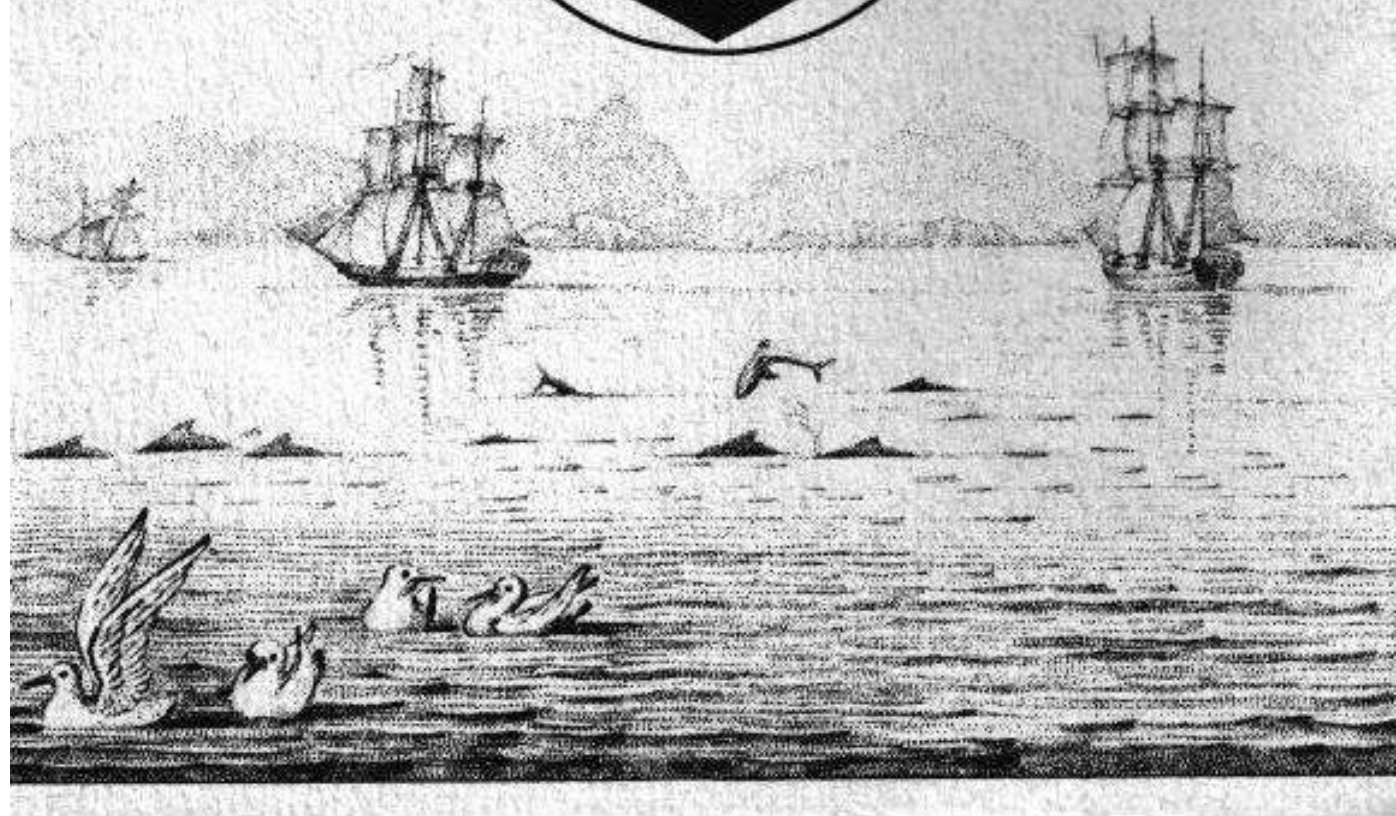


LAPEROUSE MUSEUM



LAPEROUSE MUSEUM

Sydney District
National Parks and Wildlife Service

Saving forever
our natural and cultural heritage
for you and your children to use,
treasure and enjoy.



