Pedro Fernandez De Quirós Encyclopedia Article

Pedro Fernandez De Quirós

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1565-1614

Portuguese navigator who explored the South Pacific in a vain attempt to find the elusive "southern continent," or Terra Australis. In 1603, King Philip III of Spain granted him three vessels for a southward voyage, and on December 21, 1605, the expedition departed from Callao, Peru. They moved gradually across the southern Pacific, through the island regions now designated as Pitcairn and French Polynesia and beyond, far to the west. Finally they arrived in Espiritu Santo in what is now Vanuatu—only about 1,200 miles (1,931 km) from Australia—where Quirós established the colony of Nova Jerusalem on May 14, 1606. Due to infighting among the crew, Quirós was forced to turn back soon afterward.