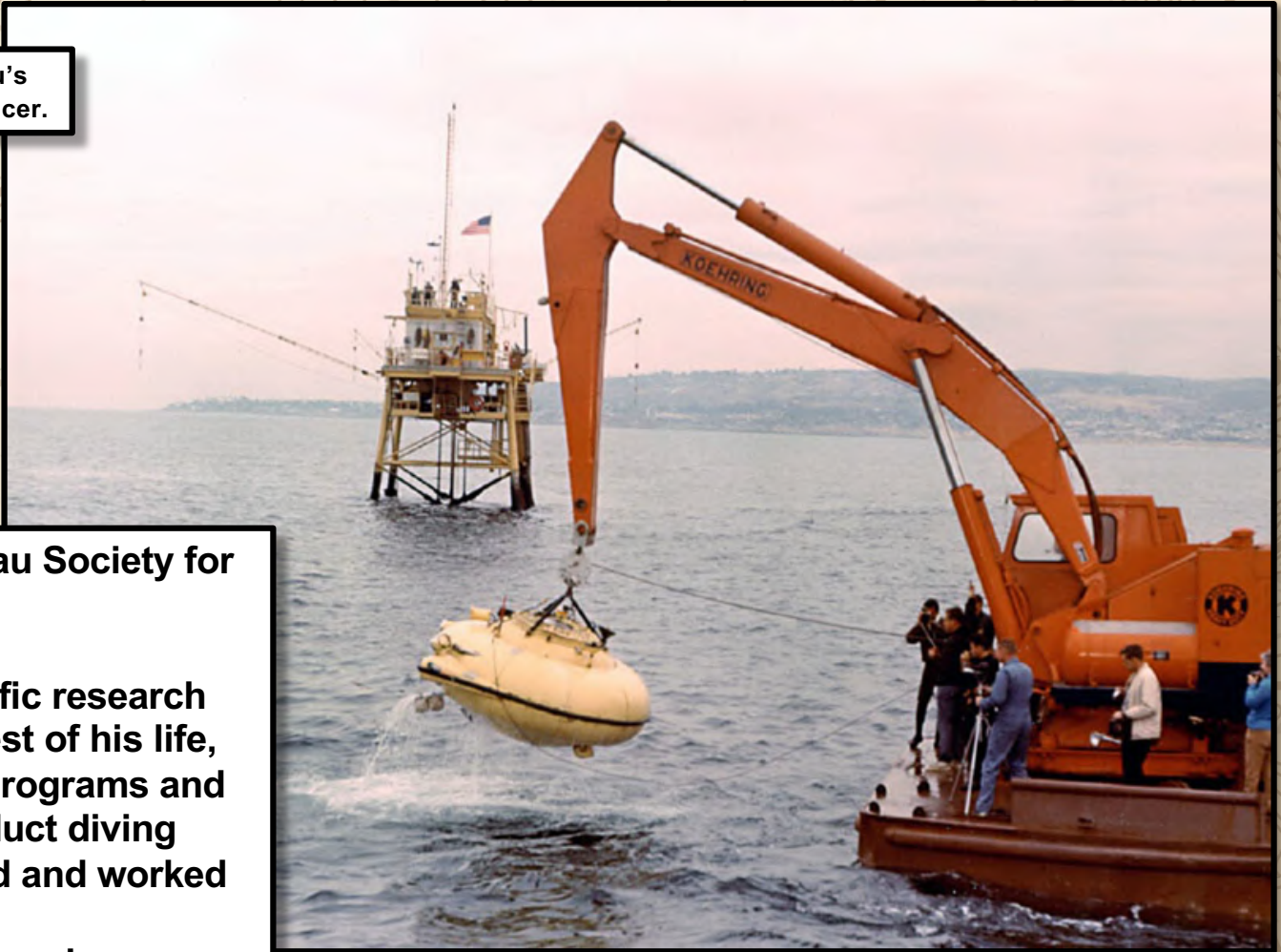


An illustration of the Aqua-Lung developed by Cousteau.