First published 1988
Reprinted 1989

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possible by the generosity of the
BANQUE NATIONALE DE PARIS



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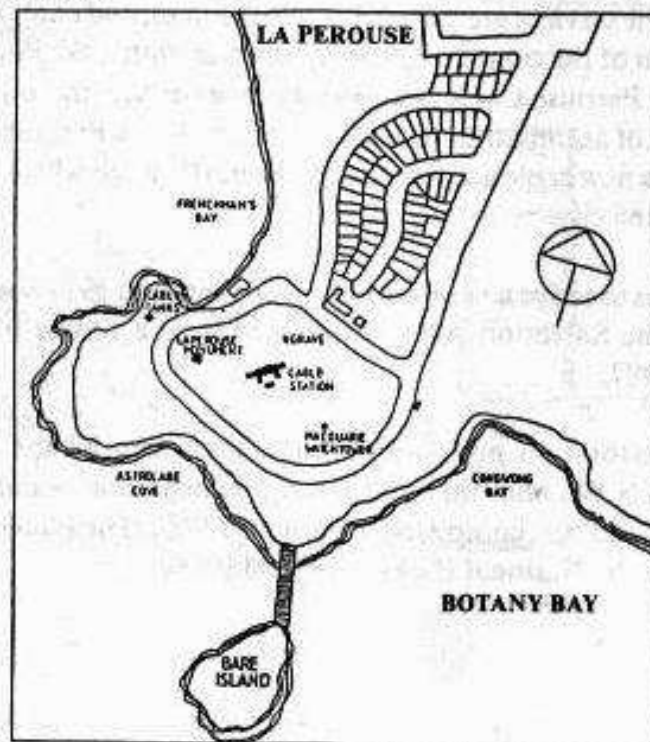
THE LAPEROUSE MUSEUM

In July, 1984, a group of Australian and French residents formed the Lapérouse Association for the Australian Bicentenary with the aim of establishing a museum in memory of Lapérouse, on the very site where his expedition had arrived to witness the first six weeks of British settlement in Australia. The Cable Station at La Perouse in the Botany Bay National Park was chosen to house the museum.

The museum commemorates the achievements of Lapérouse and other French navigators in the Pacific, and records their significant role in the exploration of the Australian coastline.

Officially opened by the Hon. R.J. Carr, M.P., Minister for Environment and Planning, on the 23rd February, 1988, the museum was presented to the New South Wales Government, in the name of the Lapérouse Association, by the French minister Mr André Giraud, as President of the *Comité Français pour le Bicentenaire de l'Australie*.

In keeping with the spirit of cooperation required to create it, this museum also seeks to perpetuate and further strengthen the long-lasting ties between Australia and France.



LA PEROUSE HISTORIC SITES - LOCATION MAP
showing the Lapérouse Monument, the Cable Station
and the Grave of Father Receveur

HISTORY OF CABLE STATION

The Cable Station was built in 1881-1882 as accommodation for officers of the Eastern Extension Australasia and China Telegraph Company.

In 1876, the Company had completed the laying of a submarine cable from La Perouse to Nelson in New Zealand, the final link in a telegraph service between England and New Zealand.

The layout of the building gives clues to the operation of the cable company. The building faces towards Frenchman's Bay and the landfall of the submarine cable. The focal point of the building is the centrally located "Instrument Room", a double height space, top-lit, with three oval highlight windows on the west and east facades. Evidence of the cable lines entering the room can still be seen beneath the verandah. Flanking the Instrument Room are two almost identical accommodation wings.

The initials of the cable company were written on the pediment above the entry. Within the Instrument Room, telegraph operators operated a 24 hour cable service, receiving and sending morse code messages. The P.M.G. re-directed these messages to the city.

The need for cable services grew at such a rate that a second cable line was laid in 1890. By the turn of the century, the company had built a larger office at Yarra Bay, and the La Perouse Cable Station was used for accommodation only. By 1916, the advent of automatic repeaters had made the La Perouse Cable Station redundant, and a new cable line was laid via Bondi through which messages were sent directly to the city.

The building was used for a variety of purposes between 1917 and 1944, when it was leased to the Salvation Army, who used it as a refuge for women and children until 1987.

