

## 2. Migration Routes of the First Americans

Today, most scientists agree that the first people in North America came from Asia. This migration is estimated to have taken place during the last ice age, at least 12,500 years ago. An ice age is a long period of time during which large areas of Earth's surface is covered with thick sheets of ice.

The last ice age began about 2.6 million years ago and ended about 10,000 years ago. During the last part of the ice age, about 25,000 years ago, the Bering Sea did not separate Asia and North America, as it does today. Instead, a bridge of land almost 1,000 miles wide connected them.

Most scientists believe that the first Americans came from Siberia, which is a region in northeastern Asia. The people living in this region followed and hunted big game, such as mammoths (large, elephant-like animals), bison (also called buffalo), and caribou (reindeer).

Scientists believe that these large animals ate the grass on the land bridge. As the years passed, they moved across the land bridge. Small groups of Siberian hunters followed the animals, reaching North America after a long time. Other Siberians may have moved along the southern coast of the land bridge in small boats. They may have continued along the Pacific coast of Alaska and Canada and then turned south.

For hundreds of years, early Americans hunted big game. The animals likely led the hunters south through North and South America, with groups of people settling in areas along the way. Others kept moving until they reached the southern tip of South America. The paths they took to reach their new homes are called migration routes.

## Migration Routes to North and South America