**Cousteau's  
Diving Saucer.**

**In 1974 he founded the Cousteau Society for marine conservation.**

**Cousteau combined his scientific research with his media career for the rest of his life, writing books and making TV programs and films. In 1957 he began to conduct diving experiments in which men lived and worked in undersea laboratories in the Mediterranean. His team developed many items of oceanographic equipment, including the diving saucer in 1959. He made annual research trips on the Calypso. His work in underwater exploration has given us great insight into life under the sea.**



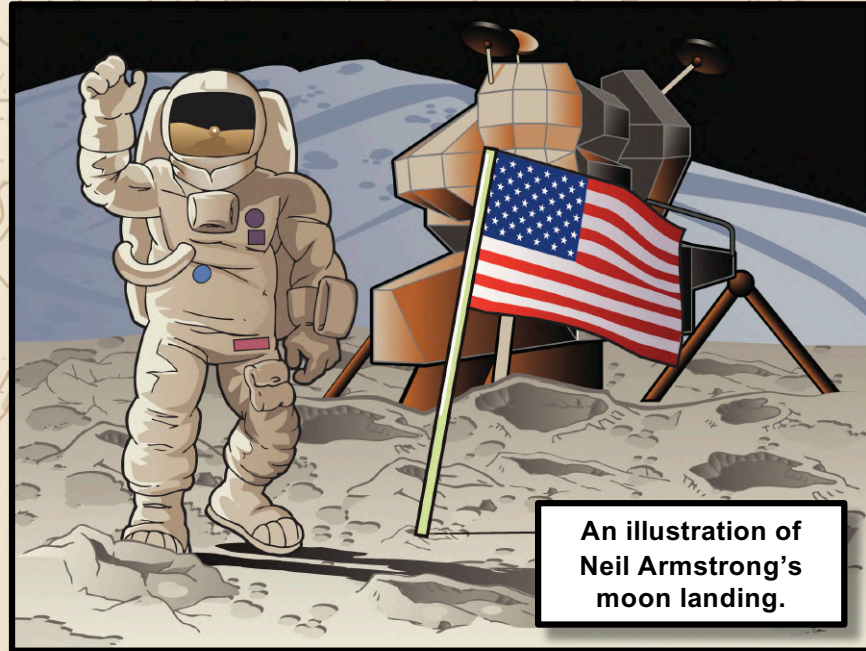
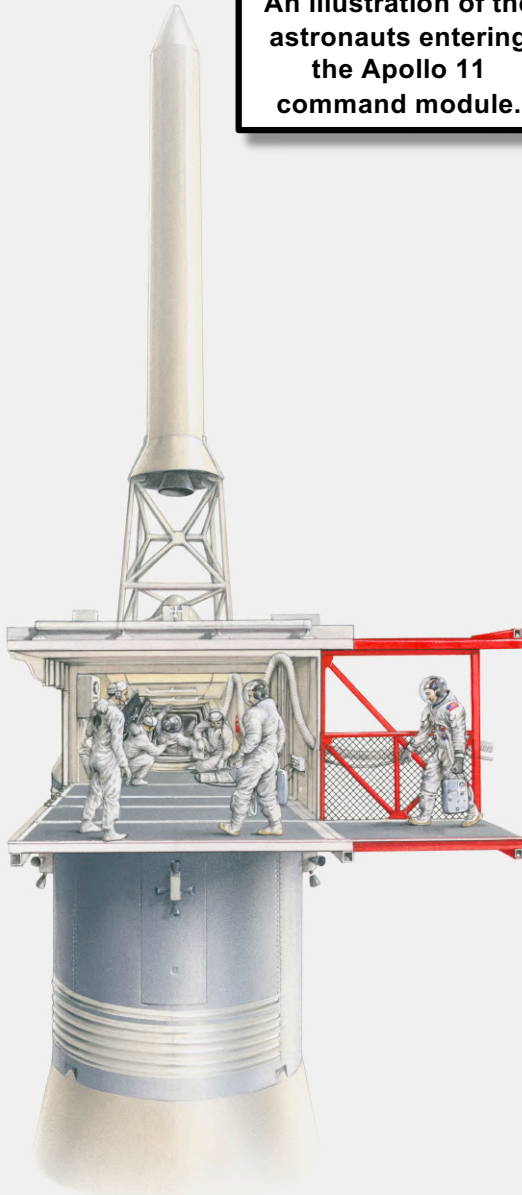
# Neil Armstrong

A photo of Neil Armstrong taken in 1952.