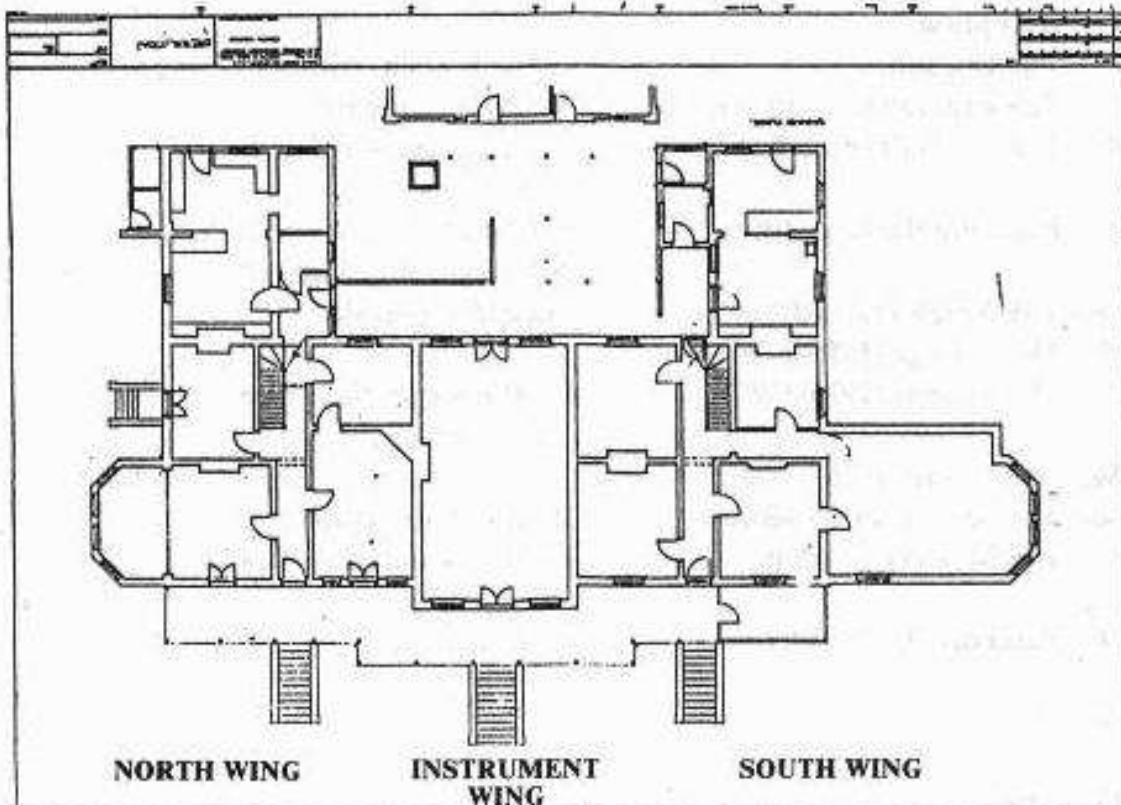
An extensive restoration programme was undertaken by the Public Works Department, N.S.W. and the south wing which now accommodates the Lapérouse Museum was completed in January, 1988. The building is presently administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

CABLE STATION

Elevation - West Facade



Original Ground Floor Plan (before restoration)

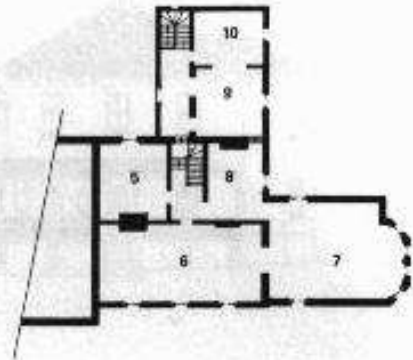


LAPEROUSE MUSEUM FLOOR PLAN

Ground Floor



First Floor



Display Rooms

- 1 Reception**
- 2 The Encounter**
- 3 The Unknown Pacific Ocean**
- 4 J.-F. de Galaup de Lapérouse**
- 5 Planning the Expedition**
- 6a. The King's Instructions**
- 6b. The Voyage (1785-1786)**
- 7 The Voyage (1786-1787)**
- 8a. The Voyage (1787-1788)**
- 8b. The Search for Lapérouse**
- 9 The Mystery Unfolds**
- 10 Vanikoro & The Wrecks**

Services

- 11 Office**
- 12 Archives & Conservation**
- 13 Public Amenities**

Room sponsored by;

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- Société Générale
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ROOM 2 — THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter took place in Botany Bay, New Holland, on the 26th January, 1788. The First Fleet, H.M.S. *Sirius* and *Supply* accompanying the ships loaded with convicts from England, under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip, had been at anchor since the 18th. Phillip's second-in-command, Captain John Hunter, was about to set sail for Port Jackson, when two strange frigates flying the white flag of France, sailed into the bay.

Captain Phillip had however been told before leaving England that Lapérouse was on a major voyage of exploration in the Pacific, and that Britain, like other European powers, had agreed to provide help and assistance to the French ships, should either be required. In Botany Bay, the French received a friendly welcome, pleased to note that "*all Europeans are indeed compatriots at such a great distance from home.*"

Having already decided that swampy Botany Bay was unsuitable for settlement, Captain Phillip ordered the British fleet to sail on to Port Jackson, leaving Botany Bay to the Frenchmen, who set up camp on the northern shore, now known as the Sydney suburb of La Perouse.

