

SILK ROAD

WHO TRAVELED ALONG IT?

- Merchants-those selling/buying goods.
- They would have many guards with them. Traveling in a big group like a caravan helped in defending from bandits. Camels were popular animals for transport because much of the road was through dry and harsh land.
- Marco Polo- born in Venice, Italy in 1254. Venice was a wealthy trading city and Marco's father was a merchant. Marco Polo was a merchant and explorer who traveled throughout the Far East and China for much of his life.
- Missionaries carried their religions (including Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism) to distant lands.
- This route was opened up by Zhang Qian in the Western Han Dynasty and the routes were gradually formed throughout the Han Dynasty.

WHAT WAS IT?

- A great trade route originated from Chang'an (now Xian) in the east and ended at the Mediterranean in the west, linking China with the Roman Empire.
- It is not only an important transportation route connecting the ancient world, but also a synonym for economic and cultural exchanges between the Western world and the oriental world.
- The ancient Silk Road helped to integrate the old Chinese, Indian, Persian, Arabian, ancient Greek and Roman cultures and promoted the exchange of the Western and Oriental civilizations.
- It was called the Silk Road because one of the major products traded was silk cloth from China. People throughout Asia and Europe prized Chinese silk for its softness and luxury. The Chinese sold silk for thousands of years and even the Romans called China the "land of silk".

WHEN WAS IT USED?

- 206 BC (Han Dynasty) to 1453 AD, when the Ottoman [Empire](#) boycotted trade with the west and closed the routes. The closing of the Silk Road forced merchants to take to the sea to ply their trade
- Later, under the rule of the Yuan Dynasty set up by Kublai Khan of the Mongols, trade from China along the Silk Road would reach its peak. During this time the Mongols controlled a significant portion of the trade route, enabling Chinese merchants to travel safely. Also, merchants were granted more social status during the Mongol rule.

WHERE WAS IT?

- The Southern Route wandered west along the northern foot of the Kunlun Mountains, passing Ruoqiang (Charkhlik), Qiemo (Cherchen), Hetian, Yecheng (Karghalik), Shache (Yarkand) and reached Kashgar (the last point of the Silk Road in China). Then this route crossed the snow-covered Pamirs, reached Pakistan and India via Kashmir; it could also reach Europe through Islamabad, Kabul, Mashhad, Baghdad and Damascus.
- The Central Route ran west along the southern foot of [Tianshan Mountains](#), passing Loulan (now Ruoqiang), Turpan, Korla, Kuche (Kuqa), Aksu and Kashgar, afterwards went over the freezing Pamirs, wound to Mashhad via the Fergana Basin, Samarkand, Bukhara and finally joined the Southern Route.
- The Northern Route went west along the northern foot of Tianshan Mountains, taking merchants westwards to Hami (Kumul), Urumqi and Yining, and then reached the areas near the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.
- 6,214 miles long; among which approximately 1,864 miles of the route are inside China's territory.
- The Silk Road was a trade route that went from China to Eastern Europe. It went along the northern borders of China, India, and Persia and ended up in Eastern Europe near today's Turkey and the Mediterranean Sea.

WHY WAS IT MADE?

- The Silk Road was important because it helped to generate trade and commerce between a number of different kingdoms and empires. This helped for ideas, culture, inventions, and unique products to spread across much of the settled world.
- Besides silk, the Chinese also exported (sold) teas, salt, sugar, porcelain, and spices. Most of what was traded was expensive luxury goods. This was because it was a long trip and merchants didn't have a lot of room for goods. They imported, or bought, goods like cotton, ivory, wool, gold, and [silver](#).

TRADING