



Key events of the Third Crusade

4 July 1187: Salah ad-Din's forces decisively defeat a Crusader army at the Battle of Hattin.

2 October 1187: Muslim leader Salah ad-Din captures Jerusalem from Guy of Lusignan.

October 1187: Pope Gregory VIII issues a papal bull, calling for the Third Crusade to retake Jerusalem.

May 1189: Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa), Richard I (the Lionheart) of England, and Philip II of France prepare forces to reclaim Jerusalem.

June 1190: Frederick Barbarossa drowns. His death causes many German forces to return home.

July 1191: Richard and Philip capture Acre after a lengthy siege. Shortly after, Philip returns to France.

September 1191: Richard defeats Salah ad-Din at Arsuf, gaining control of a crucial route towards Jerusalem.

January–July 1192: Richard advances to Jerusalem but decides not to attack due to logistical concerns. Stalemate.

September 1192: A truce, known as the Treaty of Jaffa. Richard then departs for Europe, ending the Third Crusade.

Key people

Salah ad-Din	Sultan of Egypt and Syria; leader of the Muslim forces.
Richard I of England (Richard the Lionheart)	The King of England and one of the leaders of the Crusade.
Philip II of France	King of France. Leader with Richard, but also his rival.
Frederick I Barbarossa	Holy Roman Emperor and leader of the German forces.
Guy of Lusignan	King of Jerusalem and a Crusader leader.
Pope Gregory VIII	Initiator of the Third Crusade.
Archbishop Baldwin	Archbishop of Canterbury. Head of the Church in Wales and England.
Gerald of Wales	Welsh monk and writer.

The challenge of Salah ad-Din

Salah ad-Din (1137–1193) was the first Sultan of Egypt and Syria. His main goal was to recapture Jerusalem, a sacred city for Muslims, Christians and Jews, which had been under Crusader control since the First Crusade (1099).

The Battle of Hattin (1187)

Saladin tactically drew the Crusader army into the dry plains near Hattin, where they suffered from heat and lack of water. Surrounded by Muslim forces, the Crusader army was weakened and ultimately defeated. Most of the Crusader forces were either killed or captured, including King Guy, and the True Cross, a Christian relic, was captured.

The capture of Jerusalem (1187)

Salah ad-Din's forces moved to Jerusalem and laid siege to the city, which was defended by a small Crusader garrison. After a brief but intense siege, the Crusader defenders surrendered on 2 October 1187.

Saladin agreed to let the city's Christian inhabitants leave safely if they paid a ransom, showing mercy in contrast to the brutal capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099.

Key events of the Third Crusade

After the capture of Jerusalem, **Pope Gregory VIII** called for the Third Crusade through a papal bull, Audita Tremendi, issued in October 1187.

In **1188**, **Archbishop Baldwin** and historian **Gerald of Wales** toured Wales to gather support. Some Welsh fighters joined Richard's forces.

Richard I of England was motivated by religious duty, honour and personal glory to join the Crusade. Before departing, he raised funds, recruited soldiers and secured alliances, notably with Philip II of France.

Richard's journey included storms and conflicts in Sicily and **Cyprus**, where he conquered the island in **1191**. At **Acre**, Richard's leadership and fresh troops turned the tide for the Crusaders, who took the city in **July 1191**. However, delays by Salah ad-Din in fulfilling surrender terms led Richard to execute 2,700 Muslim prisoners.

Philip II returned to France, leaving Richard as the primary Crusader leader. Richard then advanced towards Jerusalem, staying near the coast for naval support. At **Arsuf**, Richard's disciplined march repelled harassment from Salah ad-Din's forces. A decisive counterattack led by Richard on **7 September 1191** inflicted heavy losses on Salah ad-Din, establishing Richard's reputation as a skilled military commander.

Stalemate and the end of the Third Crusade

After winning the **Battle of Arsuf**, Richard I took and fortified the port city of **Jaffa** to secure supplies and use it as a base to push towards **Jerusalem**. By **January 1192**, Richard's army was within 12 miles of the city's outskirts but decided against a siege due to difficult winter conditions, a shortage of supplies and doubts about being able to hold the city.

In **spring 1192**, Richard made a second attempt to attack Jerusalem but again withdrew, discouraged by problems of getting supplies to his army and Jerusalem's defences. He returned to **Ascalon**. In **July 1192**, Salah ad-Din attempted to retake Jaffa but failed. Eventually, both Richard and Salah ad-Din commenced negotiations, recognising that neither side could achieve outright victory.

On **2 September 1192**, a truce known as the **Treaty of Jaffa** was signed. The treaty allowed Christian control over key coastal cities like Acre and Jaffa, guaranteed safe pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and established a three-year truce. Jerusalem remained under Muslim control, with mutual respect for religious access.

Soon after, Richard left the Holy Land due to depleted resources, political threats in Europe, and a stalemate with Salah ad-Din. His departure weakened the Crusader states. This marked the end of the Third Crusade.

Richard is remembered as a skilled warrior and diplomat, although he faced criticism for not capturing Jerusalem. Salah ad-Din's health declined post-treaty, and he died in **1193**. His legacy as a noble leader and defender of Jerusalem earned admiration even in Europe. Both became iconic figures.