Royal Navy captain Matthew Flinders was the first person to sail around Australia and confirm that it was a continent. He arrived in Australia aged just 21. With George Bass, he explored the coast on a small sailing boat. The pair were sent on a larger ship to find out if Tasmania was an island.

In September 1798, Flinders and his crew of eight sailed through what was later named Bass Strait, for his fellow explorer. It was clear that Tasmania was indeed an island.

**A Bigger Circumnavigation**

Now Flinders was ordered to try to sail around Australia. He started at Cape Leeuwin, on the southwestern tip, in 1801. He sailed east, meeting the French explorer Nicholas Baudin. As Flinders went on, his boat began leaking. Still, he managed to sail on around the continent, completing the circumnavigation before landing at Sydney in June 1803.

**Did You Know?**

Flinders' ship, the Investigator, leaked so badly he gave up charting the coast and speeded up his voyage to avoid sinking.

Nicholas Baudin was captain of the French warship Geographe. In 1800, the new emperor of France Napoleon sent him to try to take control of Tasmania. Baudin was also meant to chart the west and north coasts of Australia. But Baudin died during his task in 1803. Much of his work was taken from maps given to him by the English explorer Matthew Flinders.