The first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong, took his first ride in an aeroplane when he was just six years old. He became a licensed pilot on his 16th birthday. He was also a keen Boy Scout, attaining the highest possible rank, Eagle Scout. His university studies, in aeronautical engineering, were interrupted by his military service in the Korean War. In 1955 he completed his degree and joined NACA (National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, later to become NASA) as a research pilot, testing rocket and supersonic planes. In 1962 he was selected to join the space program, to become an astronaut.

An illustration of the astronauts entering the Apollo 11 command module.



An illustration of Neil Armstrong's moon landing.

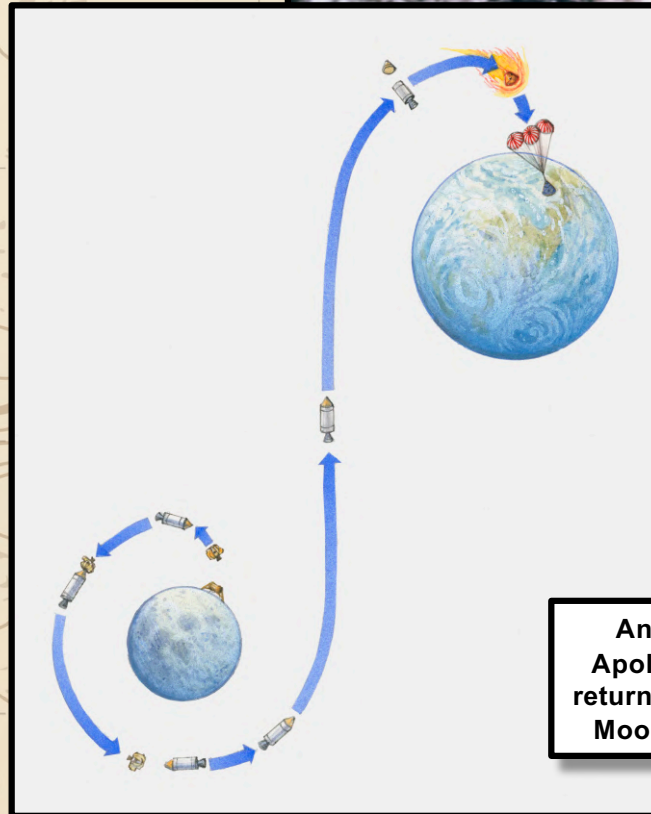
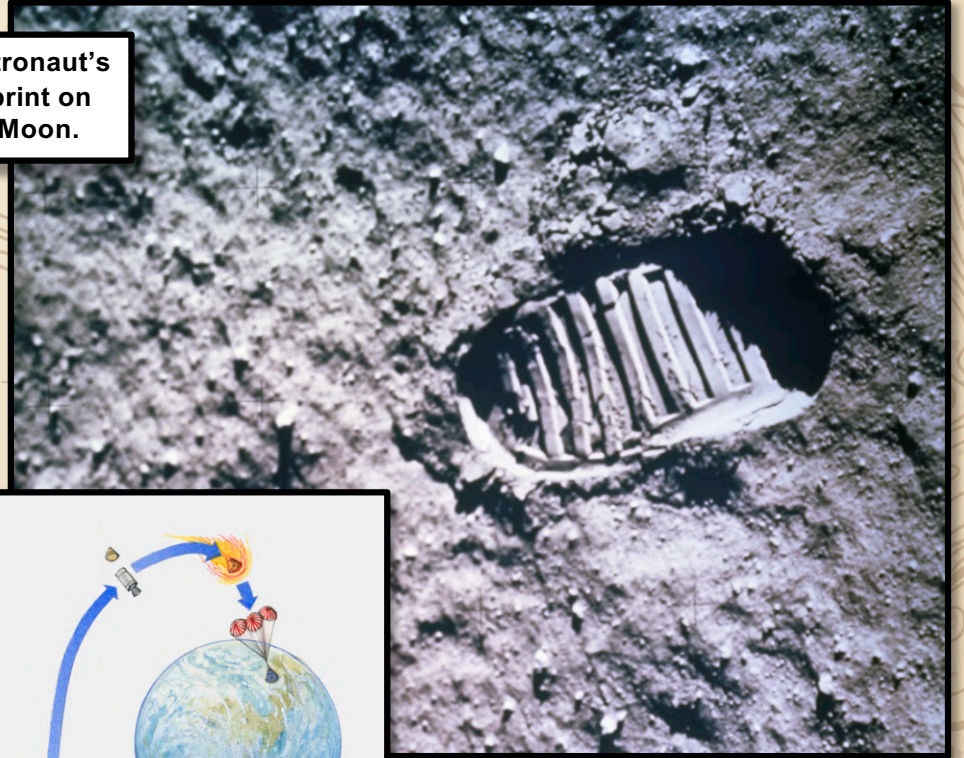
In 1966 he took part in the first successful mission for two space vehicles to dock in space, on Gemini 8. Although the docking was successful, the mission had to be cut short due to technical difficulties and Armstrong made an emergency landing in the Pacific Ocean.

