

European explorers - exploration of New Zealand

Early European explorers

Spanish and the Portuguese had an active presence in the Pacific from the early 16th century but there is no firm evidence of Europeans reaching New Zealand before Abel Tasman in 1642. Nor is there evidence that Arab or Chinese ships (trading in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea) were ever off New Zealand's coast.

There was speculation that a *terra australis incognita* (unknown southern land) existed, but European presence in the Pacific remained well north of New Zealand before the mid 17th century.



Abel Tasman stamp

Dutch exploration of the Pacific was essentially bound up with the Dutch East India Company's quest for a southern sea route to Chile, and the possibility that there might be treasures in 'unknown' parts of the globe. His voyage thus motivated (and financed) by business interests, in mid December 1642 Abel Tasman sighted New Zealand, anchoring a few days later at what is now called Golden Bay. By the time he left in early January 1643, Tasman's New Zealand was a ragged line on the world map, which might or

might not be the coast of the unknown southern land. Another voyage was planned in 1643, but the Dutch never followed up on Tasman's discovery, probably as he had not found any land which would provide the material profit the Dutch East India Company had hoped for.

Serious British interest in the Pacific is generally considered to have begun only in the mid 1760s. Following John Byron and Samuel Wallis's earlier expeditions, in 1768 James Cook set out for Tahiti to observe the transit of Venus. The expedition was then to establish the eastern tip of Tasman's New Zealand and the Australian coastline. While the goals of the voyage were scientific, the British also wished to expand trade and empire, and Cook would be careful to include information on resources and the suitability of land for settlement.



James Cook stamp

Cook sailed from Plymouth in late August 1768, and sighted New Zealand on 6 October 1769. By the time he left to chart the Australian east coast at the beginning of April 1770, he mapped the entire coastline, confirming that New Zealand was not a vast southern continent. Yet there still remained unexplored ocean to the east of New Zealand, where a great continent could lie. The exploration of these areas was one of the objectives of Cook's second voyage (1772-5), which finally proved there was no such

continent. Cook's discoveries also forged New Zealand's later links with Britain. Several French explorers active in the Pacific at the same time, so the Admiralty instructed Cook to annex lands he might discover. At Mercury Bay on 15 November 1769, and at Queen Charlotte Sound on 30 January 1770, he made proclamations which helped ensure that Britain would dominate New Zealand's subsequent history.

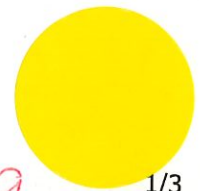
The French, also interested in trade and exploration, were the only other Europeans to play a significant part in the mapping of New Zealand's coastline. As Cook rounded the top of the North Island in December 1769, the French explorer Jean François Marie de Surville was as little as 40km to the south-west. In mid December he reached the west coast of New Zealand, spending two weeks in Doubtless Bay.

On the islands of de Surville, in 1772 Marc Joseph Marion du Fresne spent more than two months in the islands while undertaking extensive repairs. He was killed in mid June, caught in a confrontation between Ngā Puhi and Ngāti Pou, but many of his initial encounters with Maori were peaceful, and the expedition left an extensive record of Maori life.

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From the 1770s, New Zealand tended to be used more as a base for explorers seeking more challenging destinations. On his way to survey the north-west coast of America for example, George Vancouver spent three weeks in Dusky Sound in November 1791. In February 1793 the Italian explorer Alessandro Malaspina also called in to Dusky Sound on his way to Australia. A quarter of a century later, the Russian explorer Fabian von Bellingshausen was sent to continue to work of Cook's later voyages in exploring the southern polar regions. He visited Queen Charlotte Sound for a week, using it as a base as Cook had. In 1824 the French explorer Louis Isidore Duperrey had a two week stop over in the Bay of Islands before continuing on his circumnavigation of the world.

Duperrey's second-in-command in 1824 was Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville. The expedition that Dumont d'Urville led in 1826 is considered to be the last important voyage in the story of the European discovery of New Zealand. D'Urville intended to complete Cook's chart of New Zealand; he explored Tasman and Admiralty Bays, and much of the east coast of the North Island before leaving.

