

Marco Polo's trip to China at the end of the 1200s made Europeans want to find an all-water route to and from Asia. The search began in the 1400s, with the Portuguese leading the way.

In 1415, Prince Henry of Portugal (called "the Navigator") set up a school to train sailors for the long ocean voyage to Asia. Under Henry, the Portuguese invented a new kind of ship called the caravel. They also decided on a route. They planned to go south from Portugal, circle around Africa, and then sail across the Indian Ocean to Asia. Since no one knew whether it was possible to sail around Africa, Portuguese caravels began sailing down the African coast, looking for the end of the continent.

Finally, in 1487, ships commanded by Bartholomeu Dias made it around the southern tip of Africa. Dias knew he could sail on to Asia, but his men refused to go farther. So he returned to Portugal, having proved that Europeans could reach Asia by sea.

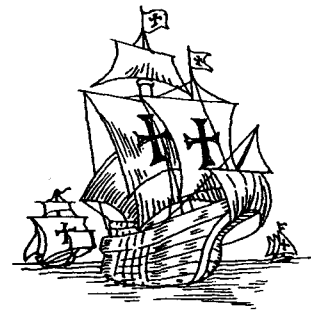
The success of Dias disappointed Christopher Columbus. He had been trying to win Portuguese support for his plan to reach Asia by sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean. The Portuguese now had no reason to try that route. Columbus went to Spain.

In 1492, Columbus convinced the Spanish rulers to back his plan. Of course, he never did reach Asia. But his explorations that year and on three later trips led to a vast Spanish empire in the New World. The Portuguese, meanwhile, finished the task they had started under Prince Henry. In 1498, Vasco da Gama reached Asia from Portugal by following the route around Africa.

Directions: Use facts about European explorers to fill in the crossword puzzle below.

Across

- 2. Prince Henry's nickname
- 4. Ship invented by Portuguese
- 6. ____ backed Columbus' plan.
- 7. The Portuguese planned to cross the ____ Ocean to get to Asia.
- 9. Vasco da ____ was the first European to reach Asia by an all-water route.



Down

- 1. Prince Henry's country
- 3. Columbus planned to reach Asia by crossing the ____ Ocean.
- 5. The Portuguese route meant sailing around the tip of ____.
- 8. Columbus never reached ____.