Three years later, Armstrong was the Commander of the Apollo 11 mission, which was the first time a human had set foot on the Moon. It took four days to reach the Moon and the journey did not go entirely to plan. Armstrong had to take over the descent from the computer, which was sending them into a dangerous, rocky area.

As he stepped onto the moon, Armstrong uttered the famous phrase “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Along with Buzz Aldrin, he spent 21 hours and 36 minutes on the moon, conducting experiments and collecting samples to bring back to Earth. On their return from the Moon, the crew of Apollo 11 had to spend three weeks in quarantine in case they had brought back any dangerous microbes which could be harmful on Earth.

In 1971 Armstrong resigned from NASA and became a professor of aerospace engineering. He continued to be involved with space exploration, including working on the investigation into the Challenger disaster in 1986, but he was quite a private person and mainly kept out of the public eye.

An astronaut's footprint on the Moon.



An illustration of Apollo 11 making its return journey from the Moon back to Earth.

# Junko Tabei



An illustration of  
Junko Tabei.

Junko Tabei was born into a family of seven children in Fukushima, Japan. As a child, she and her siblings spent hours climbing on a local hill. When she was 10, a teacher took her to Mount Nasu, and her lifelong enthusiasm for climbing began in earnest. She studied English and American Literature at university, at a time when hardly any Japanese women went on to higher education. At university, she joined mountaineering groups, which often had nearly all-male membership. She found it quite challenging to get accepted, but she did not give up. She climbed as much as she could and reached the summit of all of Japan's highest mountains, including Mount Fuji.

In mid-1960 she met her husband, Masanobu Tabai, a well-known mountaineer. She decided to give up her work as an editor of a scientific journal and devote herself to climbing full time. In 1969 she founded the Joshi-Tohan women's mountaineering club. Their motto was "Let's go on an overseas expedition by ourselves".

