

World Travelers

Now let's talk about the Europeans who "discovered" America. In the late 1400s, there were no planes, no cars and no trains. It was hard to get from place to place. Almost everyone spent their entire lives near the place where they were born. Travel was so rare that people who lived in Europe, Asia and Africa didn't even know that North and South America existed.

Explorers changed all this. These men sailed ships on long journeys and discovered places that no other European had ever been to before.

The most famous of these explorers was Christopher Columbus. In 1492, three ships led by Columbus left Spain heading west.

Columbus knew the world was round, but he thought the earth was much smaller than it really is. He was hoping to find a better way to get to Asia. Instead, Columbus discovered some islands now known as the Bahamas, which are east of Florida. Thinking he had discovered a place near India (in Asia), Columbus called the natives "Indians." That is why Native Americans are called American Indians today.

A few years later, an explorer named Amerigo Vespucci sailed up and down the coast of South America. Vespucci began to realize that the land he was exploring was nowhere near Asia. He began calling it the "New World."

A few years later, mapmakers began calling the New World "America," naming it for Amerigo Vespucci.

Ferdinand Magellan was another great explorer. In 1519, Magellan left Spain heading west with five ships and 237 men. His **expedition** crossed the Atlantic Ocean and went around South America. They crossed the Pacific Ocean, then the Indian Ocean. The expedition then rounded Africa, headed north and made it all the way back to Spain.

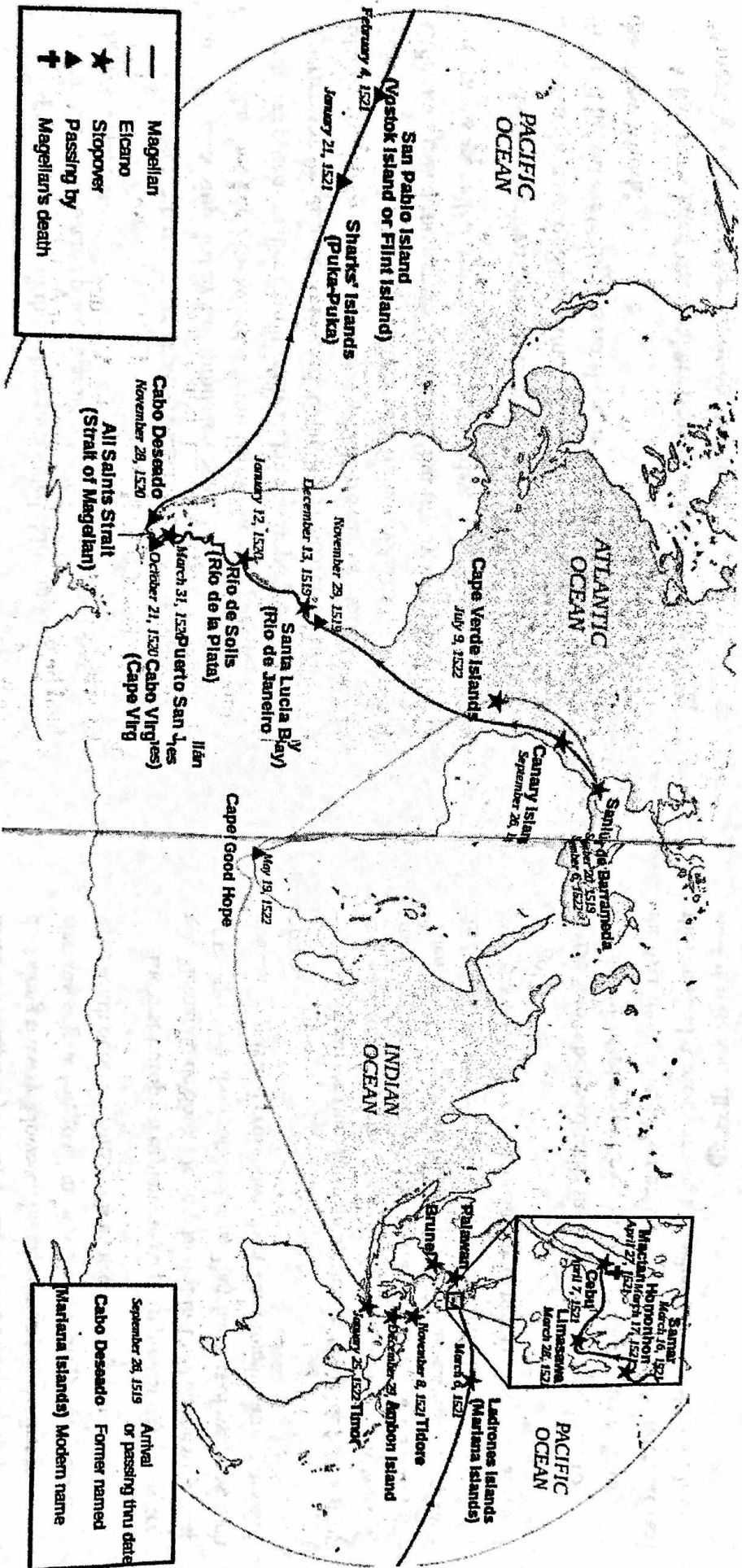
Unfortunately, only one ship and only 18 of Magellan's men made the complete journey all the way back to Spain. Magellan died along the way. However, his expedition was the first to **circumnavigate** (or, go all the way around) the globe. Today the strait south of South America is named for Magellan.

The first European explorer to come to present-day Tennessee was Hernando de Soto. De Soto landed in 1539 on the west coast of Florida with about 600 soldiers. They had lots of weapons, such as axes, swords and **crossbows**. They also brought cattle, hogs and horses.

As you can see from the map on the next page, de Soto's army moved through the present-day southeast U.S. Along the way, they rested for three weeks about where Chattanooga is today. Then they headed west, fighting with Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians along the way. De Soto's army also **enslaved** many Native Americans that they met, forcing them to help find food and look for gold.

De Soto is believed to be the first European explorer to discover the Mississippi River. In May 1541, his army found the river about where Memphis is today. They built rafts, crossed the river, and made their way into what is now Arkansas. It was there that de Soto died. ❄️

The route taken by the Magellan Expedition



— Magellan
 — Elcano
 ★ Stopover
 ▲ Passing by
 † Magellan's death

September 26, 1519 Arrival
 or passing thru date
 Cabo Desgado Former name
 Mariana Islands Modern name

Samar
 March 16, 1521
 Homobonhon
 April 27, 1521
 Limasawa
 March 26, 1521
 Cebu
 April 7, 1521

Magellan Expedition