

Explorations

See also [Explorers](#)

Country or place	Event	Explorer	Date
AFRICA			
Sierra Leone	Explored	Hanno , Carthaginian seaman	c. 520 B.C.
Zaire River (Congo)	Mouth visited ¹	Diogo Cão, Portuguese explorer	c. 1484
Cape of Good Hope	Rounded	Bartolomeu Diaz , Portuguese explorer	1488
Gambia River	Explored	Mungo Park , Scottish explorer	1795
Sahara	Crossed	Dixon Denham and Hugh Clapperton, English explorers	1822– 1823
Zambezi River	Explored ¹	David Livingstone , Scottish explorer	1851
Sudan	Explored	Heinrich Barth , German explorer	1852– 1855
Victoria Falls	Explored ¹	David Livingstone , Scottish explorer	1855
Lake Tanganyika	Explored ¹	Richard Burton and John Speke , British explorers	1858
Lake Victoria, identified as the source of the Nile	Explored	John Speke , British explorer	1858
Zaire River (Congo)	Traced	Sir Henry M. Stanley , British explorer	1877
ASIA			
Punjab (India)	Invaded	Alexander the Great , king of Macedonia	327 B.C.
China	Explored	Marco Polo , Italian traveler	c. 1272
Tibet	Visited	Odoric of Pordenone, Italian monk	c. 1325
Southern China	Explored	Niccolò dei Conti, Venetian traveler	c. 1440
India	Explored (Cape route)	Vasco da Gama , Portuguese navigator	1498
Japan	Visited	St. Francis Xavier of Spain, missionary	1549
Arabia	Explored	Carsten Niebuhr , German explorer	1762
China	Explored	Ferdinand Richthofen , German scientist	1868

Mongolia	Explored	Nikolai M. Przhevalsky , Russian explorer	1870– 1873
Central Asia	Explored	Sven Hedin , Swedish scientist	1890– 1908
EUROPE			
Shetland Islands	Visited	Pytheas of Massilia (Marseille), Greek navigator and geographer	c. 325 B.C.
North Cape	Rounded	Ottar, Norwegian explorer	c. 870
Iceland	Colonized	Norwegian noblemen	c. 890– 900
NORTH AMERICA			
Greenland	Colonized	Eric the Red , Norwegian	c. 985
Labrador, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia (?)	Explored ¹	Leif Eriksson , Norse explorer	1000
West Indies	Explored ¹	Christopher Columbus , Italian	1492
North America	Coast explored ¹	Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot), for British	1497
Pacific Ocean	Sighted ¹	Vasco Núñez de Balboa , Spanish explorer	1513
Florida	Explored	Ponce de León , Spanish explorer	1513
Mexico	Conquered	Hernando Cortés , Spanish adventurer	1519– 1521
St. Lawrence River	Explored ¹	Jacques Cartier , French navigator	1534
Southwest United States	Explored	Francisco Coronado , Spanish explorer	1540– 1542
Colorado River	Explored ¹	Hernando de Alarcón , Spanish explorer	1540
Mississippi River	Explored ¹	Hernando de Soto , Spanish explorer	1541
Frobisher Bay	Explored ¹	Martin Frobisher , English seaman	1576
Maine Coast	Explored	Samuel de Champlain , French explorer	1604
Jamestown, Va.	Settled	John Smith , English colonist	1607
Hudson River	Explored	Henry Hudson, English navigator	1609

Hudson Bay (Canada)	Explored ¹	Henry Hudson	1610
Baffin Bay	Explored ¹	William Baffin , English navigator	1616
Lake Michigan	Navigated	Jean Nicolet , French explorer	1634
Arkansas River	Explored ¹	Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet , French explorers	1673
Mississippi River	Explored	Sieur de La Salle , French explorer	1682
Bering Strait	Explored ¹	Vitus Bering , Danish explorer	1728
Alaska	Explored ¹	Vitus Bering	1741
Mackenzie River (Canada)	Explored ¹	Sir Alexander Mackenzie , Scottish-Canadian explorer	1789
Northwest United States	Explored	Meriwether Lewis and William Clark , American explorers	1804– 1806
Northeast Passage (Arctic Ocean)	Navigated	Nils Nordenskiöld , Swedish explorer	1879
Greenland	Explored	Robert E. Peary , American explorer	1892
Northwest Passage	Navigated	Roald Amundsen , Norwegian explorer	1906
SOUTH AMERICA			
Continent	Explored	Christopher Columbus , Italian	1498
Brazil	Explored ¹	Pedro Alvarez Cabral , Portuguese	1500
Peru	Conquered	Francisco Pizarro , Spanish explorer	1532– 1533
Amazon River	Explored	Francisco Orellana , Spanish explorer	1541
Cape Horn	Explored ¹	Willem C. Schouten , Dutch navigator	1615
OCEANIA			
Papua New Guinea	Explored	Jorge de Menezes, Portuguese explorer	1526
Australia	Explored	Abel Janszoon Tasman , Dutch navigator	1642
Tasmania	Explored ¹	Abel Janszoon Tasman	1642
Australia	Crossed	John McDouall Stuart , English explorer	1862
Australia	Explored	Robert Burke and William Wills, Australian explorers	1861

New Zealand	Sighted (and named)	Abel Janszoon Tasman , Dutch navigator	1642
New Zealand	Explored	James Cook , English navigator	1769
ARCTIC, ANTARCTIC, AND MISCELLANEOUS			
Africa, Middle East, Asia, and Europe	Explored	Ibn Batuta , greatest Arab traveler	1325–1349
Ocean exploration	Expedition	Ferdinand Magellan 's ships circled globe for Spain	1519–1522
Galápagos Islands	Explored	Diego de Rivadeneira, Spanish captain	1535
Spitsbergen	Explored	Willem Barents , Dutch navigator	1596
Antarctic Circle	Crossed	James Cook , English navigator	1773
Antarctica	Explored ¹	Nathaniel Palmer , American whaler (archipelago), and Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen , Russian admiral (mainland)	1820–1821
Antarctica	Explored	Charles Wilkes , American explorer	1840
North Pole	Reached ²	Robert E. Peary , American explorer	1909
South Pole	Reached	Roald Amundsen , Norwegian explorer	1911

1. First European to reach the area. 2. Admiral Peary's claim to have reached the Pole has been disputed from the beginning—as was the claim made by his former colleague, Dr. [Frederick Cook](#), who has been generally dismissed as a charlatan. The credit ultimately went to Peary, a claim officially backed by the U.S. Congress. But recent scholarship, including evidence culled from the journals and diaries of both Cook and Peary, has cast doubt on both explorers' veracity. If it is the case that neither reached the Pole, then the credit goes to Joseph Fletcher, who landed a U.S. Air Force C-47 plane there in 1952.