

# CAPTAIN JAMES COOK'S VOYAGES IN THE PACIFIC 1768-1779

This exhibit shows the Pacific voyages of **Captain James Cook** and the increase of knowledge of Polynesian & aboriginal culture along with new discoveries of flora and fauna. The scope comprises of philatelic material, including die proofs and other items specifically 18<sup>th</sup> century maps and engravings from descriptions in his journals published on his return to Britain.

Cook joined the Royal Navy in 1755, fought the Seven Years War, and surveyed the St Lawrence River of Quebec, bringing him attention to the British Admiralty and the Royal Society.

In 1768 the Admiralty commissioned Cook to command scientific voyages to the Pacific. Here he achieved the first recorded contact of the eastern coastline of Australia, the Hawaiian Islands and the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand.

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Cook displayed a combination of seamanship, navigation and cartographic skills, physical courage and an ability to lead men in hostile conditions.

His contact with the environment & culture of the Pacific has left a lasting legacy that is felt to this day.

Philatelic and other items of particular interest are indicated: ●

## **Exhibit contents**

### **1. Early Exploration and planning**

- 1.1 Terra Australis Incognita
- 1.2 Tasman, Janszoon and de Vlamingh
- 1.3 James Cook: Early Career
- 1.4 The Ships commanded by Cook
- 1.5 Preparation and overview of voyages

### **2. Cook Explores the Pacific**

- 2.1 Observing the Transit of Venus
- 2.2 Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia
- 2.3 Cook Islands and New Hebrides
- 2.4 Tonga and Norfolk Island
- 2.5 Christmas Island

### **3. Culture of the Polynesians**

- 3.1 The Indigenous peoples of Oceania
- 3.2 Sea Navigation
- 3.3 Architecture of the Pacific
- 3.4 Tools and Weapons
- 3.5 Religious Beliefs

### **4. Flora and Fauna Encountered**

- 4.1 Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander
- 4.2 The Breadfruit and other flora
- 4.3 The Kangaroo
- 4.4 The Opossum

### **5. Last Voyage and Legacy**

- 5.1 Cook lands at Tasmania
- 5.2 Landing on the Hawaiian Islands
- 5.3 Alaska: Nootka Sound
- 5.4 Cook killed on Kealakekua Bay
- 5.5 The Legacy of Cook

## Captain James Cook's Voyages in The Pacific 1768-1779

This exhibit shows the Pacific voyages of Captain James Cook and the increase of knowledge of Polynesian & aboriginal culture along with new discoveries of flora and fauna. The scope comprises of various philatelic material, including die proofs and other relevant items specifically 18th century maps illustrations and engravings from descriptions in his journals published on his return to Britain.

### **Background and importance**

In 1768 the Admiralty commissioned Cook to command scientific voyages to the Pacific. Here he achieved the first recorded contact of the eastern coastline of Australia, the Hawaiian Islands and the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand.

His contact with the environment and culture of the Pacific has left a lasting legacy that is felt to this day.

### **Contents of exhibit**

This exhibit consists of philatelic material: stamps, first day covers including scarce printers proofs and essays and other relevant items such as coins & medals, cigarette cards, illustrations maps, and copperplate engravings dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. These would have given western civilisations first glimpse of the cultural society and flora and fauna of the Pacific. Philatelic and other items of particular interest are indicated: ●

The cromalin die proofs by Walsall Security Printers have only 8 known examples with monochrome versions of which about 20 are known to exist.

### **Development of this exhibit**

This exhibit began as a continuation of a previous one about the Mutiny on the Bounty.

I soon decided to develop one on the theme of Captain Cook voyages of discovery with an emphasis of the impact on the Pacific and Cook's legacy on the conclusion page.

Philatelic material relating to Cook's voyages are wide ranging. Several countries have issued commemorative stamps and covers such as Australia New Zealand the Cook Islands, French Polynesia amongst others. I included copperplate engravings, which are extracts from encyclopaedias published at the time, which are appropriate by giving a first hand impression.

This exhibit is a culmination of research using the following sources:

- An Account of Cook's Voyages (1768-1779)
- Captain James Cook (Richard Hough, 1994)
- Museum of New Zealand
- National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
- The Captain Cook Society

Cook's published journals (available online) were researched for dates and quotes he made when observing and recording the voyages. The Captain Cook Society publishes journals and newsletters quarterly and provides a list of reading materials and websites for further research. I visited the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London that had a Cook exhibit with actual artefacts. Modern biographies were also consulted.

### **Layout of this exhibit**

This exhibit is divided into 5 main parts beginning with early exploration and planning covering earlier attempts by Europeans followed by a detailed account of Cook's exploration of the unknown lands he encountered.

The following 3 parts examine the culture of the Polynesians society and the flora and fauna seen by the scientists and botanists onboard. The final part profiles the last voyage, Cook's demise and examines his legacy of the scientific and geographical knowledge gained with a conclusion about his impact of modern pacific society.

#### **Update/revision from last show**

Southeastern Stamp Expo (Atlanta, 2025)

Title change

**"Aspects of Cook's Voyages in the Pacific 1768-1779" to  
"Captain James Cook's Voyages in the Pacific 1768-1779"**

A final page highlighting the impact on the environment & culture of the pacific islanders and a conclusion of the legacy of Cook.