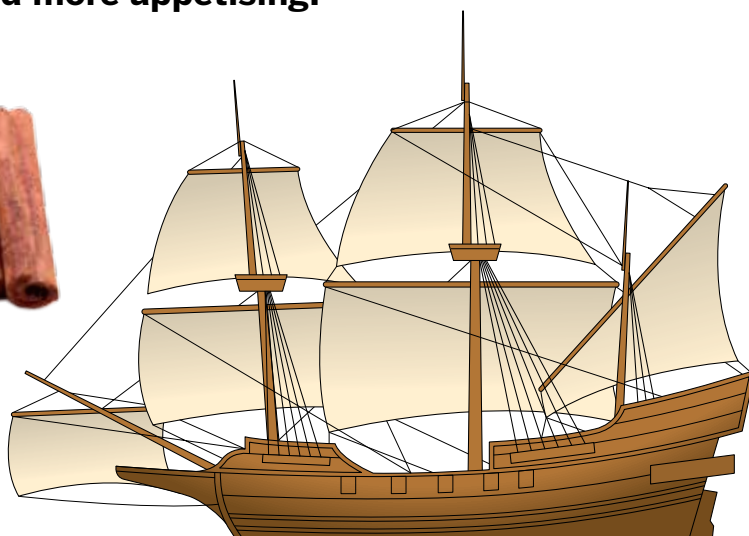


# Where are the Spice Islands?

**In Tudor times, wealthy people in Europe were very keen to have spices such as nutmeg to make their food more appetising.**



Many years before, the Arabs, who were trading along the Indian Ocean shores, arrived at some of the islands that are now part of the country called Indonesia. Here they found nutmeg and other highly-flavoured nuts and fruits. Eventually they traded them back to Arab lands, and from there they were traded along the Mediterranean Sea. The city of Venice (now in Italy) found itself very handily placed to handle this spice trade.

Unfortunately, the trade was cut off due to problems between Christians and Muslims concerning Jerusalem. Without a reliable supply route from the tropical rainforests of SE Asia, the Europeans began to look for other ways of getting their spices.

The Spice Islands are to the east, but European explorers thought that if they went west, they might get to the Spice Islands without having problems with Muslim lands. This is what started the Age of Discovery.

1. From an atlas, draw a world map and mark on it the route between the Spice Islands and the Arab lands. Add Venice and then a route back to Britain.
2. Now imagine that route being cut off in the Middle East (modern Israel) and you see why the Tudors (and those in Spain, Portugal, Holland and elsewhere) wanted to find a route west. Draw a sea route to reach Indonesia from Spain and from Britain.

**It was all about getting to the tropical rainforests.**

## Where are the Spice Islands?

Here is an opportunity to do a cross-curricular topic in which you can link rainforests with the Tudor Age of Discovery.

The reason people went east was that their home food often tasted so rotten they needed spices to make it palatable. As it happens, many spices are fruits of the rainforest, which is why they grew in tropical rainforests of Indonesia, and how part of that land came to be called the Spice Islands.

So the whole business of exploration and discovery – including the accidental finding of America, the destruction by disease of millions of Aztecs, and everything that came after, was all about getting palatable meals in Europe. The gold and silver they found were accidental, even though they turned out to be very important.

In the Learning Centre, we have a creative topic book called *Pieces of 8* which deals with this. There are also textbooks of ours called *The Tudor Age of Discovery* and *Exploring the Tudor Age of Discovery*.

Get children to draw out maps and routes.

Discuss the sea route they have chosen and then discuss some of the problems that would have faced the early navigators. For example, the Portuguese went along the coast of Africa first because striking out to sea was very dangerous as their boats were so small and could not stand up to large waves. A route west across the ocean could only be attempted after the ships were redesigned. There was also the problem of taking sufficient supplies, as the ships travelled at just a few km an hour under sail.