

# Earliest globetrotters may have used sea

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Early civilizations migrating around the globe may have followed coastal routes from Africa to points east and west, an anthropologist said.

Early peoples in California exhibited a high ability to live off the sea thousands of years ago, Jon Erlandson told the BBC. Erlandson, an anthropology professor at the University of Oregon in Eugene said this finding contradicts the long-held belief that maritime skills were a relatively recent phenomenon and less influential on the development of civilization.

Erlandson, speaking at the Calpe Conference 2006 in Gibraltar, said changing sea levels since the last Ice Age, combined with coastal erosion, would have wiped out evidence of a maritime past, the BBC said. The professor said a dig on California's San Miguel Island yielded a cache of artifacts, including fish hooks made of bone and netting made of seaweed, plus other items dating back thousands of years.

These discoveries, plus study of watery kelp forests, led Erlandson to his theory that some of America's earliest inhabitants may have migrated by water from Asia's coasts, in addition to the traditional theory of overland passage from Siberia to Alaska and down to what is now the United States.

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