

THE BIRTHPLACE OF HUMANKIND

The first traces of human activity were found in Africa, the starting point from which our ancestors later traveled to all four corners of the Earth. These humans were the first explorers. Here we can see the paths they took.

Leaving Africa

For a long time, humans lived only in Africa, but about 120,000 years ago they began to explore other parts of the world as well. This led to some of the most significant journeys of discovery in the history of humankind. We're still not totally sure why they started off on their wanderings, but it was probably in search of new hunting grounds or because of changes in the climate.

More than 60,000 years ago, stone spears were already being used as tools and weapons.

From Asia to America

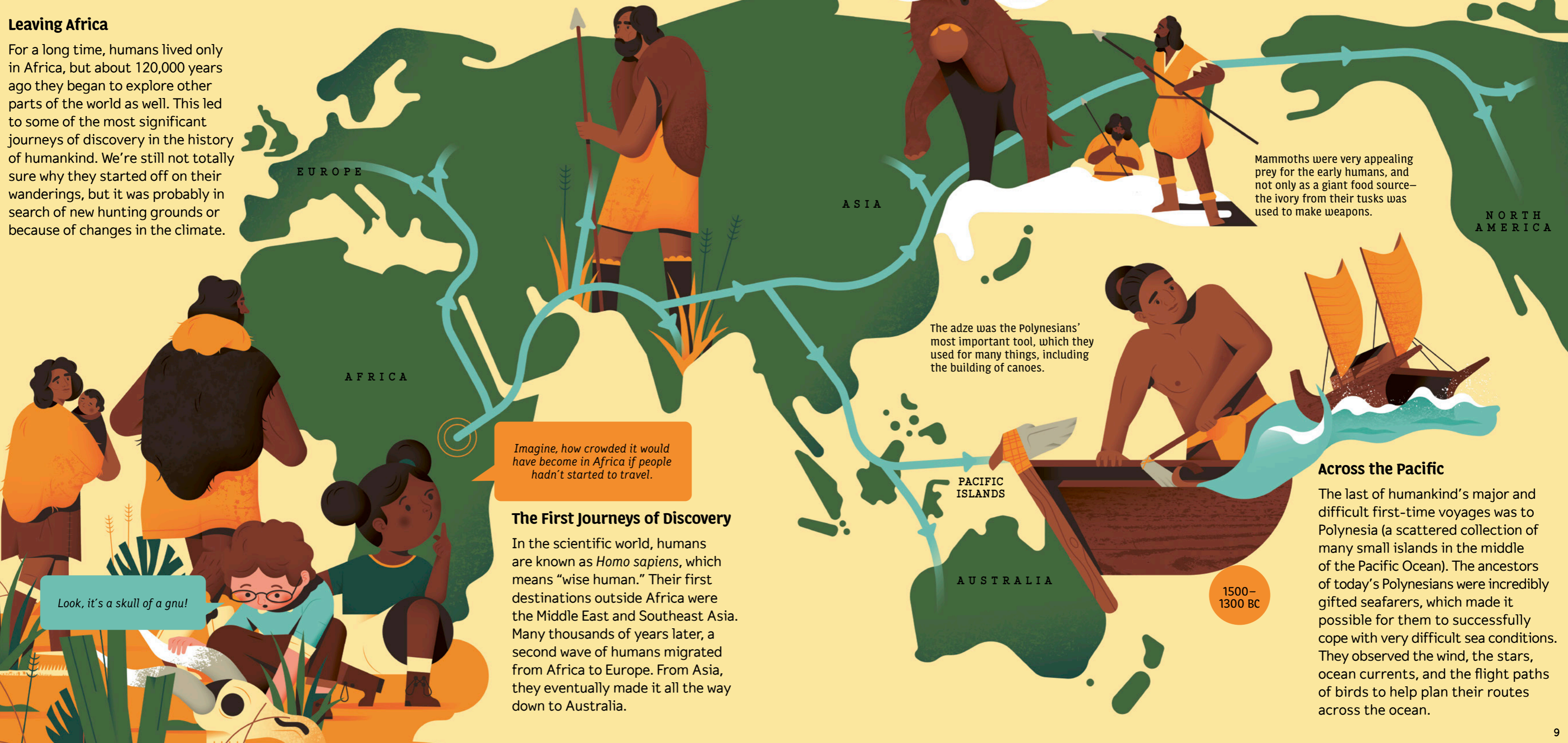
The last major landmass to be inhabited by humans was what we now call the Americas. Researchers are still trying to figure out how exactly humans were able to get there from Asia, but one thing is certain: they reached the continent at least 15,000 years ago, either by journeying over the ice in the Far North (that is, from modern-day Russia to Alaska) or by making their way across the ocean.

Mammoths were very appealing prey for the early humans, and not only as a giant food source—the ivory from their tusks was used to make weapons.

The adze was the Polynesians' most important tool, which they used for many things, including the building of canoes.

Across the Pacific

The last of humankind's major and difficult first-time voyages was to Polynesia (a scattered collection of many small islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean). The ancestors of today's Polynesians were incredibly gifted seafarers, which made it possible for them to successfully cope with very difficult sea conditions. They observed the wind, the stars, ocean currents, and the flight paths of birds to help plan their routes across the ocean.



Imagine, how crowded it would have become in Africa if people hadn't started to travel.

The First Journeys of Discovery

In the scientific world, humans are known as *Homo sapiens*, which means "wise human." Their first destinations outside Africa were the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Many thousands of years later, a second wave of humans migrated from Africa to Europe. From Asia, they eventually made it all the way down to Australia.

Look, it's a skull of a gnu!