



Explorers A to Z

The world is a big place. That doesn't come as a surprise to you and me. All of our lives, we've had maps that show us where we are compared with every single nation on earth. We can count the time zones and know what time it is in a country on the opposite side of the world. We can even look at online maps and webcams and see what is happening a hundred or a thousand miles away.

But have you ever stopped to think about the men and women who have made all that knowledge possible? Explorers, cartographers, and record keepers who left everything familiar and set off to discover something new? Maybe it was a continent. Maybe it was a hidden treasure. Maybe it was a lost city or a mythical land. Sometimes it was simply to know what lay beyond what was known at the time.

They didn't have satellites, cell phones, or GPS. Some of them never returned. But because of the ones who did, and the ones who recorded their stories, trade routes were formed, lands were settled, nations were founded, and the Gospel was preached.

We're going to look at the stories of some of these explorers and record keepers, moving through the alphabet from A to Z. We're going to skip over some of the better-known explorers like Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama and learn about men like Antonio Alaminos, Fabian von Bellingshausen, Jacob Roggeveen, and Francisco Xeres.

On the next pages, you'll learn about these men as we work our way from A to Z. Each page notes the explorer's name, what he is known for, and what country he was originally from (in parenthesis under his name). There are a few questions to get you thinking about each explorer and some space to record your answers. There are also some notebooking pages at the end of the pack to write down other things you learn about the explorers and their destinations. One page is blank; the other four are themed so you can give each explorer a sheet that is related to the types of places he visited, if you'd like. You can print as many of these pages as you need.

Before we get started, keep in mind one important thing. There is still more exploring to be done. There are still hidden places, forgotten lands, and lost peoples. There are languages to be translated, cultures to discover, and stories to be recorded. Is there something God is calling you to discover?



Fabian von Bellingshausen: Circumnavigated Antarctica (Estonia)

Was there a continent at the southernmost end of the globe, and was it inhabitable? These were two of the questions Fabian von Bellingshausen set out to answer in 1819. Following in the footsteps of James Cook, whom he admired, Bellingshausen carried his exploration of the Antarctic region even further.

Over two years later, he would conclude his journey. In that time, he traveled back and forth from the Antarctic region to Australia and parts of the South Pacific, but the part of his journey that will always be remembered is his circumnavigation of the continent of Antarctica. He, and his extremely courageous and talented crew, traveled around the entire mainland. Sadly, however, he never realized that what he saw was actually the seventh continent. He saw icebergs but was not able to land and explore enough to determine that the ice he saw was indeed the mainland. By the time the records of his travels were published, there was some debate as to whether he had actually been the first man to see the Antarctic mainland.

Would you travel to Antarctica? Why or why not? If you would, what would you most like to see there?



Edward John Eyre: First East-West Transcontinental Crossing of Australia (England)

Edward John Eyre was a cattleman in Australia in the 1800s. There was a great need to supply the growing city of Perth with beef, but transporting preserved beef from Adelaide was expensive. Edward and a number of other men who helped him finance his exploration wanted to discover a way to drive cattle from Adelaide to Perth, enabling them to provide the residents with fresh beef. But no one knew if there was any good grazing land for the cattle along the way. Edward set out to find the answer.

He first headed north, as far as what is now known as Lake Eyre, but he did not find good grazing. He didn't want to return home with nothing to show for his venture, however, so he and a team of men headed west from Adelaide, hoping to reach Perth and find good cattle country along the way.

Instead, what he found was the Great Australian Bight. This region is marked by very high cliffs and extremely arid land. There was absolutely no good grazing land for cattle. The land was so dry that he and his men almost died of thirst many times. During his journey, some in his party even murdered his foreman and stole from what little supplies the party had left. In the end, Edward never found the cattle country he was looking for, but he made history by crossing the Great Australian Bight, making the first east-to-west transcontinental crossing of Australia, and living to tell about it.

If you had been on Edward's expedition and had traveled days without water, would you have turned around and gone back? Why or why not?



Sven Hedin: Explored Central Asia (Sweden)

Sven Hedin was born in 1865. He knew from the time he was young that he wanted to explore Central Asia. There was a vast area that no one had ever mapped before, and he wanted to be the one to do it. He knew it would take a lot of work and planning, so he studied the sciences he knew he would need.

He got his first taste of exploring when he was twenty years old. Sven was given a job as an interpreter for the Swedish on a mission to meet with the ruler of Iran. A few years later, he left on his first real exploratory mission. He explored part of China and the Ural and Pamir mountains. On his next mission, he explored the Gobi Desert. From 1905-1908, he explored Tibet and made the first detailed map of the country. But Sven wasn't done exploring, not yet.

He continued to explore various parts of China and discovered some important archaeological artifacts. He also discovered the sources of the Brahmaputra, Indus, and Sutlej Rivers. In 1927, he returned to Tibet and led an expedition to further map the area.

Do you think it was wise of Sven to learn the skills early in life that he knew he would need later on? What could he have studied if he hadn't known he wanted to be an explorer?
