Ferdinand Magellan Essay, Research Paper

Ferdinand Magellan

Magellan was born Fernao de Magalhaes to a noble Portuguese family; later the Spanish knew him as Fernando de Magallanes. He served as a court page in his youth and 1505 he sailed with a fleet carrying the first Portuguese viceroy to India. He then served with the fleet in the exploration of the East Indies. Twice wounded in battle, he took part in expeditions that captured the kingdom of Malacca in Malay Peninsula of Southeast Asia. He explored the islands of present-day Indonesia as far east as the Moluccas, or Spice Islands. By 1510, he was promoted to the rank of captain. In 1512 Magellan returned to Portugal , and 1513 he battled the Moors in Morocco. He was wounded again and left with a permanent limp.

Magellan renounced his Portuguese citizenship and in 1517 went to Spain to seek support for his plan from King Charles I. Magellan believed there was a passage to the west through or around South America. Such a passage would be of great value to the Spanish, who wanted a share in the trade in spices from the Moluccas. Portugal controlled the eastward route to the East Indies, around Africa?s Cape of Good Hope and would not allow Spanish ships to pass. Magellan won the king?s approval for his voyage. A fleet of five vessels was outfitted and sailed from Sanlucar de Barrameda, Spain with about 250 men on September 20, 1519. Magellan sailed through the waters along the west coast of Africa and then south to the equator. The fleet turned southwest and crossed the Atlantic to a point near Recife in Brazil.

Magellan searched down the coast of South America for a passage through the continent. In December be stopped at Rio de Janeiro, where the sailors traded with Native Americans for provisions. Magellan suppressed a mutiny of his Spanish officers, who were jealous because Magellan was Portuguese. One ship was lost when it was driven ashore during an exploratory journey. Magellan pressed on through the strait, which was dangerously narrow and winding in many places. To the south was a stark, forbidding land, dotted with fires, which he named Tierra del Fuego. Because it was calm, Magellan named the ocean Pacific. Although favored by the weather, the fleet suffered greatly. Although Magellan did not complete the voyage, he is considered the first person to circle the world because Cebu is west of the Moluccas. Sailing west, he had reached a point beyond the point he had reached earlier when sailing east.