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## Geographical Discoveries

1. A great development which marked the beginning of the modern age in Europe was a series of geographical discoveries.
2. Helped by some remarkable inventions viz. the Compass and Astrolabe, daring sailors sailed from distant lands.
3. They were financed by rulers and merchants.
4. The main motivation behind these adventures was the lure of profits that trade with the East would bring.
5. During 1288-93, Marco Polo (1256-1326), Venetian traveller, travelled from Venice to China and Japan. He was the 'first European to visit China'. From his travelogue the Europeans learned about the all round prosperity of the East.
6. The first great steps in the exploration of the earth were taken by the sailors under the patronage of Portuguese and Spanish rulers.
7. Prince Henry (1394-1460), the Navigator of Portugal, encouraged sailors by making maps based on trips to the African coast.
8. In 1487, Bartholomew Diaz, reached the point which the Portuguese named Cape of Good Hope (the southern-most point of Africa).
9. Vasco da Gama followed this route and sailed on round the cape and reached Calicut in India in 1498.
10. Italian sailor Columbus' trip was financed by Spain from where he sailed in 1492. When he had reached land, he thought he had reached India; so he called the islands, the 'Indies'; but it was America.
11. The land discovered by Columbus was soon to be called the 'Americas' after the name of a later Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci.
12. Magellan, a Portuguese sailor, went beyond the lands that had stopped Columbus. He sailed went around the tip of South America, which is named after him - the straits of Magellan. He called the new ocean that he entered, 'The Pacific' because it seemed more quiet than the Atlantic. Magellan reached what is now called the Philippine Island where he died. Magellan was the first to sail round the world.

**13.** Other countries - England, France & Holland - also sent out their ships to join the race for explorations. Francis Drake of England sailed round the world in 1577.

**14.** These voyages laid the foundations for the almost complete geographical knowledge of the world.

