Trade Route to India

July 8: 1497

The ruler of Portugal King Manuel I vested Vasco da Gama, our captain-major with a fleet of four vessels. I am aboard the Berrio the third vessel in Capt. da Gama’s fleet. The largest vessel the São Gabriel is the lead ship. The São Raphael follows, and we are next. Last is the tiny fourth ship that carries all the food. We are charged with establishing a trade route to India.

MONDAY

November 7: 1497

I have been at sea for many fortnights and we have not yet reached our destination. Presently, we have cast anchor in the Bay of Saint Helena. We will remain here for eight days but it doesn’t seem long enough to finish our work. We must mend the sails, clean out the hold and take in wood and food. I am part of a crew of thirty sailors. There is enough work, however, for at least fifty men.

TUESDAY
November 12, 1497

We have been working tirelessly for many days. Our duties are difficult but the weather thankfully has been most agreeable. Many birds fly overhead and circle our ships looking for food. I have seen cormorants, gulls, turtle doves, crested larks, and many others. Natives laden with offerings approached our ships. When they were a stone's throw away we alerted Capt. da Gama.

Wednesday

November 13, 1497

My closest comrade Jorge is posted to Capt da Gama's vessel, the São Gabriel. He witnessed Capt. da Gama's encounter with the natives they offered the captain cinnamon, cloves, seed-pearls, gold, and many other treasures. As we travel farther up the African coast, cities such as Mozambique, Mombasa, and Malindi offer such riches.

Thursday