

Chronology of the Most Important Voyages

To help the reader I have summed up, in chronological order, the voyages undertaken on behalf of Spain and Portugal that are mentioned in this book.

1. Bartolomeu Dias sailed from Lisbon in August 1487, followed the coast of West Africa, then widened his course towards the west. After a violent storm, he found a free passage to the Indian Ocean and continued his voyage as far as the present-day port of Kwaaihoek at the mouth of the Boesmans River in eastern South Africa. During the return voyage, he sighted Cabo das Tormentas, now called the Cape of Good Hope. He arrived in Lisbon in December 1488.
2. Christopher Columbus sailed on August 3, 1492 from the port of Palos in Andalusia to cross the Atlantic Ocean and reach Asia. Instead, he landed on the island of San Salvador in the Lucayan archipelago (the Bahamas). He continued north and then when returning south again he reached the island of Haiti/Hispaniola. He returned to Palos on March 5, 1493.
3. Christopher Columbus sailed from Cadiz on September 25, 1493 to take colonists to Haiti where he arrived on November 22. He undertook a voyage of exploration towards the west and north-west between April 24 and September 29, 1494. After capturing numerous slaves, he arrived back in Cadiz on June 11, 1495.
4. Four merchants, including Amerigo Vespucci, set sail from Cadiz on May 10, 1497. The fleet explored the north-eastern coast of South America. They continued northwards along the Lesser Antilles reaching Hispaniola, from where they sailed westwards to Yucatán and explored the isthmus between the two parts of the New World. The merchants repaired the ships, captured the men of a tribe of cannibals as slaves, and arrived back in Cadiz on October 15, 1498.
5. On July 8, 1497, the 'First Fleet' destined to reach the markets of India set sail from Lisbon under the command of Vasco da Gama. On December 25, the fleet reached the eastern coast of South Africa, which was given the name Natal. Between April and May 1498, they crossed from Malindi to Calicut. The return voyage began on Au-

- gust 29, 1498 and the crossing as far as the African coast lasted 90 days, during which most of the crews died of scurvy. Only one ship returned to Lisbon in early September 1499.
6. Christopher Columbus departed from Cadiz for his third voyage on May 30, 1498, landing in South America in the Gulf of Paria on August 1, 1498, arriving at Santo Domingo, Haiti, on August 30 of that year. As the result of the colonists' rebellion, Columbus and his brothers were taken back to Cadiz in chains, arriving in late November 1500.
 7. On May 16, 1499, Ojeda, de La Cosa and Vespucci sailed from Cadiz. At the Canary Islands, Vespucci and de La Cosa parted company with Ojeda and continued to the Cape Verde Islands from where they sailed to cross the Atlantic Ocean. They reached the mouth of the Amazon River, sailing south as far as the Cape of Saint Augustine, inverting their course and following the coast beyond the island of Trinidad. They were reunited with Ojeda and on November 22 set sail for Cadiz, once again parting company with Ojeda, and arriving on January 8, 1500.
 8. The 'Second Fleet' left from Lisbon on March 9, 1500, heading for the East Indies under the command of Pedro Álvares Cabral. The fleet widened its course too far to the west and on April 26, 1500 reached Porto Seguro in present-day Brazil. On May 1, the fleet set sail again, but after four ships were destroyed by a storm, it reached Calicut at the end of 1500 where a violent clash took place with the local inhabitants. The ships returned separately towards Lisbon, the first two meeting the fleet of which Amerigo Vespucci was the navigator at the end of May 1501.
 9. On May 10, 1501, a small fleet of three ships led by Amerigo Vespucci set sail from Lisbon. At the end of the month, they encountered two ships from Cabral's fleet in the port of Bezeguiche (now Dakar). Following a difficult ocean crossing, on August 17 they reached Brazil at ~40°20' West, proceeded southward and reached a place they named Cananea (at Brazil's southern border). Amerigo calculated the longitude at different places along the coast. On March 6, 1502, they reached the port of San Julián. On reaching 52° South, the fleet began its return voyage, arriving in Lisbon in September 1502.
 10. On May 9, 1502, Christopher Columbus left Cadiz on his fourth voyage. He was in search of a passage from the Caribbean Sea towards Asia and reached Santo Domingo, Haiti, on June 29. In early July, a hurricane destroyed 24 Spanish ships. Columbus reached Panama sometime in March 1503; he discovered a productive gold mine but not the passage to the west. During the return voyage, the crews took refuge on the coast of Jamaica where they remained for a year. They arrived in Haiti on August 13, 1504 and returned to the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda in Spain on November 7, 1504.
 11. Amerigo Vespucci sailed from Lisbon on May 10, 1503 for his fourth voyage with the goal of reaching the Moluccas. The fleet was under the command of Gonçalo Coelho who was wrecked on the rocks of Quaresima Island (now called Fernando de Noronha) and then continued together with a merchant's ship. After a stop at All Saints' Bay (Baía de Todos os Santos), a base, including a fort, was built at the bay of Caravelas. They returned to Lisbon on June 28, 1504.

Measurements

The measurements relating to tonnage, weight and length are those provided by Amerigo Vespucci. The tonnage measurements are in tuns, or *butti*, greater than the modern metric tons by 20%. The weights of dry food stuffs are in pounds (c. 450 grams); in this text, they are converted to kilograms or quintals. The most common measurements of length used by Amerigo are leagues and miles. According to him, each league is equivalent to four miles, although it is not clear what the length of a mile is: the Roman mile was c. 1,600 m, the same figure then used in the Iberian Peninsula. However, Vespucci's estimations are most often vague. In this text, each land mile equals c. 1,200 m, each nautical mile 1,400 m. The numerical estimates of populations, of times, or of ages are usually reliable but were often exaggerated by ancient translators. Christopher Columbus used measurements more correctly, so that one league equalled 3.5 Roman miles; he used latitudes in a correct manner but adjusted them according to need.