During their six weeks stay, the French came into close contact with the aborigines, as they had done with inhabitants on other shores, following the King's peaceful instructions. They constructed a stockade and even grew vegetables on the land where this museum now stands. Two small boats were built to replace the ones lost on the west coast of North America more than a year before.

Their chaplain-naturalist Father Receveur, who had been wounded by the natives in Samoa a few weeks earlier, died on 17th February. They buried him under a eucalyptus tree. When Captain Duperrey's *Coquille* visited the site in 1824, a sailor carved the epitaph which can still be seen on the tree trunk now exhibited in this room.

Lapérouse left with Phillip the reports and letters to be sent to France by the first available ship. Then, on the 10th March, 1788, the expedition sailed out of Botany Bay, unimpressed with the potential of the place as a colony, bound for Tonga, New Caledonia and New Guinea according to their instructions. Lapérouse's ships *Boussole* and *Astrolabe* were never to be seen again!

ROOM 3 — THE UNKNOWN PACIFIC OCEAN

The exploration of the Pacific was a prodigious undertaking that lasted for over three hundred years. It began as a European search for a new, direct route to the lands of spice and treasure in the Far East, and culminated in seventy-five years of feverish activity between 1768 and 1842, when more than twenty national expeditions sailed into the Ocean for the purposes of commerce, colonization and scientific discovery.

Willem Janzoon began exploration of the coast of New Guinea and northern Australia in 1605. The arid west coast of Australia had been reconnoitred by Abel Tasman, who discovered and named Van Diemen's Land in 1642. However, nothing was known of the hundreds of islands that dotted the huge expanse of the southern Pacific.

The English buccaneer William Dampier in 1688 and again in 1699 landed on the west coast of Australia and found it a God-forsaken place, while in 1772, Aleno de Saint-Alouarn took possession of the same coast in the name of France. Despite such constant activity, nobody had yet discovered the east coast of Australia, even though the Portuguese navigator Torres had safely picked his way through the reefs of the Torres Strait in 1606. In 1768, after leaving the New Hebrides, Bougainville narrowly escaped disaster on the Great Barrier Reef, then turned north.

The two great obstacles to long voyages of discovery were deficiencies in ship design, and the inability to fix longitude. Early navigators found their uncertain way through unknown waters by observing the relative positions of the sun and stars, but these could be invisible for days at a time in bad weather. Quite early in the 15th century, mariners learned to establish latitudes by using a cross-staff to measure the angle of the Pole star with the horizon, but fixing of longitudes was yet impossible. This important advance in the science of navigation was not made until the 18th century when the marine chronometer was developed in 1735.

Now the great age of Pacific exploration could begin, and England and France were both leaders and rivals in the field. It was the three voyages of James Cook between 1768 and 1780 that were to define the fundamental nature of the Pacific.

In 1774, Louis XVI came to the throne of France. He was deeply interested in geography, knew Bougainville's voyage by heart, and was eagerly following the voyages of Captain Cook. He decided to send an expedition on a voyage of discovery which would rival the achievements of Cook.

ROOM 4 — JEAN-FRANCOIS DE GALAUP DE LA PEROUSE

Jean-François de Galaup was born in 1741, the eldest son of a well-to-do middle-class family of landowners from Albi in Southern France; his birthplace, the Manoir du Gô, was the summer residence of his family. After an early education at the Jesuit College in Albi, at the age of 15, he joined the French Navy as a *garde de la Marine*, and was immediately plunged into action, leaving for Canada, where France was engaged in a struggle with England. In the disastrous naval battle of Quiberon Bay, he was taken prisoner by the British and spent two years in captivity.

In 1764, he sailed to Bengal, India and China and, was posted in 1771 to the Isle de France (now Mauritius) where he met and fell in love with Eléonore Broudou who later became his wife. For five years, he was engaged in the defence of French possessions in the Indian Ocean where, once again, France and England were rivals.