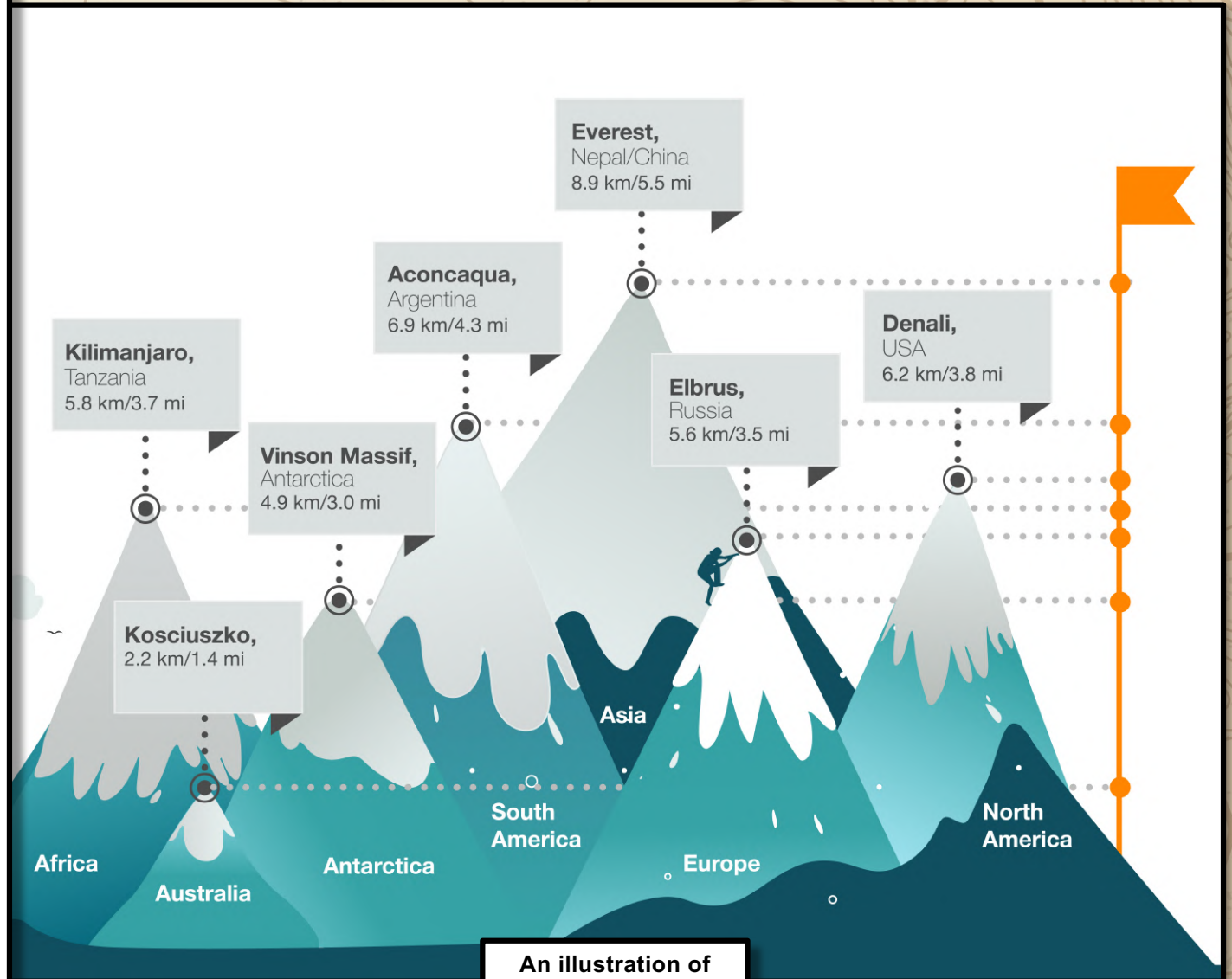
In 1975 she became the first woman to climb to the summit of Everest. The expedition took five years to arrange as it was difficult to get permission and funding. The group were almost killed by an avalanche and were rescued by their Sherpas, before reaching the summit.



Mount Everest.

Tabai became famous overnight in Japan but did not enjoy the attention and was unhappy when her two-year-old daughter was frightened by the cameras.

In 1992 Tabai became the first woman to complete **The Seven Summits**; a challenge to climb the highest peak on all seven continents. Alongside her climbing, she studied the ecology of mountains and worked with organisations protecting mountain environments. Tabai was diagnosed with cancer in 2012 but continued climbing until very near the end of her life. During her career, she climbed the highest peak in at least 76 countries.



An illustration of the Seven Summits.



