

*The following article is slightly adapted from the Discover website, which is delivered by DHL.*

### **Where would we be without the explorers? Without the pioneers? Without those who did it first?**

Like the first fish to crawl out of the primordial waters onto dry land 530 million years ago, perhaps the most important exploration undertaken by any creature on the planet. Was it looking for fame or money? No – it was simply demonstrating the inexorable urge of life to seek, discover and explore.

#### **The Romans**

The Romans did a lot of exploring in Europe, Asia, and Africa. In 61 AD, Emperor Nero sent a small group of Praetorian guards to find the source of the Nile. The party navigated 600 miles up the river until they reached the swamplands of South Sudan. Here, facing crocodiles and hippos, they had to turn back as the water could only bear a small boat containing one person. Sounds appropriate for Susie and her Rustler 36.

#### **The Chinese**

The Chinese were great explorers as well, sailing over the years across the Indian Ocean and around the tip of the Arabian Peninsula to Egypt. It helped that the Chinese invented the magnetic compass, first using it for maritime navigation in the 12th century AD during the Song dynasty. The compass was a magnetic needle floating in a bowl of water.

#### **The Vikings**

The Vikings didn't sit still either. Leif Ericson may have been the first European to travel to North America, 500 years before Christopher Columbus. Exploration was in his genes. His father, Erik the Red, sailed from Iceland in 982 AD to investigate the mysterious country to the west. After three years, he returned and tried to convince Icelanders to settle there by giving it the more appealing name of Greenland. He neglected to mention that three-quarters of the island is covered by the only permanent ice sheet outside of Antarctica.

## **The Polynesians**

Don't forget the Polynesians. These Pacific Islanders were exploring the surrounding ocean for 5,000 years, discovering New Zealand in 1280 AD. Like the Chinese, they developed a key technology to assist their maritime endeavors – the outrigger canoe. These vessels had supporting floats fastened to the side of the hull, increasing speed and stability.

## **The Age of Discovery**

People couldn't stop exploring in the Age of Discovery. Various European nations all went around the world discovering and colonizing, from Columbus in America to Vasco de Gama in India. The world map was completed later by Brit James Cook, who traveled to Australia, and Russian Vitus Bering, who explored the Bering Strait.

## **The Final Frontier**

With Voyager probes leaving the Solar System and manned missions to Mars planned over the next decades, the spirit of exploration is still going strong. The next frontiers are off-planet. The Voyager probes will travel in interstellar space carrying details about Earth on 12-inch gold records.