

A Brief History of Sailing

Published on LEARNZ (<http://www.learnz.org.nz>)

Listen: [Listen to this page](#) [1]

[Listen to this page](#) [2]

People have been harnessing the power of the wind to sail for thousands of years.

People have been using the power of the wind to sail for thousands of years.

Sailing uses the wind acting on sails, wingsails or kites to propel a craft forwards.

Throughout history sailing has helped civilizations to develop as people sailed across oceans to settle in new areas or trade with others.

- The earliest record of a ship under sail appears on an Egyptian vase from about 3500 BC.
- Vikings sailed to North America around 1000 years ago.
- Advances in sailing technology from the 15th century onward enabled European explorers in Canada to make longer voyages into regions with extreme weather and climatic conditions.
- Further improvements in sails and equipment allowed colonization of America, Australia and New Zealand, and world trade to flourish in the 18th and 19th century.

Two main periods of voyaging can be identified:

1. Ancient voyaging: from 50,000 to 25,000 BC people from Asia sailed simple rafts from island to island, reaching Near Oceania (Australia, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands). They traded in stone, hunted animals and gathered seafood and local plants.
2. Recent voyaging: from 1200 BC people sailed canoes further east, into Remote Oceania (Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia). The islands were much further apart and more difficult to find. Migrating voyagers kept in contact with their home islands through trading trips.

Thousands of years ago, the ancestors of Māori journeyed out of South-East Asia and across the Pacific Ocean. Migration eastward across this large body of water took place over thousands of years. They sailed in waka (canoes), and were some of the world's greatest waka builders, navigators and mariners.

The Lapita people

Archaeologists believe that the Lapita culture is the ancestor of historic cultures in Polynesia, Micronesia, and some coastal areas of Melanesia. The Lapita were the first to reach Remote Oceania. Between 1200 and 1000 BC they spread to West

A Brief History of Sailing

Published on LEARNZ (<http://www.learnz.org.nz>)

Polynesia (including Tonga and Samoa) on single-hulled outrigger canoes.

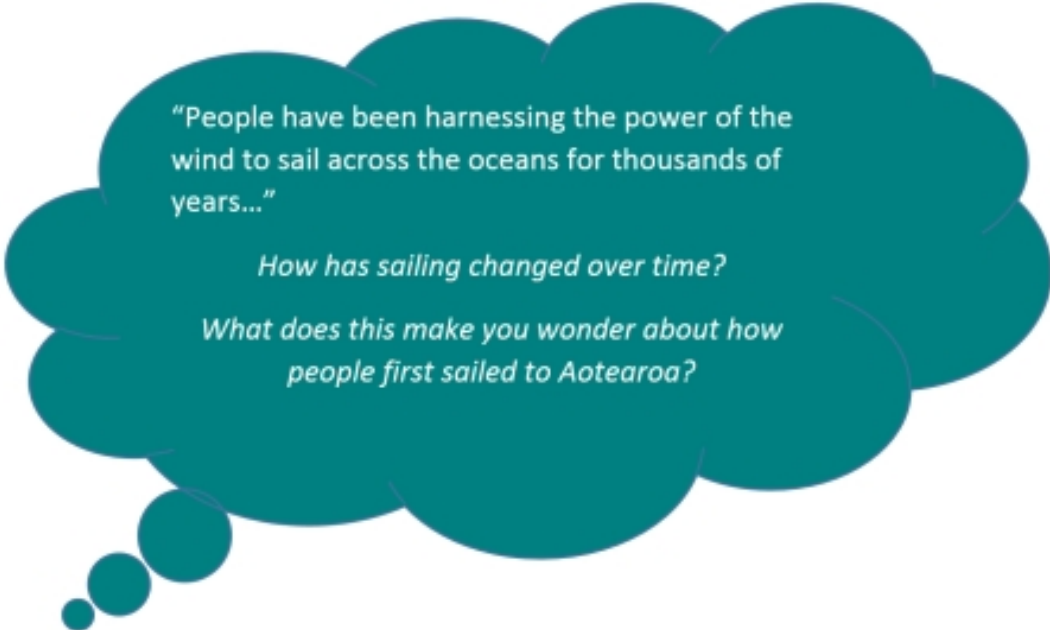
Polynesian explorers

About 3,000 years ago Polynesian culture developed in West Polynesia. Skilled navigators in double-hulled waka gradually discovered remote islands to the east, using their knowledge of the stars and the winds to return home safely. Groups would then set off to start new settlements.

