

Ibn Battuta

Ibn Battuta decided not to go along with the expedition, fortuitously because all three ships did not survive the trip to China. Fearful about the failure of the expedition, Ibn Battuta did not go back to the sultan in Delhi.

- Some time later, he decided to travel to China again, but he first visited the Maldives where he stayed 9 months long where he also worked as a qadi. Then he suffered shipwreck at the Coromandel Coast where he was forced to stay a few years at the Court of the sultan of Madurai, Giyathuddin Damghani. The sultan was married with a daughter of Jalalludin Ahsan Khan and was thus a brother-in-law of Ibn Battuta. In 1342 the sultan died suffering from cholera and was succeeded by the new sultan Nasiruddin Damghani who granted several ships to Ibn Battuta so that he may continue his journey.
- In continuing his journey, Ibn Battuta visited Malabar, Ceylon and Bengal before he reached Sumatra and Cambodia, Zayton (now Quanzhou) around 1346. And he reached Mecca for the fourth time, this time through Calicut, Hormuz, Baghdad and Cairo. Then he returned to travelling with another visit to Sardinia from where he returned to Morocco in 1349 after almost 25 years after his departure. Many of his family were already deceased.
- In 1350 Ibn Battuta left again and this time he went to Andalusia, where the Islamic rulers were threatened by King Alfonso XI of Castile. This King died of the plague and Ibn Battuta could finally visit Valencia and Granada rather than to fight a war in Spain. Many Europeans died of the plague because of their abysmal hygiene. This made Europe very unattractive for travelers.
- Ibn Battuta made his last trip in 1352-1354, he crossed the Sahara on the way to Niger and visited the Kingdom of Mali and Timbuktu. After this he returned to Fez (Morocco) where he remained as qadi (judge) for the rest of his life. He died in 1368 or 1369. Some wrote his death date to be around 1377.

Ibn Battuta left his travels and adventures by writing it down in a book titled Rihla or "the journey". There were but a few stories of his book known, but in the 19th century (1818) and the whole book was found in 1853-1858, his life story was published in Arabic and French. After the publication of his book Ibn Battuta became a well known figure in both the Islamic and the Western world. The airport of Tangier is named after him. Ibn Battuta traveled more than 121,000 km in almost 30 years. Along the way, he has worked as a judge, translator, teacher, negotiator and ambassador. He was attacked by bandits and pirates, held hostage by a King and kidnapped by another King. He was betrothed to a Princess on the Maldives. He met cannibals in west Africa and stayed at Egyptians who lived in China. He has accomplished the Hajj 7 times.



Illustration from "Rihla", ibn Battuta with a Caravan.



"Traveling first makes you speechless,
then it makes you a story teller."
Ibn Battuta. Rihla, 1360 CE.