

# Explorers Before Columbus

In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue. This is a common saying school children often memorize so they can remember the date when Christopher Columbus began his journey to the Americas. But, many people don't realize that there were quite a few explorers that had more than likely visited America before Columbus ever made the journey.

One of the first groups that scientists believe visited the Americas before Columbus were the Pacific Ocean island dwellers known as the Polynesians. Artifacts to confirm this theory are rare but there is one piece of evidence that strongly encourages this theory: the sweet potato. This is a plant that is NOT found on the islands that were inhabited by the Polynesians.

How could Polynesians have gotten their hands on sweet potatoes prior to the Europeans, if not by traveling to the Americas themselves? The idea that the sweet potato just floated to the Americans or were carried by birds is quite unlikely. Also, scientists have tested ships used by the Polynesians and have found they could make the journey to South America.

Another group of explorers that had already reached the Americas was the Vikings. In about A.D. 1000, Lief Erickson led a group of Viking sailors west to a land called Greenland. Erickson heard rumors of a land west of Greenland, and led an expedition to the rumored place. Erickson and his crew built a Viking settlement in the northern part of Canada when they arrived.

The Vikings didn't stay long in North America. While hunting and fishing in the area, the Vikings fought with Native Americans. As the fighting grew worse, they chose to leave. The Vikings wrote about their voyage, but not many people knew about these records or read them. For years, most Europeans didn't even consider the idea that land existed west of the Atlantic ocean.

Main Idea -

Supporting Details

Supporting Details

