

# The Canoe in Pacific Island Culture

This thematic exhibit describes the role of the canoe as the most important cultural artifact of the island people that inhabit the Pacific Ocean from Hawaii to New Zealand and from the Marianas to Easter Island.



Migration paths and trading routes of the peoples of the South Pacific.

At the time Roman soldiers were marching through Iron Age Europe, great wooden canoes carved with Stone Age tools were sailing across the world's largest ocean. When Europeans first observed these "Vikings of the Pacific" in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Pacific Islanders had been sailing their ocean-going canoes for a thousand years.

Ancient Tongan Canoe



17th century Tongan voyaging canoe, *Tongiaki* navigating at night as described by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman (1603-1659)  
Original watercolor by artist "Isabel" after a painting by Herb Kawainui Kāne – accepted for 1981 Penrhyn 1c value (ex-Fournier archives)