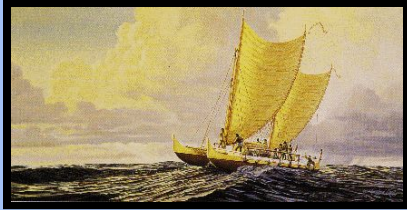


# EARLY POLYNESIAN EXPLORERS

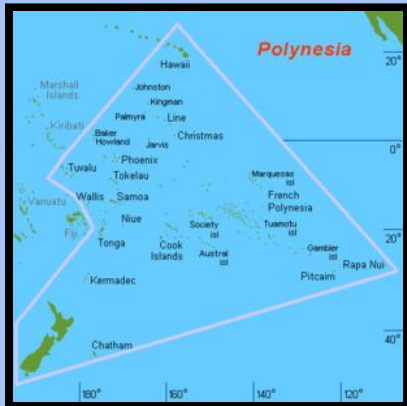
By Andy Armour



An example of a Polynesian voyaging canoe.



An early Polynesian native.



A map of Polynesia.

## Who are the early Polynesian explorers?

The Polynesian explorers are believed to be the descendants of early seafarers from Asia. They are the ancestors of all Polynesian people, including the Māori.

## Where and when did the early Polynesians explore?

The Polynesian explorer's early ancestors are believed to have set off using simple rafts, thousands of years ago. They dispersed throughout the islands of southeast Asia. Their descendants, the Polynesian people, explored and settled in almost every inhabitable island in Polynesia. About 900 years ago, they had spread throughout Polynesia, including New Zealand.

## How and why did the early Polynesians explore places?

The main motive for early Polynesians to explore and settle more and more new islands was the need for more resources. A large number of untouched resources could be obtained if a new island was discovered. That could include birds, ocean life, and other animals as well as trees. Unfortunately, on smaller islands, these resources would often be used up until there was almost nothing left. They would then go out to find a new island and repeat the process. In later periods of their history overpopulation and exile could lead to new islands being discovered and explored. The Polynesians used a variety of canoe types that evolved and got better over the years. They relied mostly on the stars and the sun for navigation. They also used the ocean currents and wave patterns to determine their direction.

## What challenges did the early Polynesians face? How did they respond?

- Many of them moved around different islands. Because of this, those who did not intend to stay, didn't build huge buildings that took a long time to make and hard to take down. They made their houses small and quick to put up, as well as easy to take down.
- They had no navigational equipment, so they used nature to guide them. They learnt how to use the stars, the sun, ocean currents and wave patterns to help them navigate.
- Because of their habit of draining an island's resources, once they had lived on an island for long enough, nothing was left. They responded by moving around a lot, consequently discovering and exploring many new islands.
- Polynesians living on some islands had to cope with natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and volcanoes. The Polynesians' buildings, as previously talked about, were quick and easy to build. Because of this, when a natural disaster did occur any building/homes destroyed could be easily put back up.
- When voyaging across in their boats, storms would have been a problem. I can imagine that their small light boats wouldn't hold up well in a storm and they probably frequently tipped. But since the Polynesians' way of life involved water a lot, I am assuming that most, if not all of them were strong swimmers. If their boat got tipped during a storm they could swim to the land if there was any nearby or try and hold out until the storm passed. They then might have been picked up by another boat or tried to continue the voyage.

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