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# THE AGE OF DISCOVERY

The Age of Exploration

Santillana

## The Silk Road and seas exploration

Europeans got exotic products from Asia and North Africa through the Silk Road, a trade route that linked Constantinople to China. Nevertheless, in 1453, the Turks conquered Constantinople and occupied the Byzantine Empire, disrupting the Silk Road. Consequently, European merchants needed to find other routes to the East and they started to explore new routes by sea.

## Navigational instruments

Important advances in navigation made it possible for European expeditions to travel long distances:

- **Cartography.** Portolan charts were nautical charts showing coasts, sea routes and possible obstacles.
- **The compass.** It was probably brought to the Mediterranean region by Arab merchants. It allowed ships to sail when land was not visible. Sailors could calculate latitude with the astrolabe and the quadrant.
- **The log and sandglass.** They helped to measure the ship's speed.
- **Caravel.** It was a light ship designed by the Portuguese in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.