He took command of the *Astrée* in 1780 and, during the colonial struggle between Britain and France, participated in the battle of Louisbourg. In 1782, he accepted the risky commission to destroy British installations in the Hudson Straits in the north of Canada and demolish their Forts York and Prince of Wales. Displaying brilliant seamanship and tactical ability, he captured three ships and reduced the forts. The British garrison had fled, but Lapérouse did not destroy its food supplies, as men could have starved in the coming Canadian winter. For this generous gesture, he was warmly commended by Louis XVI. By late 1782, he was back in France. Three years later, he was chosen to lead the expedition in the Pacific.



adieu je vous embrasse et vous aime de tout mon coeur
Lapérouse
à bord de la corvette dans la baye de botanique le 1er Janvier 1764

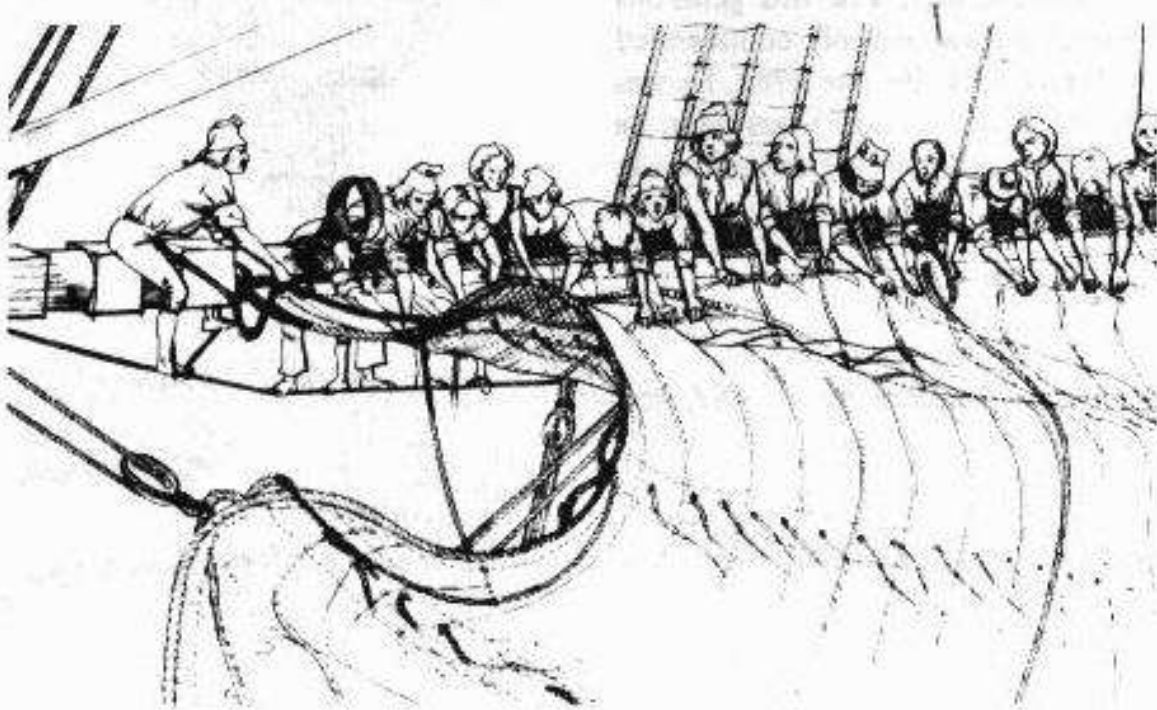
ROOM 5 — PLANNING THE EXPEDITION

Two frigates, *Astrolable* and *Boussole*, named to indicate the scientific nature of the voyage, were lavishly equipped for a long and arduous campaign. The ships were crammed with every conceivable store and supply, including a vast array of goods for trade and gifts for the natives. The decks were swarming with livestock. Sacks of vegetables and fruit were stuffed into every corner and fish were hung out to dry.

The cabins were small and cramped. The presence of the scientists meant that space was even more limited than usual. Calm and practical by nature, Lapérouse was quite at ease in his position of authority, despite the different circumstances.

Lapérouse himself carefully selected most of the scholars and scientists; the engineer Monneron, the geographer Bernizet, the astronomers Dagelet and Monge, the mineralogist Lamanon, the botanists Collignon and Lamartinière, the naturalists Receveur and Dufresne. Duché de Vancy was the Senior Artist to record people and places while the Prevosts, uncle and nephew, were engaged to paint natural history specimens.

All kinds of French and English scientific instruments were taken on board. From Joseph Banks, Monneron received two dipping needles for taking measurements that had been used by Cook himself, which Lapérouse regarded with feelings of veneration. A library of over 125 titles was assembled, including the journals of other French and foreign voyages and books relating to all aspects of astronomy, navigation, physics and natural history.



ROOM 6a — THE KING'S INSTRUCTIONS

After the Treaty of Versailles in 1783, when peace had been established and seemed likely to last for some time, Louis XVI enthusiastically supported the project of a French expedition around the world in the interest of science and hydrography, with the hope of filling in the blank spaces still remaining on world maps after Cook's expeditions.

