

From the **Rise of Mankind** to the **Fall of the Berlin Wall**

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Unforgettable Events



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# Vikings in America

I wonder if you know which European discovered America? Was it Christopher Columbus in 1492? Oh, no, he was outrun by a Viking, an adventurer and seafarer Leif Erikson **1**, son of an equally famous Viking Erik the Red. In early October 1000 or 1001, Leif set sail with a crew of 35 loyal men **2** to the far seas,

heading for the shores of North America. The impulse for this trip originated in a story by Bjarni Herjólfsson, a merchant who glimpsed a piece of wooded American coastline on his voyage, and the desire to bring wood supplies back to the hostile Greenland. Moreover, Leif bought from Bjarni a 15-meter long Viking row boat

called the *knaara* **3**. After 250 days of their toilsome voyage, the heroic Vikings arrived to the shores of the New World and they explored the coasts of the today's Baffin island **4**, the Labrador region, finally to found a settlement in fertile L'Anse aux Meadows where fish were in abundance to feed them. Leif Erikson only explored the coasts of the newly discovered sites and

maintained fair relations with native inhabitants **5** whom the Vikings named "Skraelings" and who treated the newcomers with mistrust. Later voyages to America, in which Leif Eriksson was no longer involved, saw an escalation in relations between the Norsemen and the native people and the Vikings ceased sailing to America once and for all.



# Battle of Orléans

At the very beginning of the century-long war conflict between England and France, there was a dispute over the rich territory of Flanders. In 1336 the count of Flanders had arrested all Englishmen staying in Flanders at the time. Naturally, England did not want to lose the prosperous region, and launched a counter-attack. This

happened in 1337 and this great war saw an end as late as in 1453. In the final stage of this endless fight, France started losing points. France came perilously close to defeat. If the English conquered the last strategically important town of Orléans ❶, in front of gates of which they stood in spring 1429, France

would have been crushed. At that moment, a barely seventeen-year-old Joan of Arc ❷, an ordinary girl who convinced since her childhood that she had been chosen by angels ❸ and God himself to save her homeland, came to lead the French armies. With a small army ❹ she got by entreaty from the Dauphin Charles, an heir to the throne, she set out along the Loire river for the town of Orléans, besieged by the English for ten months already ❺. On their way, she straightened out

her soldiers, forcing them to regular prayers and order. Then, as her suite managed to sneak in the town, she challenged her army to ferocious fight in the name of God. She lunged herself forward under the flag with a white lily, wearing armour of almost 20kg in weight. Though injured by an arrow, she led her men through ten days of fights to victory. Since that day, France started winning the protracted conflict, and Joan, for her miraculous victory in Orléans, won great popularity.



# The Race for the South Pole

Antarctica – At the beginning of the 20th century the only place on the planet not yet trodden by human feet. Attractive as what adventurer would not wish to be the first? The Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen (1) was set on the South Pole, too. The experienced traveller left nothing to chance. He played it safe with

sled dogs (2) and storages with food supplies (3) he had built in advance, and with fur clothing (4) inspired by the Inuit. To reach his goal, he chose a path by 100 km shorter than the one of his rivals, the British researcher Robert Scott had embarked on. But it should be noted that the Amundsen's path was yet unknown

and unexplored. The Amundsen's adventure began in October 1911 when he set out with four guides, four sledges drawn by 52 dogs and members of his final team for the South. In harsh conditions of the Antarctica, the adventurers covered 50km a day. On ski, with dogs. They proceeded so fast that they reached the South Pole as early as on December 14th, 1911. They explored its surroundings and left a letter to Robert Scott. The Scott's expedition contended with difficulties

all the time. Siberian ponies (5) failed to cope with the harsh environmental conditions, motor sleds (6) proved ineffective. At the end the expedition, members had to pull sledges with their supplies by themselves (7). Scott set out for the South Pole on November 1st, 1911 and arrived there on January 18th, 1912. Bad luck kept Scott's men on their way home and the Antarctica has never let four members of the crew, including Robert Scott himself, of its cruel grip.



# The D-Day

“Hey, can you see that, too?” One of the German sentry men could shout out at dawn on 6th June 1944. He may have been watching the biggest invasion fleet ever. 5300 military vessels **1** heading relentlessly for the shores of Normandy, with thousands of planes **2** buzzing above. About 200,000 men, soldiers armed

to teeth, were getting ready to break through the Hitler’s notorious Atlantic Wall - a strong defence system consisting of bunkers and artillery fortifications, stretching from the Norwegian border to France. The liberation of Europe commenced. In the evening before, about 13,000 allied paratroopers **3** landed in

France to take control of important locations – bridges, intersections, and villages. The Allies had left nothing to chance. The operation Overlord, as the whole campaign was called, had been prepared for two years. No wonder that they surprised Germans with amphibious tanks **4**, which managed to float to the shore from the assault ship and start fighting right away, or bridge tanks **5** capable of bridging obstacles, as well as with armoured

vehicles determined to eliminate mines. The most severe fights took place on the beach codenamed Omaha where the German defence was particularly strong and where 3,000 Americans lost their lives. Despite severe losses of the liberation forces, the operation Overlord turned successful, as it clearly started the subsequent defeat of the entire Nazi regime.



# The Fall of the Berlin Wall

They started building it on the night of 13th August 1961. Secretly, under the strict supervision of Soviet soldiers. Consent to the construction was given by the highest representative of the USSR of the time, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev. Its entire length of 165.7km divided Berlin in two parts for long 28 years. The West

part representing the pro-French, pro-American, and pro-British Germany, against the pro-Russian East Germany. It was to guard socialism, firmly and grimly... The talk is about the Berlin Wall **1**, a construction that has become a symbol of the Cold War, war tension between states controlled by the Soviet Union,

and the Western world. It prevented East German intellectuals and scholars from running for freedom, escaping to the other part of Berlin, the capitalist West where even the most courageous opinions could be openly expressed **2**. On the 9th November 1989, German border crossings to the West were opened with immediate effect. On November 9, thousands

of East Germans **3** ran to the Berlin Wall, trying to cross to the better part of the city. However, almost two hundred of them did not live to see the desired freedom. The chaotic crossing of the Wall turned fatal to them. Anyway, November 9th, 1989, made its mark in history by the fall of the structure symbolising the hated socialism.



The book *Unforgettable Events* is a collection of historical moments that marked, indelibly, our lives. Though some are distant by thousands of years, they were decisive for the direction followed by the history of humanity. 23 spectacular two-page illustrations present the milestones of our history from the Ice Age to the end of the 20th century. Let's travel back in time and explore the events that should not be forgotten.

