About 1,000 years ago a group of people called the Vikings set out from their European homeland for unknown places beyond the horizons. In addition to being the fierce warriors that we think of when hear their name, Vikings were master craftsmen, smart businessmen, expert farmers, and fearless explorers. Their activities stimulated political changes in Europe and Russia, created lasting new societies in Iceland and Greenland, and led to the discovery of North America 500 years before Columbus. The Vikings’ dramatic western expansion across the North Atlantic still isn’t fully understood. What made them leave their homelands? How did they navigate the North Atlantic? Where in North America did they travel?

Answers to questions about the Vikings can be found in many places. Fragile objects and archaeological sites tell us about their western expansion. Ice-core samples and pollen remains help reconstruct the environment during the Viking age. Manuscripts preserve the deeds and words of the Vikings and tell us their own stories. For modern scholars, uncovering the Viking past is itself a constant journey of discovery.

And now, you too can take a Viking voyage. Sail the stormy seas of the North Atlantic in your own “longship.” Follow the path of the Norsemen from their homelands in Scandinavia to the shores of the New World to see how recent advances in archeology, saga studies, history, environmental studies, and even human genetics are changing our understanding of the Vikings, their neighbors, and their descendants.

Learn more at Smithsonian:  [http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/start.html](http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/start.html)

ePals Activity:  Share three interesting facts that you learned about the Vikings. Why do you think Vikings continue to fascinate people today? Post your thoughts to [Smithsonian Chat Student Forum on ePals](http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/start.html).

See more classroom activities in ePals [Gallery of Smithsonian Activities](http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/start.html).