Together with the King, the Maréchal de Castries, Minister for the Navy, and Claret de Fleurieu, Director of Ports and Arsenals, secretly drew up detailed plans for an ambitious four years voyage around the world. The *Académie des Sciences* and the *Société de Médecine*, the two most prominent learned societies of France, were requested to devise programmes for important astronomical, geographical, botanical and zoological observations.

Although the early political and commercial considerations never entirely disappeared, they gradually became less important. The King's instructions were extensive and precise. Lapérouse was directed to explore the Pacific more fully in one voyage than anyone had ever previously attempted to do. Fleurieu and the Royal Geographer, Jean Buache, prepared copious historical and geographical notes on the matters to be investigated, and the leading scientists of France were asked to provide detailed *mémoires* outlining the various investigations, experiments and research that could be undertaken.

Two of the King's personal instructions read as follows:

"On all occasions, Sieur de Lapérouse will act with great gentleness and humanity towards the different peoples whom he will visit during the course of his voyage."

"His Majesty will consider it as one of the happiest events of the expedition if it should end without costing the life of a single man."

ROOM 6b — THE VOYAGE (1785-1786)

As commander of the expedition, Lapérouse had the right to choose all his officers. This would make for harmonious relationships, so important on a long, difficult and often dangerous voyage in uncharted waters, with no hope of rescue in the event of a shipwreck.

Without hesitation, he chose as second-in-command his friend Vicomte Fleuriot de Langle, a man much admired for his ability, education and strength of character. The officers were selected from the men they knew and had sailed with. Among them, the Irishman Sutton de Clonard, who would later have to replace Langle and be the one to approach the British officers of the First Fleet in Botany Bay.

Finally the ships' crews were made up to strength; Lapérouse's flagship *Boussole* had a complement of 111 and the *Astrolabe*, commanded by Langle, 114. The King demanded that the expedition be ready by the end of April, 1785, but it was the 1st August before the two ships, loaded to the hilt, sailed from the port of Brest into the Atlantic.

CHRONOLOGY OF LAPÉROUSE VOYAGE From Brest to Hawaii

				Days
				at sea
1785				
August	1	Brest	Departure	1
	13-16	Madeira		13
	18	At sea	Sighting of Salvages Islands	18
	19-30	Tenerife	Monge leaves expedition	19
September	29	At sea	First crossing of the Equator	60
October	16	At sea	Sighting of Martin Vaz Islands	77
	17-18	Trinity		78
November	6-19	St Catherine	Brazil	98
1786				
January	25	At sea	Crossing of Le Maire's Strait	178
February	24-	Concepción	Arrival in Chile	208
March	-17		Departure	229
April	9-10	Easter Island	Observation of natives and statues. Planting of trees	252
	28	At sea	Second crossing of the Equator	271
May	28-	Hawaiian	Arrival. Well received by	301
June	-1	Islands	natives on island of Maui	

ROOM 7 — THE VOYAGE (1786-1787)

From Hawaii to Kamtchatka

				Days at sea
1786				
June	23	N-W Coast of America	From Mt. Saint-Elias to Monterey Hydrographic survey	337
July	3	Alaska	Arrival at Lituya Bay, named by Lapérouse Port-des-Francais	327
	13		Purchase of furs for trade	
	30		Disaster! 21 men lost	
			Departure	364
September	15	Monterey	Visit of San Carlos mission	411
	24		Departure on voyage across Pacific Ocean from East to West	420
November	4	At sea	Discovery of Necker Island	461
December	14	Asuncion	Marianas Islands	501
1787				
January	3-	Macao	Fur trade	521
February	-5			554
	21-23	Marivelle	Brief stay to buy wood	570
	28	Manila	Arrival at Cavite, Manila	577
April	10		Departure from Manila	618
May	1	East China Sea	Exploration of coastline of China and Korea	639
	21	Sea of Japan	Sighting of Quelpaert Island	659
	27-29		Brief stay at Dagelet island	667
June	23-27	Ternay Bay	Tartary Coast	692
			Gathering of medicinal plants for treatment of scurvy	
July	4-5	Suffren Bay	Tartary Coast	703
	12-14	Langle Bay	Sakhalin Island	711
			Friendly meeting with natives	
	19-20	D'Estaing Bay	Tartary Coast	723
	28-	Castries Bay	Tartary Coast	732
August	-2		Inhabitants courteous & generous	
	10	At sea	Discovery of Monneron Island	745
	11	At sea	Discovery of Cape Crillon and Lapérouse Srait (Soya)	746
	23-30	At sea	Survey of Kuriles Chain of Islands linking Japan to Kamtchatka peninsula	755
	30	At sea	Leave the Kuriles. Discovery of safe passage through Boussole Strait to Pacific Ocean	765

