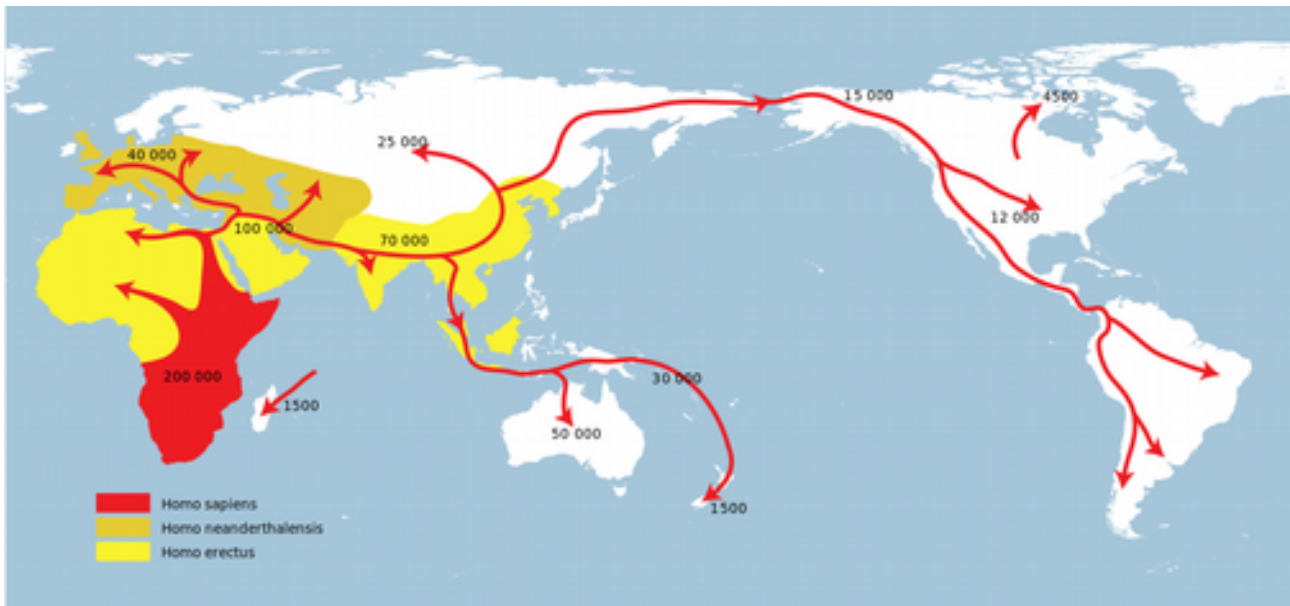


# Modern Humans Leave Africa



Modern humans (also known as “anatomically modern humans” or AMH) left Africa about 100,000 years ago during the [Last Ice Age](#). By about 100,000 years ago modern humans had reached the Middle East. It is thought that they crossed into the Arabian peninsula either in the North of modern Egypt, across the Sinai peninsula, or across the Bab al Mandeb, which is the tip of the Arabian peninsula in Yemen, closest to Africa.

Although the [sea](#) levels were a lot lower than today, because much of the [sea water](#) was held in the [ice](#) caps, there would always have been [water](#) between Africa and Arabia at the Bab al Mandeb. However, at the height of the [Ice Age](#), this [water](#) would have only been a couple of kilometres across and so people could have swum or floated across, perhaps using simple boats. These boats may have just been a log, or a raft or canoe.

People probably did not set out to travel across the world. It took thousands of years and they probably only moved a short distance in each lifetime.

## Europe

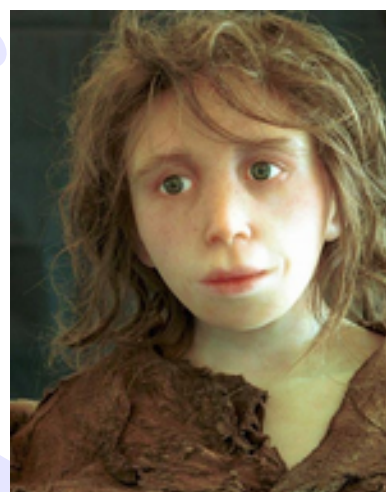
Much of Europe was still covered with [ice](#) and [tundra](#), so modern humans only settled in Europe about 45,000 years ago. This is after we know that modern humans (ancestors of the Aborigines) were already living in central [Australia](#). One of the earliest sites of modern humans in Europe is in southern Italy at 43-45,000 years ago.



The Neanderthals were already living in Europe. Neanderthals were a type of human adapted to living in the cold. They had big noses to warm up the cold Ice Age air before it got to their lungs; they were short and stocky, with powerful arms and legs. Being short and stocky helped them to keep warm, because less skin was exposed to the air. Their brains were slightly bigger than ours, but had a slightly different shape. It is thought that they were very good at remembering things. but not so good at solving problems. They



*Model of adult male Neanderthal, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.*



*Model of a Neanderthal child. Anthropological Institute, Zurich.*

made stone tools and buried their dead. They may have had simple boats. They probably had language and they lived in small social groups.

## Asia

From Arabia, modern humans spread into Asia. At first they stayed in the south of Asia, near the coast, where it was warmer and there was less ice. The ice covering the Himalaya mountains blocked them from going further north for many thousands of years. Most modern humans stayed in India and South-east Asia for many thousands of years. In these areas they replaced the earlier human ancestors, *Homo erectus*, who had left Africa about 1.75 million years ago.



*Model of female Homo erectus. Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.*

## Australia

Modern humans reached Australia about 60 or 70,000 years ago. They travelled to Australia from South-east Asia. Although the sea level was very low, they would have



needed boats to cross the **sea** between Indonesia and **Australia**. The Timor Trough is deep **water** that lies between Timor and **Australia**. People would have needed to cross about 90 km of open **sea** to reach **Australia**. They must have had boats.

## North and South America

Asia was linked to North America during the **Last Ice Age** by a **land** bridge called “Beringia” in the area that is today the Bering Strait. As a result of the low **sea** level, **land** was exposed that joined the two continents together. This bridge of **land** meant that people could walk into North America from Asia. Modern humans then spread down the coast of the Americas, reaching Peru by 20,000 years ago.



*The land bridge between Asia and North America during the Ice Age.*