# Yuri Gagarin

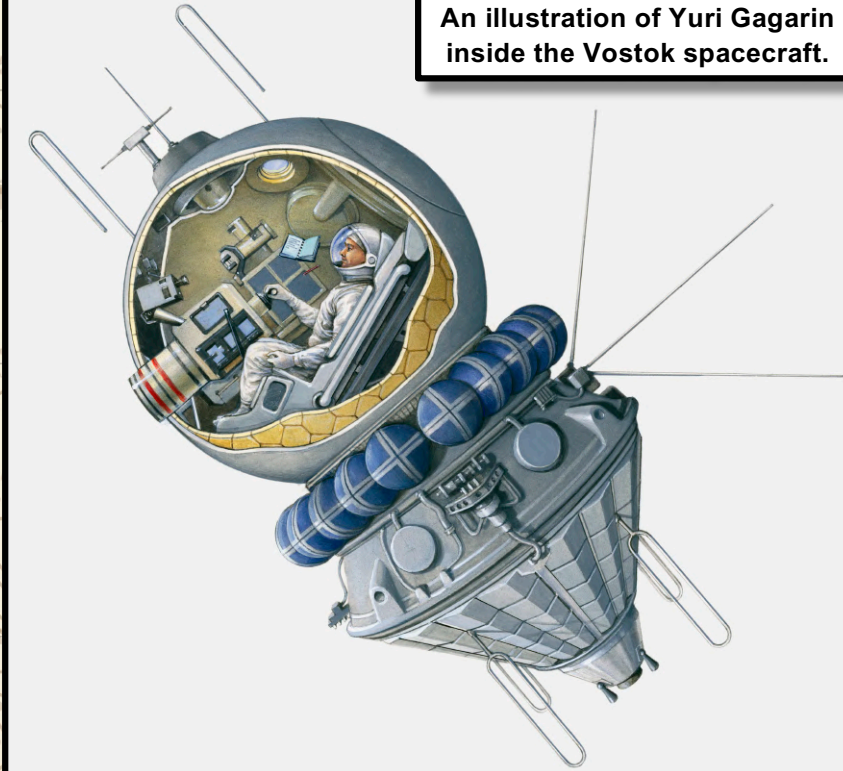


An image of Yuri Gagarin printed on a postage stamp to celebrate his achievement.

Yuri Gagarin was mostly brought up by his older sister, as his parents were working on a farm in the Soviet Union (now Russia). He had a technical education and was trained in metal work. He also joined a flying club, where he learned to fly light aircraft. In 1955, he began flight training and became a successful military pilot.

In 1960 he was one of only 20 pilots selected to join the Soviet space program and became part of an elite group who were destined to go into space. Eventually, he was chosen to be the first human to be launched into space. He was a popular choice, and at only 1.57 metres (5ft 2in) tall, his small stature was an advantage in a cramped spacecraft.

**An illustration of Yuri Gagarin inside the Vostok spacecraft.**



**A reproduction of the Vostok 1 rocket.**



**On the 12th of April 1961, his ship Vostok 1 orbited the Earth for 108 minutes, at a maximum height of 187 miles (301 km). He became a great celebrity and toured the world to promote his achievement. He was awarded the highest Soviet honour, Hero of the Soviet Union.**

**After his flight he continued to work in space exploration, designing reusable spacecraft and training other cosmonauts. He was banned from taking part in any other missions though, as officials feared that he would be killed. He also served in the Supreme Soviet, which made laws in the Soviet Union.**

The Yuri Gagarin monument in Moscow.



Yuri Gagarin depicted on a Russian coin.



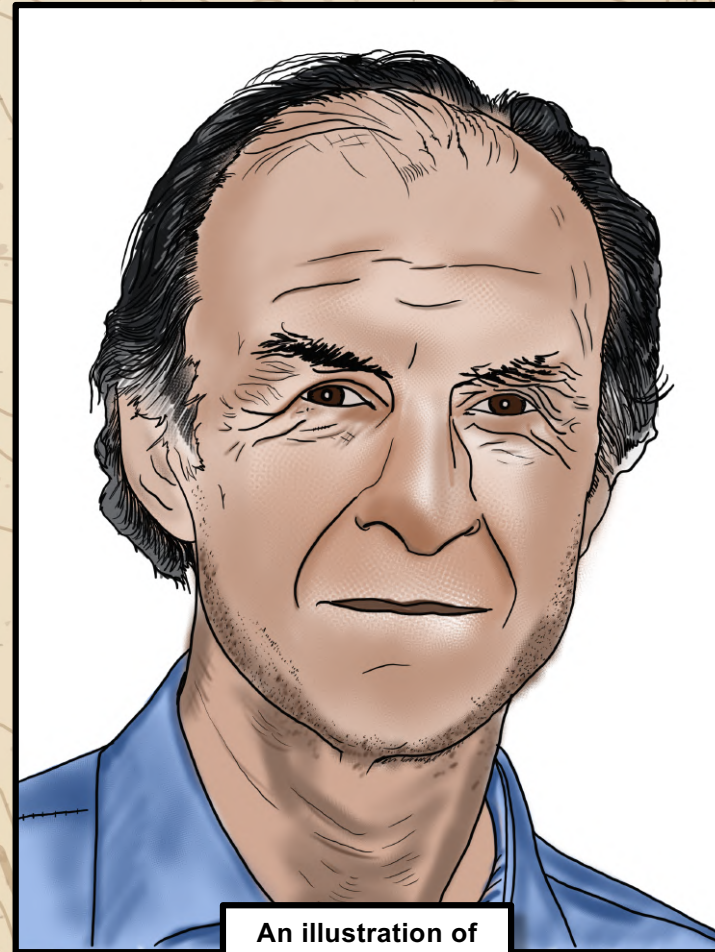
Following his successful flight, many streets and buildings in the Soviet Union were named after him. There is even a Gagarin crater on the far side of the moon. His hometown Gzhatsk was renamed Gagarin after his death in 1968. His face has appeared on Russian notes and coins, and the Apollo 11 astronauts left a medal commemorating his achievement on the moon.