ROOM 8 — THE VOYAGE (1787-1788)

From Kamtchatka to Botany Bay

			Days at sea	
1787				
September	7	Petropavlosk	Arrival in Kamtchatka. Warm Russian welcome. Mail from France. New order to sail to Botany Bay & report on extent of English settlement plans. Return of Lesseps overland to France with reports & journals	773
	30		Departure on voyage to Southern Pacific Ocean	796
November	21	At sea	Third crossing of the Equator	848
	6	At sea	Sighting of Samoan Islands	863
	9	Tutuila	Arrival	866
	11		Disaster! Langle, commander the Astrolabe, Lamanon and ten crewmen are massacred by natives. Many others are wounded	868
	14		Departure from Massacre Bay	871
	20-23		Survey of Cocos and Traitors Islands	877
	27	At sea	Sighting of Vavau, Tonga	884
	27-31	Tongatabu	Brief stop in Islands of Tonga	888
1788				
January	2-5	At sea	Survey of Pylstart Island	890
	13-14	At sea	Survey of Norfolk Island	901
	23	At sea	Sighting of the east coast of Australia	911
	26	Botany Bay	Arrival in Australia	914
February			Cordial meetings with members of the British First Fleet	
	17		Death of Father Receveur	936
March	10		Departure from Botany Bay	958
April	15-20	Projected survey of Tonga's Archipelago		c.994
May	1-15	Projected survey of part of New Caledonia		c.1010
June		Estimated period of the wreck at Vanikoro		c.1050

ROOM 8b — THE SEARCH FOR LAPEROUSE

The expedition was expected to make a triumphant return to France about the middle of 1789. In July, there were still no despatches and by the end of the year, concern was mounting. Rumours were circulating throughout Europe and despite the turmoil of the Revolution, the French people's passionate interest in the bold enterprise never waned.

Concerned that the ships might have been stranded far from any known sailing route, in some remote place unvisited since the time of Cook, the learned societies of Paris added their influence to a petition, presented to the National Assembly in January 1791, requesting the necessary funds to send an expedition to search those areas.

The Assembly voted a million francs to equip two ships, *Recherche* and *Espérance*, to be commanded by Admiral Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, to follow the route Lapérouse was believed to have taken after leaving Botany Bay. The expedition left the port of Brest on the 29th September, 1791 and reached the Tasmanian coast on 21st April, 1792.

D'Entrecasteaux and his men were the first to explore the southern coast of Tasmania and the Derwent River. The naturalist Labillardière compiled a vast natural history collection. The hydrographer Beautemps-Beaupré drew accurate charts of many areas in the Pacific.

They then sailed for the Santa Cruz Islands, sighting Vanikoro in the distance and even calling it "Ile de la Recherche" (Search Island). Exhausted and racked with fever, they failed to send in a small boat to the island. Had they done so, would they have found the survivors of Lapérouse's ships?

Meanwhile, in Paris, as Louis XVI climbed the steps to the guillotine on the 21st January, 1793, he enquired once more:

"At least, is there any news of Monsieur de Lapérouse?"

ROOM 9 — THE MYSTERY UNFOLDS

In 1826, the Irishman Peter Dillon, a Pacific trader and ship's captain for the British East India Company, called at the little island of Ticopia. There, he met a native carrying a tarnished silver sword guard and exchanged it for a few fish-hooks. Dillon set out for the island of Vanikoro, but could not put in there because of bad weather. He made his way back to India where he persuaded the East India Company to equip him for a thorough search of the area.

On Vanikoro, at last, he won the confidence of the natives who told him the story that, on the night of a terrible storm, two ships had run onto the reef surrounding the island; one had sunk and all aboard were drowned, the other had been held on the reef. Some white men had left the island in a small boat they had built, five to ten moons later. Two of the white men had remained on the island; one had died not long before and the other had left the island with a chief who was in disgrace.

Dillon acquired a haul of articles from the wreck, including a bell engraved with a crucifix and the inscription "*Bazin m'a fait*". There could no longer be any doubt that this was the place where the Lapérouse expedition had come to a tragic end and where Lapérouse and most of his men had died.

In 1826, just before Dumont d'Urville was to leave on his first great expedition to the Pacific, a report of what Dillon had found on Ticopia reached France. One of Dumont d'Urville's instructions was to seek out and confirm the truth or otherwise of this report. In January, 1828, he hurried from Hobart to Ticopia, where the friendly natives told him that the island in question was Vanikoro. He then rushed to the island which he reached on the 21st February.

