



Strait of Magellan

- The Strait of Magellan is located **near southern [Chile](#) along the southern edges of the South American continent and links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.**
- It is named after the **Portuguese adventurer, Ferdinand Magellan**, the first explorer to circumnavigate the globe.
- Sheltered by mainland South America and the islands of **Tierra Del Fuego archipelago**, this route was considered much safer than the **Drake Passage**, a more violent stretch of chaotic water between Antarctica and South America.
- Located on the Strait of Magellan, Chile's port city, **Punta Arenas** was once one of the most important supply stops for mariners, until the **[Panama Canal](#)** opened in 1914.

Ferdinand Magellan

- He **set off from Spain 500 years ago** on an audacious voyage to sail all the way around the globe for the first time, a landmark in the history of exploration.
- While crossing the strait, the explorer and his crew observed two galaxies visible to the naked eye from the southern hemisphere, now known as the **Magellanic Clouds**.
- The voyage also contributed to **Europeans' knowledge of the universe.**

Magellanic Clouds

- They are comprised of two irregular galaxies, the **Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC)** and the **Small Magellanic Cloud (SMC)**, which orbit the **[Milky Way](#)** once every 1,500 million years and each other once every 900 million years.
- Lying only about 200,000 light years away, they were the closest known galaxies to the Milky Way until recently, when the Sagittarius and Canis Major **[dwarf galaxies](#)** were discovered and found to be even closer.
- Although very close to us, the Magellanic Clouds have played a significant role in our understanding of the distant Universe.



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