

## *Ibn Battuta*



Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Battuta, was a Moroccan Muslim scholar and traveller. He is known for his traveling and going on excursions called the Rihla. His journeys lasted for a period of almost thirty years. This covered nearly the whole of the known Islamic world and beyond, extending from North Africa, West Africa, Southern Europe and Eastern Europe in the West, to the Middle East, Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and China in the East, a distance readily surpassing that of his predecessors. After his travel, he returned to Morocco and gave his account of the experience to Ibn Juzay.

### **Early life and Career**

Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Battuta, was born in Tangier, Morocco, on the 24th of February 1304 C.E. (703 Hijra) during the time of the Marinid dynasty. He was commonly known as Shams ad-Din. His family was of Berber origin and had a tradition of service as judges. After receiving an education in Islamic law, he chose to travel. He left his house in June 1325, when he was twenty-one years of age and set off from his hometown on a hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca, a journey that took him 16 months. He did not come back to Morocco for at least 24 years after that. His journey was mostly by land. To reduce the risk of being attacked, he usually chose to join a caravan. In the town of Sfax, he got married. He survived wars, shipwrecks, and rebellions.

He first began his voyage by exploring the lands of the Middle East. Thereafter he sailed down the Red Sea to Mecca. He crossed the huge Arabian Desert and travelled to Iraq and Iran. In 1330, he set off again, down the Red Sea to Aden and then to Tanzania. Then in 1332, Ibn Battuta decided to go to India. He was greeted open heartedly by the Sultan of Delhi. There he was given the job of a judge. He stayed in India for a period of 8 years and then left for China. Ibn Battuta left for another adventure in 1352. He then went south, crossed the Sahara Desert, and visited the African kingdom of Mali.

Finally, he returned home at Tangier in 1355. Those who were lodging Ibn Battuta's grave Western Orient lists could not believe that Ibn Battuta visited all the places that he described. They argued that in order to provide a comprehensive description of places in the Muslim world in such a short time, Ibn Battuta had to rely on hearsay evidence and make use of accounts by earlier travellers.

Ibn Battuta often experienced culture shock in regions he visited. The local customs of recently converted people did not fit his orthodox Muslim background. Among Turks and Mongols, he was astonished at the way women behaved. They were given freedom of speech. He also felt that the dress customs in the Maldives and some sub-Saharan regions in Africa were too revealing.

### **Death**

After the completion of the Rihla in 1355, little is known about Ibn Battuta's life. He was appointed a judge in Morocco and died in 1368. Nevertheless, the Rihla provides an important account of many areas of the world in the 14th century.