

**Christopher Columbus**



**Who's Christopher Columbus**

Little is known of Columbus’s early life. The vast majority of scholars, citing Columbus’s testament of 1498 and archival documents from Genoa and Savona, believe that he was born in Genoa to a Christianhousehold; however, it has been claimed that he was a converted Jew or that he was born in Spain, Portugal, or elsewhere. Columbus was the eldest son of Domenico Colombo, a Genoese wool worker and merchant, and Susanna Fontanarossa, his wife. His career as a seaman began effectively in the Portuguese merchant marine. After surviving a shipwreck off Cape Saint Vincent at the southwestern point of Portugal in 1476, he based himself in Lisbon, together with his brother Bartholomew. Both were employed as chart makers, but Columbus was principally a seagoing entrepreneur. In 1477 he sailed to Iceland and Ireland with the merchant marine, and in 1478 he was buying sugar in Madeira as an agent for the Genoese firm of Centurioni. In 1479 he met and married Felipa Perestrello e Moniz, a member of an impoverished noble Portuguese family. Their son, Diego, was born in 1480. Between 1482 and 1485 Columbus traded along the Guinea and Gold coasts of tropical West Africa and made at least one voyage to the Portuguese fortress of São Jorge da Mina (now Elmina, Ghana) there, gaining knowledge of Portuguese navigation and the Atlantic wind systems along the way. Felipa died in 1485, and Columbus took as his mistress Beatriz Enríquez de Harana of Córdoba, by whom he had his second son, Ferdinand (born c. 1488).C

hristopher Columbus is known the world over as 'the man who discovered America' despite the fact that he was not the first European to do so when he landed in the Americas in 1492. Learn about Christopher Columbus' voyages of 'discovery' in this lesson.

**'Discovery' of the Americas**

Although Columbus was not even the first European to 'discover' or even explore the Americas, having been preceded by the Norse expedition led by Leif Ericson, he was the first to create extended interest in the New World and make it a centerpiece of colonization efforts by the Spanish, French, English, and others.

If there actually had been other Europeans who traveled to the Americas earlier, why, then, do we say Christopher Columbus'discovered' America? Well, Benjamin Franklin didn't really 'discover' electricity, nor did Henry Ford 'discover' the internal combustion engine or the automobile. But these men's names are associated with each of these achievements. So, perhaps a better way to phrase it would be 'encounter'; this emphasizes how the 'discovery' was mutual.

Columbus not only encountered America, but he did so in an 'official' capacity, on behalf of Queen Isabella of Spain. Columbus was not sailing just for adventure or to prove the world was round, but to get a share of the tremendous profits that were to be made

by reaching the Indies.

**The First Voyage of Christopher Columbus, 1492-1493**

As most of us can remember from the childhood ditty, Columbus set sail from Spain in 1492, with his fleet of three ships - the Niña, the Pinta, and the flagship, the Santa Maria. About five weeks later, Columbus and his crew arrived at an island in the Bahamas that he named San Salvador, believing he had reached the Indies, as the lands of China, Japan and India were then known in Europe.

They proceeded onward and landed in Cuba. When Columbus heard the native word Cubanocan, which means 'middle of Cuba,' he mistook it for El Gran Can, which was Marco Polo's title for the Mongol Ghengis Khan. Finally, they continued onward, arriving at the island of Hispaniola, which is modern-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Columbus was dealt a blow when the Santa Maria was shipwrecked, forcing him into establishing a colony on Hispaniola, where he left men behind while he returned to Spain. This alone meant that Columbus already had made a major impact on global history because he created the first European outpost in the

New World since the Viking explorers.

**Searched in:** http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\_figures/columbus\_christopher.shtml and study.com and https://www.britannica.com/biography/Christopher-Columbus