
The Greatest Explorer In

...And most people have never heard of him! No, not Columbus, nor Marco Polo, not even Magellan, but...Captain James Cook! The problem was that he wasn't part of history's great Age of Exploration in the 1400s, 1500s, and 1600s. He came later and is thus often overlooked when discussing explorers.

"James Cook was born in 1728 in Marton, England. His father was a Scottish migrant farm worker who allowed James to apprentice on coal carrying boats at the age of eighteen. While working in the North Sea, Cook spent his free time learning math and navigation. This led to his appointment as mate. Searching for something more adventurous, in 1755 he volunteered for the British Royal Navy and took part in the Seven Years War and was an instrumental part of the surveying of the St. Lawrence River, which helped in the capture of Quebec from the French.

The First Voyage

Following the war, Cook's skill at navigation and interest in astronomy made him the perfect candidate to lead an expedition planned by the Royal Society and Royal Navy to Tahiti to observe the infrequent passage of Venus across the face of the sun. Precise measurements of this event were needed worldwide in order to determine the accurate distance between the earth and sun.

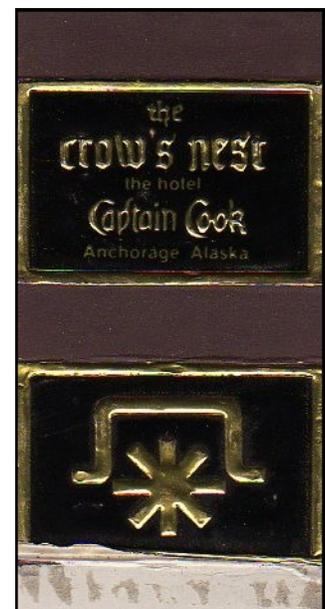
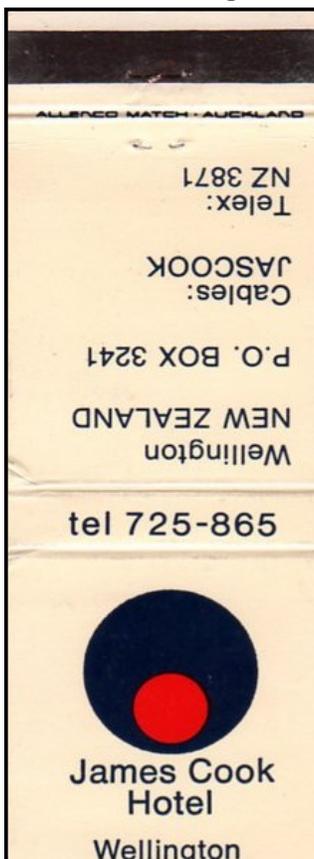
Cook set sail from England in August, 1768 on the *Endeavor*. His first stop was Rio de Janeiro, then the *Endeavor* proceeded west to Tahiti where camp was established and the transit of Venus was measured. After the stop in Tahiti, Cook had orders to explore and claim possessions for Britain. He charted New Zealand and the east coast of Australia (known as New Holland at the time).

From there he proceeded to the East Indies (Indonesia) and across the Indian Ocean to the Cape of

Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. It was an easy voyage between Africa and home; arriving in July, 1771.

The Second Voyage

The Royal Navy promoted James Cook to Captain following his return and



The History Of The World!

had a new mission for him, to find Terra Australis Incognita, the unknown southern land. In the 18th century, it was believed that there was much more land south of the equator than had already been discovered. Cook's first voyage did not disprove claims of a huge landmass near the South Pole between New Zealand and South America.

Two ships, the *Resolution* and the *Adventure* left in July, 1772 and headed to Cape Town just in time for the southern summer. Captain Cook proceeded south from Africa and turned around after encountering large amounts of floating pack ice (he came within 75 miles of Antarctica). He then sailed to New Zealand for the winter and in summer proceeded south again past the Antarctic Circle (66.5° South). By circumnavigating the southern waters around Antarctica, he indisputably determined that there was no habitable southern continent. During this voyage he also discovered several island chains in the Pacific Ocean.

After Cook arrived back in Britain in July, 1775, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and received their highest honor for his geographic exploration. Soon Cook's skills would again be put to use.

The Third Voyage

The Navy wanted Cook to determine if there was a Northwest Passage, a mythical waterway which would allow sailing between Europe and Asia across the top of North America. Cook set out in July of 1776 and rounded the southern tip of Africa and headed east across the Indian Ocean. He passed between the North and South islands of New Zealand (through Cook Strait) and towards the coast of North America. He sailed along the coast of what would become Oregon, British Columbia and Alaska and proceeded through the Bering Strait. His navigation of the Bering Sea was halted by the impassible Arctic ice.

Upon yet again discovering that something did not exist, he continued his voyage. His last stop was in February, 1779 at the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) where he was killed in a fight with islanders over the theft of a boat.

Cook's explorations dramatically increased European knowledge of the world. As a ship captain and skilled cartographer, he filled in many gaps on world maps. His contributions to eighteenth century science helped propel further exploration and discovery for many generations." [<http://geography.about.com/cs/captaincook/a/jamescook.htm>]

Cook covered over 70,000 miles on his second voyage alone. All in all, he probably chalked up more miles than any other sailor in history!