The Vanikorans were suspicious of the white men and pretended not to know anything. However, in return for a length of red cloth, one man led them out onto the reef. There, through the clear water, they could see scattered on the seabed, bits and pieces of ship's equipment, encrusted with coral: one anchor, a cannon, two bronze swivel guns, and many other items belonging to the *Astrolabe* of Lapérouse.

Before leaving Vanikoro, Dumont d'Urville decided to build a modest monument to Lapérouse. He then left on the 17th March, too many of the men were already ill from tropical fever.

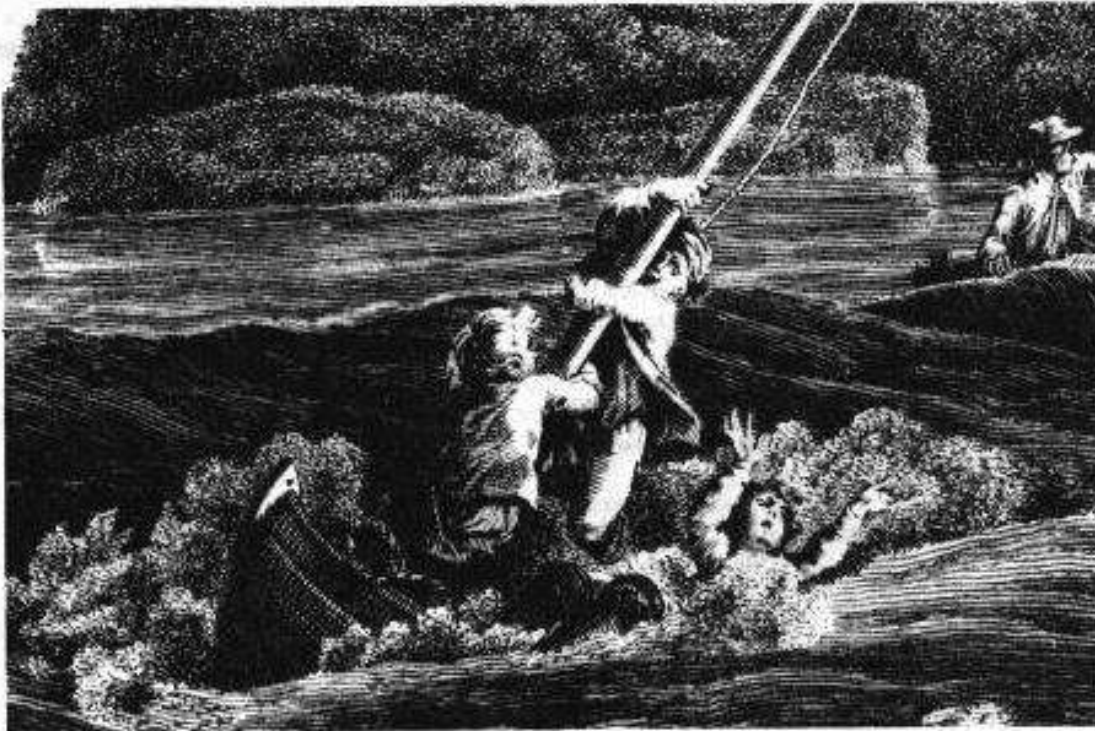
ROOM 10 — VANIKORO & THE WRECKS

One hundred and thirty years later, in 1958, a New Zealand diver living in Vanuatu, Reece Discombe, who was fascinated by the mystery of Lapérouse, started diving onto the reefs of Vanikoro. His skill and tenacity led to a number of major finds that resulted in a tentative re-evaluation of the facts surrounding the tragedy of 1788.

As there was still some confusion about the precise location of the wreck site, the maps of Vanikoro charted by Dillon and Dumont d'Urville were re-examined. In 1958, a French expedition re-discovered the site that d'Urville had named "*Astrolabe*". In 1964, the second ship *Boussole* was found. Reece Discombe explored it himself and alerted the French authorities. The French Government subsequently sponsored three other expeditions and confirmed the existence of a second wreck.

Many more expeditions went to Vanikoro, the latest being organized in 1986 by an Australian-French-Solomon Islands team. They were hoping to find out what had happened to the survivors. Were they massacred in the lagoon? Was the "small boat" they had built to escape stripped of its equipment and perhaps set adrift? Or, did they manage to leave Vanikoro only to die from starvation?

Two hundred years have passed since the disappearance of the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe*, and the fate of Lapérouse and his crew still remains one of the great unsolved mysteries of the sea.



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