In 2011, the 12th of April was declared the International Day of Human Spaceflight, and in Russia and other former Soviet Union countries it is celebrated as Cosmonautics Day.

# Ranulph Fiennes

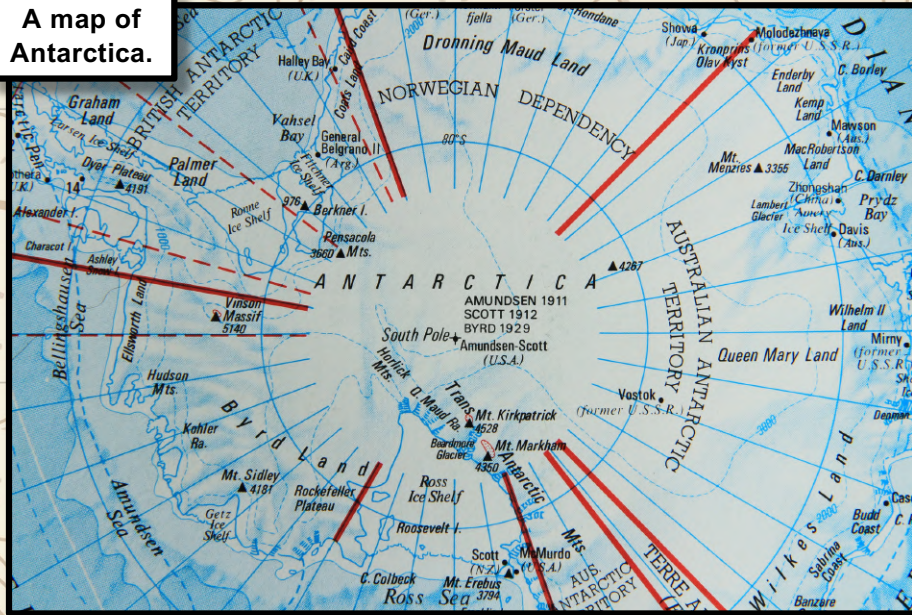
British Ranulph Twisleton-Wykeham-Fiennes was born just after the death of his father in WWII. When he was a young child, the family moved to his grandmother's home in South Africa, where he lived until he was sent to Eton in 1954. As a young man, he joined the military and went on to become the youngest captain in the British Army at the time, receiving honours for his service.

In 1972 he and his team began to prepare for the Transglobe Expedition. The Expedition set off in 1979, with the aim of circumnavigating the world, keeping as close as possible to the Greenwich Meridian. This involved crossing both the North and South poles. The expedition took three arduous years to complete, including three months drifting on an ice floe.



An illustration of Ranulph Fiennes.

A map of Antarctica.



A mountain peak in Antarctica.




During the late 1980s Fiennes made several unsuccessful attempts to reach the North Pole unsupported (without a team bringing supplies etc.), and in 1992-3 he crossed Antarctica (although he did not quite make it to the opposite shore).

He also tried to hike solo to the North Pole; on this attempt, he fell through the ice and had to have some portions of his fingers removed due to frostbite.

As well as his polar expeditions he travelled to many other parts of the world; in 1991 his team discovered the ancient city of Ubar in Oman.

In 2003 he ran seven marathons on seven consecutive days on seven continents, just four months after having heart surgery following a heart attack.



**In 2009 Fiennes became the oldest Briton to climb Mount Everest. This feat also made him the first person ever to reach the summit of Mount Everest and cross both poles.**

**In 2015 he completed the toughest footrace on Earth – The Marathon des Sables. The route runs for 156 miles (251km) through the Sahara desert. At 71, he was the oldest Briton to complete the race.**

**Most of Fiennes' expeditions are fundraisers, and over his career, he has raised millions of pounds for charity.**

**Sand dunes in the Sahara desert.**