To New Zealand and the Chatham Islands

New Zealand's remote islands were the last to be settled. Around 1300 AD Polynesian settlers navigated their way here. These migrants were the ancestors of Māori. The original migrants came from a region in East Polynesia which Māori later called Hawaiki. At about the same time, they reached the smaller northern islands of Norfolk and the Kermadecs.

Later still, early Māori exploring eastward from New Zealand discovered the Chatham Islands, a few centuries before the first European expeditions reached the Pacific.



"People have been harnessing the power of the wind to sail across the oceans for thousands of years..."

How has sailing changed over time?

What does this make you wonder about how people first sailed to Aotearoa?

Today

Sailing today is mostly done for recreation or sport. Sailing can be very challenging due to the changeable and often harsh conditions experienced at sea. Guidance and practice can help you to overcome these challenges and enjoy the freedom and rewards of an activity that humans have done for thousands of years.

[Ready for a quiz?](#) [3]

A Brief History of Sailing

Published on LEARNZ (<http://www.learnz.org.nz>)



[3]

Sailing uses the wind acting on sails, wingsails or kites to push a craft forwards.

Throughout history sailing has helped people to find new land and trade with other groups of people.

- The earliest record of a sailing ship has been found on an Egyptian vase from about 3500 BC.
- Vikings sailed to North America around 1000 years ago.
- Advances in sailing from the 15th century onward helped European explorers in Canada to make longer voyages into further away places.
- Further improvements in sails and equipment led to people migrating to America, Australia and New Zealand in the 18th and 19th century.
- World trade developed.

There are two main periods of voyaging:

Ancient voyaging: from 50,000 to 25,000 BC people from Asia sailed simple rafts from island to island, reaching Near Oceania (Australia, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands). They traded in stone, hunted animals and gathered seafood and local plants.

Recent voyaging: from 1200 BC people sailed canoes further east, into Remote Oceania (Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia). The islands were much further apart and harder to find. Trading trips allowed people who had migrated to keep in contact with their homelands.

The Lapita people

Experts believe that the Lapita people are the ancestors of people from Polynesia, Micronesia, and some coastal areas of Melanesia. The Lapita were the first to reach Remote Oceania. Between 1200 and 1000 BC they spread to West Polynesia (including Tonga and Samoa) on single-hulled outrigger canoes.

Polynesian explorers

A Brief History of Sailing

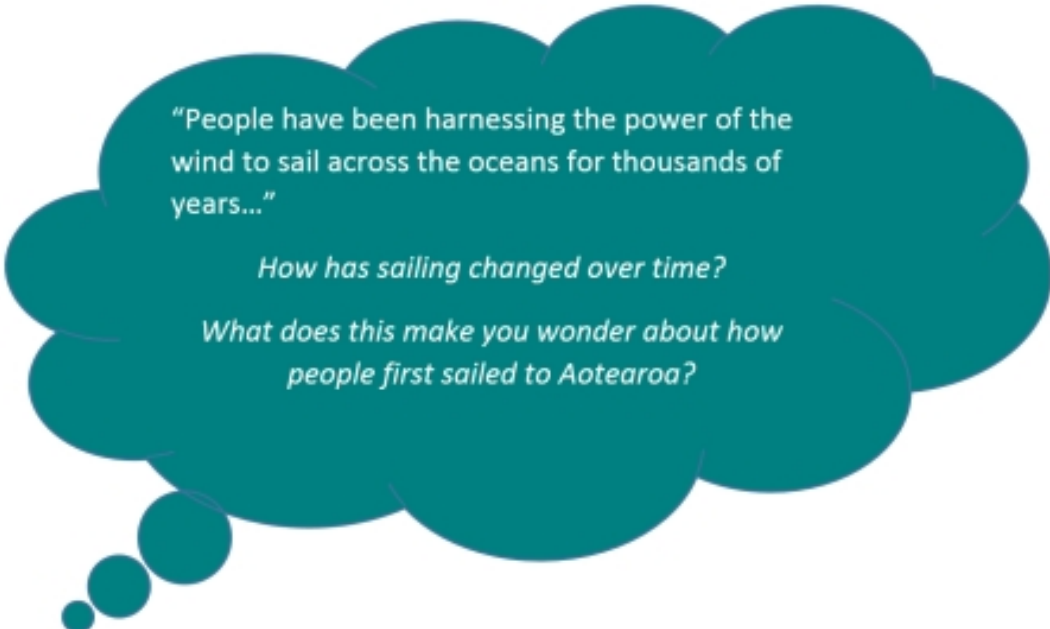
Published on LEARNZ (<http://www.learnz.org.nz>)

