Marco Polo's Journey



Aged 17, in 1271, Marco Polo travelled to Asia with his father and uncle. They travelled through Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, the Pamir Mountains and across the vast Gobi Desert to Beijing. The journey took four years and was rife with hardships and adventure.

Marco Polo contracted an illness and was forced to take refuge in the mountains of northern Afghanistan. Polo described there being "nothing at all to eat" in the Gobi Desert.

Finally, in 1275, the Polos reached Beijing and met Kublai Khan at the summer palace in Xanadu. The Khan appointed Marco the position of special envoy.

During 1275 and 1292, Marco was sent on many special diplomatic missions to many Asia locations. These included: China, India, Tibet, Vietnam, Burma and Sumatra; places that Europeans had never before seen. He investigated the customs, geography, people and culture of all places he visited. Then he reported to Kublai Khan in detail.

The Polos stayed in China for 17 years, amassing vast riches. They decided to return to Venice and during the two-year return journey by sea across the Indian Ocean, 600 passengers and members of the crew died. By the time they reached Hormuz in Persia, just 18 people remained alive on board.

Eventually, in 1294, the Polos made it back to Venice. People did not recognize them and they struggled to speak Italian! Marco Polo recorded the story of his travels in the book, 'The Travels of Marco Polo.'