

Effects of the Crusades on Europe

The Crusades opened the door for the infusion of ideas and goods into Europe, either through directly being brought back by crusaders, or indirectly through trade with both the Latin Kingdom and the Byzantine Empire. Some effects of the Crusades were the result of redesigning Europe to support its involvement in the Crusades. Nonetheless, after the Crusades, Europe was forever changed.

Below are a series of major changes caused by the Crusades.

- Nationalism began in England, France, Germany and Italy.
- Alliances were formed of former rival nations.
- Europe united itself as a geographic entity.
- The Papacy consolidated its systematic dominion.
- Kings gained power by consolidating the nobles under them.
- Towns grew as serfs bought their freedom by serving and bringing back wealth.
- Towns were granted charters in the king's absence.
- Town merchants benefited from increased trade and loaned money.
- Geographic knowledge increased through travel of crusaders and map acquisition.
- Coined money increased in use.
- Heraldic emblems were copied from the Muslims.
- Trade increased as European ports were opened in the Middle East.
- Shipbuilding and navigational skills increased.
- Codes for sea behavior were instituted.
- University concept was introduced and strengthened based on Baghdad, Cairo and Cordoba models.
- The gold standard was established in Europe.
- National taxes, not just feudal taxes were established.
- Concentric castle designs were introduced to architecture for greater defense.
- Tree grafting was introduced to agriculture.
- Military knowledge increased: the supreme commander concept, sapping, mining techniques all created.
- The cotton paper-making process replaced importing parchment; the amount of writing increased.
- The handkerchief was introduced to Europe.
- Literature imported *Sinbad the Sailor*, *Alibaba and the Forty Thieves*, *Aladdin*.
- Art: mosaics, stained glass windows, figured brocades, ecclesiastical art.
- Music: the guitar and violin were introduced.
- Mathematics: Arabic numbers, decimals and spherical trigonometry, algebra sine and tangent
- Science: physics and astronomy, the pendulum, optics and the telescope
- Medicine: physiology, hygiene, surgery, and anesthetics
- Herbs and spices: cinnamon, cloves, mace, nutmeg, saffron, and pepper
- Food: sugar cane and syrup, lemons, apricots, plums, dates, rhubarb, almonds, shallots, and watermelons
- Clothing materials: silk, linen, cotton and velvet
- Precious goods like pearls and ivory
- Cosmetics: rouge, henna, and glass mirrors
- New words: cotton, sofa, mattress, barracks, magazine, arsenal, admiral, tariff, algebra, alcove, crimson, lilac, azure

1. Based on the reading how influential were the Crusades to growth of Europe?
2. Which of these new ideas do you think is the most important? Give examples and defend your answer.

Legacy of the Crusades

The cross-bearers who undertook the long journey to the Middle East from France, England, Germany, and Italy were almost entirely ignorant of the kind of people they were going to meet there. All they knew was that they were going to try to take the Holy Land from a civilization of “unbelievers” whose God and Prophet were different from their own. The crusaders were surprised to find a highly developed culture which was not only much older than Europe’s but in many ways quite superior. Doctors who accompanied the Crusades discovered that Muslim medicine was far more advanced than their own.

One positive result of the Crusades was a greatly expanded knowledge of geography gained by the West. With the coming of so many invaders from all parts of Europe, the veil of the “mysterious east” had been lifted for good.

The 200 years of constant coming and going between East and West obviously gave trade a tremendous boost. Merchants, studying the itineraries of the cross-bearers, discovered the most direct routes between eastern Mediterranean ports and the heart of Europe. Venice was a particularly active port of entry for goods imported from the Middle East and India. From there, the goods traveled a well-established route through the Brenner Pass, up the Rhine to Brussels and then north to the Baltic Sea. Many a town which lies along this course owes its existence to a brisk demand for exotic wares from the East...

As a result of prolonged contact with the East, Europeans developed new tastes in everyday living which have survived through the centuries. Certain habits of eating, dress, and home decoration acquired while they were away in the East, were carried back to Europe. Whereas food had always been sweetened by honey before, sugar from the cane of Syrian origin became the new sweetening agent. European cooks must have spent long hours thinking up different ways of using recently introduced lemons, rice, scallions, melons, and apricots (called “plums of Damascus). Medieval menus suddenly took on added zest from the exciting new tropical products of Arabia and India.

European ladies began to appear in clothes made of damask (named for the city of Damascus), muslin, silk and fine furs. The crusaders brought back perfumes, rugs, carpets, tapestries as well as lacquers, dye stuffs, indigo and glass mirrors (a welcomed improvement over polished metals). Startling new colors, such as lilac, also came to Europe more or less directly as a result of the Crusades.

The flood of new goods could not help but bring improvements in such areas as transportation and methods of doing business. Italian merchants placed into their Mediterranean service larger and faster ships. The Templars introduced the first system of international banking. From then on, voyagers heading for the holy Land could deposit their funds in Paris and draw them out when they reached Acre or Constantinople.

1. Give examples of cultural diffusion between Europe and the Middle East.

2. What are some of the benefits of cultural diffusion?