Some of the reasons that they explored were:



* To find a sea route to the spices of Asia
* To find gold, silver, and precious stones
* To control a larger empire
* To expand Christianity
* To find animal furs

In the 1400s, there was no refrigeration. To prevent meat

from spoiling, people drowned their meat in salt to preserve and dry it (like beef jerky). They also used a lot of spices like pepper to cover up the taste of the salted or spoiled meat.



Unfortunately for

Europeans, these spices did not grow anywhere in Europe. They were only found in Asian countries like China, Japan, and India (these countries were known together as "The Indies"). It was very difficult to get the spices from Asia to Europe. They had to be brought across thousands of miles of dangerous mountains and deserts by spice traders, with bandits waiting to rob the spice caravans. The alternative was to bring the spices by ship, but the sea voyage was also dangerous because of pirates and storms. Since it was so difficult to get spices from Asia to Europe, spices were very expensive.

In 1453, spices became even more expensive and difficult to find in Europe when the land routefrom Asia to Europe was cut-off by the Turkish Empire. The European rulers tried several times to defeat the Turks in battle, but they were turned back each time.

Several European rulers finally decided to try to find a route around the Turkish Empire. If a country could find a way to get these valuable spices to Europe, the rulers would be very rich.

****

**Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones**

European rulers fought many wars. They fought against each other and against the Turkish Empire. These wars were very expensive, so they needed to find lots of gold, silver, and precious stones to pay for them. They believed that Asia was loaded with gold, silver, and precious stones, so they decided to find it and bring it back.

****

**Expand Knowledge**

In the late 1400s, Europeans did not know much about the world. Most of them had never been outside of Europe. The European map of the world included only Europe, Asia, and the top of Africa. They thought there was only one ocean, the Ocean Sea. Although many people thought the world was flat, educated Europeans knew that it was round. The problem was they had no idea how large the world was.

****

**Larger Empires**

Some European rulers, especially the King of Spain and the King of Portugal, wanted to claim as much land as they could. They wanted to take all of the natural resources from this land and use the people that lived there as slaves to do their work.

****

**Expand Christianity**

 In the late 1400s, there was only one religion in Europe, Christianity. The European rulers were very religious. They wanted to convert everyone to Christianity.

****

**Animal Furs**

Eventually, the French found that animal furs, especially beaver hats, were very valuable in Europe. Imagine everyone walking around in a  beaver hat!