Further information:

Pre-Tasman theories

- The 'articles' page of the Celtic New Zealand website offers a range of material for those interested in the claims of an ancient celtic history in New Zealand. The 'radical history' page of Zealand.org offers a simple summary of alternate theories of discovery.
- The Tamil Bell - In 1836 the missionary explorer William Colenso found this bell, which had long been used by Maori as a cooking vessel. Theories abound, but the precise origins of the bell and how it got to New Zealand remain a mystery.
- *70 South* explains the history of the quest for *terra australis incognita*.

Explorers

Abel Janszoon Tasman (Dutch, 1602/3?-1659) - first arrival 1642

- Essay on Tasman - from the online *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.
- Tasman and the Pacific offers a good summary of Tasman's Pacific voyages.
- Able Tasman - Te Ara.

James Cook (English, 1728-1779) - first arrival 1769

- Captain Cook Society - a useful starting point for further research into Cook's life and work. Also has a strong bibliographic and links section.
- The *Endeavour* replica - detailed information on the original and replica ship.
- The Ship - supports the BBC documentary series about Cook and his voyages. Includes several articles, a flash animation history of navigation and a virtual 3D tour of the *Endeavour*.
- James Cook - covers almost every conceivable aspect of Cook's life and work. Also contains material on the scientific side of Cook's Pacific voyages, and his interactions with indigenous peoples.
- South Seas - focuses on cross cultural encounters in the Pacific 1760-1800.
- Captain Cook site developed by Michael Dickinson. Contains information and images as well as a comprehensive links section.
- Cook Memorial Museum - dedicated to Cook's early years near the English village of Whitby. It offers a tour of one of Cook's early residences, now a memorial museum.
- John Cawte Beaglehole - a brief biography of the New Zealand historian best known for his work on James Cook's journals.
- Biography on Cook from the online *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

- Captain Cook Encyclopedia - Very extensive site looking at most things relating to Cook.

Jean François Marie de Surville (French, 1717-1770) - first arrival 1769

- Biography on Surville from the online *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.
- Summary of Surville's voyages to New Zealand.
- The French Akaroa page from Te Ara: the encyclopedia of New Zealand.
- New Zealand in History web-page, outlining French colonists in New Zealand, the Akaroa settlement, and the conflicting French and British interests.

Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne (French, 1724?-1772) - first arrival 1772

- Summary of du Fresne's voyages to the Pacific and New Zealand .
- Biography of du Fresne from the online *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

George Vancouver (English, 1757-1798) - first arrival 1791

- Vancouver's Pacific voyages - On his third expedition, Cook had been looking for the existence of the Northwest Passage (a sea route through or around North America). In 1791 Vancouver was sent out to complete this search.

Alessandro Malaspina (Spanish, 1754-1810) - first arrival 1793

- Biographical information and summary of voyages.
- *New Zealand James Cook Journal* article looking at the Pacific explorations of Malaspina; also looks at Vancouver.

Fabian Gottlieb Benjamin von Bellingshausen (1778-1852) -first arrival 1820

- Biography of von Bellingshausen from the online *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

Cyrille-Pierre-Théodore Laplace (1793-1875) - first arrival 1830

- Laplace's 1831 visit to New Zealand caused a stir when it was rumoured that he had taken New Zealand for France.
- Te Ara entry on the French explorers of New Zealand.

Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville (1790-1842) -first arrival 1824

- Jules-Sebastien-Cesar Dumont d'Urville (1790-1842) - lots of good information - Antarctic philately site!
- d'Urville's visits to New Zealand between 1824 and 1840.
- Biography of d'Urville from the online *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

Others

- Joseph Banks' journal of a voyage on HMS Endeavour, August 1768 - July 1771 and other information relating to Banks held at the State Library of New South Wales. See also a biography of Banks on the Australian National Botanic Gardens site.
- Daniel Charles Solander (1733-1782), 'Botanist and Nature's Argonaut' on the *Endeavour*, 1768-1771. A biography of Solander from the Australian National Botanic Gardens site. See also the HM Bark Endeavour Foundation site for more information on Solander.

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