About 3,000 years ago Polynesian culture developed in West Polynesia. Skilled navigators in double-hulled waka slowly found remote islands to the east, using their knowledge of the stars and the winds to return home safely. Groups would then set off to start new settlements.

To New Zealand and the Chatham Islands

New Zealand was the last land to be settled. Around 1300 AD Polynesian settlers found their way here. These people were the ancestors of Māori. The first migrants came from a region in East Polynesia which Māori later called Hawaiki. At about the same time, they reached the smaller northern islands of Norfolk and the Kermadecs.

Later still, early Māori exploring eastward from New Zealand found the Chatham Islands, a few centuries before the first European ships reached the Pacific.



"People have been harnessing the power of the wind to sail across the oceans for thousands of years..."

How has sailing changed over time?

What does this make you wonder about how people first sailed to Aotearoa?

Today

Sailing today is mostly done for recreation or sport. Sailing can be very challenging due to the changeable and often harsh conditions at sea. Guidance and practice can help you to overcome these challenges and enjoy the freedom and rewards of an activity that people have done for thousands of years.

[Ready for a quiz?](#) [3]

A Brief History of Sailing

Published on LEARNZ (<http://www.learnz.org.nz>)

Welcome to this interactive activity for the LEARNZ *Spirit of Adventure* virtual field trip.

Before trying this activity you may wish to view the web page "[A Brief History of Sailing](#)".

Good luck and have fun!



Image: Spirit of Adventure Trust

[3]

Māori keywords:

Audio Māori keywords:

- [tipuna - ancestor](#) [4]
- [hekenga - migration/voyage](#) [5]
- [waka ama - outrigger canoe](#) [6]
- [ahurea - culture](#) [7]
- [whakatere - navigate](#) [8]
- [kāinga - settlement](#) [9]
- [whakarērere - to sail](#) [10]

Can you find out more about the history of sailing in Aotearoa?

Can you find out more about the history of sailing in Aotearoa?

A Brief History of Sailing

Published on LEARNZ (<http://www.learnz.org.nz>)



[11]

Thousands of years ago, the ancestors of Māori migrated across the Pacific Ocean. Image: David Eccles.



[12]

The Lapita spread to West Polynesia on single-hulled outrigger canoes. Image: Wikipedia.



[13]

A Brief History of Sailing

Published on LEARNZ (<http://www.learnz.org.nz>)

Skilled Polynesian sailors discovered remote islands and started new settlements. Image: Wikipedia.



[14]

Approximately 1300 AD Polynesian settlers navigated their way to Aotearoa. These migrants were the ancestors of Māori. Image: Wikipedia.

Source URL: <http://www.learnz.org.nz/node/2133>

Links

[1] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/a-brief-history-of-sailing.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e2ebb>

[2] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/a-brief-history-of-sailing-easy.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e28b3>

[3]

<http://activities.learnz.org.nz/sp181/sp181-a01-a-brief-history-of-sailing/quiz.html>

[4]

<http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/tipuna.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e3004>

[5] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/hekenga.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e3109>

[6] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/waka-ama.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e320a>

[7]

<http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/ahurea.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e3306>

[8] http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/whakatere_6.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e33fb

[9]

<http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/kainga.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e34ef>

[10] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/whakarerere.mp3?uid=5f6900b0e35e2>

[11] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/b-sp173-01-history.jpg>

[12] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/b-sp173-02-history.jpg>

[13] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/b-sp173-03-history.jpg>

A Brief History of Sailing

Published on LEARNZ (<http://www.learnz.org.nz>)

[14] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/b-sp173-04-history.jpg>