

Ferdinand Magellan (a Portuguese sea captain sailing for Spain) had an important goal when he left the town of Seville on the 10th of August, 1519: Find a westward route to the Spice (Maluku) Islands. He did not personally achieve that goal, but his crew (led by Juan Sebastian Elcano) did.

Despite a grossly inaccurate map, and unbelievably wretched conditions aboard ship, remnants of Magellan's crew circumnavigated the world in a ship called Victoria. Their expedition lasted about three years.

Magellan (1480-1521) never planned to sail around the globe. His assignment—to reach the Spice Islands, also known as the Moluccas (or Maluku Islands), thereby proving they belonged to Spain—already had more-than-enough challenges.

One of the most significant problems was to find a way (safer than sailing round Cape Horn) to reach the Pacific (via the Atlantic) Ocean. In October of 1520, he and his men found such a passageway—between Chile and Tierra del Fuego—known today as the Strait (or Straits) of Magellan.

A month later—on the 28th of November, 1520—Magellan's expedition reached the Pacific Ocean. Because the water seemed so calm (especially compared to the Atlantic), Magellan gave the vast body of water a name which means "peaceful sea."

Five ships originally began the expedition—*Trinidad, San Antonio, Concepción, Victoria* and *Santiago*—but only *Victoria* made it back to the starting point.

See, also:

[Magellan and his Voyage of Discovery - Part 2](#)

[Magellan and his Voyage of Discovery - Part 3](#)

[Magellan and his Voyage of Discovery - Part 4](#)

[Magellan and his Voyage of Discovery - Part 5](#)

Credits:

Clip from "[Voyages of Discovery: Circumnavigation](#)," produced for the BBC.

[Paul Rose](#) (former ten-year base commander of the British Rothera research station in Antarctica) presents the unimaginable story of Ferdinand Magellan and his crew (as they attempt to find a westward passage to the Spice Islands), in "Voyages of Discovery - Circumnavigation."

Directed by Sean Smith; written by Chris Bould.

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