

Resource 1: Marco Polo - Game and Fame

Which Way Did He Go?

In the year 1271, seventeen-year-old Marco Polo traveled east to get to the Far East where China and the “Spice Islands” are located. Marco traveled with his father and uncle over five thousand miles from his home in Italy to China. Find Italy on a map. Then find China. They traveled east to get east. And they did it mostly across land. The Polos reached China in the year 1274.

Remember what you just read. Marco Polo traveled east and mostly by land to get to China which is in the Far East. And it took him three years to get there! That is a long time.

What Did the Polos Bring Back?

The Polos spent a lot of time in China but also traveled to other parts of Asia. They returned to Italy 24 years later with many riches and treasures. They were gone so long that people in Italy thought they had died.

Around 1300, Marco Polo wrote a book called “*The Travels of Marco Polo.*” Many people read his book. It described many exciting things about China including goods that the people of Europe did not have. China had porcelain, coal, gunpowder, paper money, valuable spices, and exotic animals such as alligators and rhinoceroses. The Polos also brought back valuable gems such as rubies, sapphires, and diamonds.

Europeans wanted many of the goods that Marco Polo found in China.

What Effects Did Polo’s Adventures Have on Europeans?

Marco’s book had two major effects on the people of Europe. First, many wanted to get more of the goods that were found in China. Spices could help the bad tasting food in Europe taste better. Rubies and diamonds were beautiful and could be sold by European merchants for big profits. And coal could be used to heat people’s homes.

The second effect of Marco Polo’s trip was that people in Europe wanted to travel to Europe to learn more about the exciting world of China that Marco Polo described in his book. If they could get to China, they could bring back the goods, sell them, and get rich.

What Effect Did the Travels of Marco Polo Have on Christopher Columbus?

But there was a problem. It took a very long time to get to China by way of the route that Marco Polo took. Europeans wanted to find a quicker way to get there. If it took three years to get to China, the cost of the trip might be more than the profits from the goods. So, they started exploring. Really curious people like Christopher Columbus who read about the adventures of Marco Polo started thinking. Could he find a quicker route to China? In the year 1484, Columbus came up with a very unusual idea!

What was Columbus’s idea? To travel west to get to the east. That’s right. Go west to get east!

Does this make sense to you?

P.S. There is absolutely no connection between Marco Polo’s fame and the game? Only his name.