

Slide Show

When Travel Became Fabulous

See an astonishing slide show of Europe's first printed maps and travel images.

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There was a time when travels to faraway lands were fraught with peril and few ventured far from home. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, European explorers set off on journeys to foreign realms and brought back astounding tales from their adventures that ignited the curiosity of those who remained at home. Pictures from distant countries were in great demand, and artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Stefano della Bella, and Hendrik Goltzius created remarkable printed works that depicted distant lands and previously unknown cultures.

With the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, it was possible for European artists to distribute copies of their work. For most people, these prints were the only source of information about foreign lands. As such, they provide a window into early ideas of travel and European attitudes towards foreign cultures.

A collection of approximately 60 of these early travel images are being shown together for the first time at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in an exhibition that offers insight into European perceptions of foreign countries from the 15th through the early 18th century. On view through September 16, 2007, [Fabulous Journeys and Faraway Places](#) presents a collection of marvelous works on paper depicting mythological and imaginary journeys, pilgrimages to holy sites, and adventurous expeditions to faraway lands.