A lot of the world that we know today was not known in Tudor times. There were many countries and lands full of people that no one had ever seen before.

During those times, explorers began making journeys by sea to find new and exciting places.

In Tudor times, sailing ships were quite small, broad, slow and very clumsy compared to ships today. They were built from wood and powered by the wind.

Canvas sails caught the wind which pulled the ships to move.

Often voyages could take several years.

The mast held up the sails and helped to balance the ship so that it didn't tip over.

At the top of the mast was the crow's nest.

This was where sailors would watch for enemy ships or look out for land in the distance.

It wasn't very safe place to be!

The crew were split up into two teams. These were called "watches".

One watch looked after the ship while the other watch rested.

A watch usually lasted for four hours.

Going to sea and finding your way in Tudor times wasn't easy.

Offering was very dangerous.

Some ships didn't fare from having the crew died of starvation and thirst.

Many unlucky ships were wrecked on hidden rocks.

Others were captured or sunk when they sailed into enemy waters or came upon lands where the natives were unfriendly.

Close to land, sailors had to avoid getting into shallow waters because there was the danger of running aground on sand banks or being shipwrecked on hidden rocks.

To avoid these dangers they used a heavy lead and line to measure the depth of the sea.

Cloth or leather strips were fastened to the rope line to mark the depth of the sea.

Landmarks such as cliffs, hills, church steeples, bays and harbours helped sailors find their way near the coast but, far out at sea, they had none of these to help them find their way. Instead they had to guess where they were.

In Tudor times, the navigator would have to be able to recognise landmarks using only his eyes and what he could see.

A lead line.

Most Tudor seafarers only sailed on short journeys near the coast. On a clear day they could easily find their way because they were still in sight of land.

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On board a Tudor ship, the navigator tried to work out where he was by plotting his journey on a chart. He also used a magnetic compass which showed him the direction his ship was sailing in.

The navigator would also have used maps. Maps helped sailors to find their way to distant lands and to find safe places to anchor.

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A Mariner's Compass

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One of the duties of the cabin boy on a ship was to watch the sandglasses. He had to be ready to turn them over when the last of the sand ran from the top half to the bottom half of the sandglass. At the end of each half hour, he had to ring the ship's bell. When the sailors heard the bell, they knew it was time to check the speed and direction of their ship.

What do you think it would have been like on board a Tudor sailing ship?