

LARGER THAN **LIFE**
A CELEBRATION OF GREATNESS

Christopher Columbus
1451-1506

A portrait of Christopher Columbus, showing his face and upper torso. He is wearing a dark, hooded garment. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his features against a dark background.

**christopher
columbus**

Christopher Columbus

1451-1506

Introduction

Christopher Columbus was an **Italian navigator and colonialist who is one of several historical figures credited as the first European to discover the Americas**. Though not the first to reach the Americas from Europe, it was Columbus' voyages that led to general European awareness of the hemisphere and the successful establishment of European cultures in the New World. He made a **total of four trips to the Caribbean and South America** during the years 1492-1504. The **period before 1492 is known as 'Pre-Columbian'**.

Birth And The Early Life

According to the most widely acknowledged biographies, Columbus was born **between August and October 1451 in Genoa**. While information about Columbus' early years is scarce, he probably received an incomplete education. He spoke a Genoese dialect. **In one of his writings, Columbus claims to have gone to the sea at the age of 10.**

The First Voyage

Columbus **sailed for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain**. On his first trip, Columbus led an expedition with three ships, the Niña, the Pinta and the Santa María and about 90 crewmembers. They set sail on Aug. 3, 1492 from Palos, Spain, and on October 12, 1492, spotted the Caribbean islands off southeastern North America. They **landed on an island they called Guanahani, but Columbus later renamed it San Salvador**. They were met by the local Taino Indians, many of whom were captured by Columbus' men and later sold into slavery. **Columbus thought he had made it to Asia, and called this area the Indies, and called its inhabitants Indians.**

While exploring the islands in the area and looking for gold to loot, Columbus' men traveled to **the islands of Hispaniola** (now divided into Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Cuba, and many other smaller islands. On the return trip, the Santa

María was wrecked and the captain of the Pinta sailed off on his own to try to beat Columbus back. Columbus returned to Spain in the Nina, arriving on March 15, 1493.

The Second Voyage

The second voyage **started in September 1493**. He Embarked with 17 vessels on a second expedition to the New World, during which he **traveled to Dominica, Guadeloupe, Antigua, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica**. He **founded** the town of Isabela near what is now Cabo Isabela, **Dominican Republic**. He returned to Spain after a royal commission was sent to Isabela to investigate his governing policies.

The Third Voyage

On a third expedition (May 30, 1498-October 1500), Columbus **sailed farther south, to Trinidad and Venezuela** (including the mouth of the Orinoco River). Columbus was **the first European to set foot on the mainland of America**.

The Fourth Voyage

On his fourth and last expedition (May 9, 1502-Nov. 7, 1504), Columbus **sailed to Honduras and Panama and Santiago**.

Later Years

While Columbus had always given the conversion of non-believers as one reason for his explorations, **he grew increasingly religious in his later years**. **On May 20, 1506, he died in Valladolid, fairly wealthy from the gold his men had accumulated in Hispaniola**. **When he died he was still convinced that his journeys had been along the east coast of Asia**. His remains are preserved in the Cathedral of Seville in Spain borne by four statues representing the Kingdoms of Navarre, Castille, Aragon and Leon.

Fast Facts

- Spanish patrons **King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella funded Columbus's voyages**, and allowed him to govern all territories he established.
- Columbus **called the inhabitants of the Caribbean Islands Indians** because he thought he had reached the East Indies.
- Columbus **brought back several previously unknown crops to Europe, including tobacco.**

Quotes

**By prevailing over all obstacles and distractions,
one may unfailingly arrive at his chosen
goal or destination.**



**Riches don't make a man rich, they only
make him busier.**