

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

3 July

MARCO POLO'S JOURNEYS ALONG THE SILK ROAD

In the late 13th century, the known world for many Europeans ended at the edges of their own continent. However, the travel narratives of a Venetian merchant, Marco Polo, would soon shatter these boundaries and expand the horizons of Western understanding. Embarking on a perilous journey spanning decades, Polo travelled along the fabled Silk Road—a vast, intricate network of trade routes linking the Mediterranean to the heart of the Mongol Empire. He was a teenager, travelling with his father and uncle. A journey that lasted 24 years.

During this era, the Silk Road was not merely a path for the movement of luxury goods like spices and textiles; it was a conduit for cultural exchange, technological innovation, and diplomatic engagement, facilitated by the unprecedented stability of the Pax Mongolica. The significance of Marco Polo's travels lies in examining how his detailed accounts of the Mongol court and the lands of the East acted as a bridge between civilisations. By analysing Polo's experiences and observations, we can gain insight into the profound impact the Silk Road had on the medieval world and how these accounts helped set the stage for the global exploration that would follow.