

S3 Christopher Columbus

Who is Christopher Columbus?

Christopher Columbus was the famous explorer who is credited with “discovering” America. Of course, people were already living in America. Nowadays, we call them Native Americans. Columbus was not the first person to visit America from Europe, but he was the one who started the exploration and colonization of the Americas. He was born in Genoa, Italy in 1451. He moved to Portugal and worked as a trader. He became interested in making maps and learnt how to navigate a ship.

Why did he travel west from Europe?

Columbus wanted to visit the East because he knew there were great riches there. However, travelling by land was very dangerous, so he decided he would sail west and reach China by ship. He had no idea that a whole other continent lay between Europe and Asia when travelling in this direction.

Who funded the voyage?

Columbus had great plans, but he did not have the money to fund the voyage himself. He spent many years trying to raise the money. Finally, he managed to persuade King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to pay for the journey.

Voyage and discovery

He set sail on August 3, 1492 with three ships: the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria. The journey was difficult and took over two months. On October 12, 1492 land was spotted. It was a small island in what we now call The Bahamas. He called the people he met there Indians as he was convinced that he had reached India. Only two of his ships made it back to Spain. The Santa Maria was wrecked off the coast of Hispaniola. He left 43 men there to create a settlement. He returned to Spain and was welcomed as a hero. He brought with him things he had found, such as turkeys, pineapples, and natives he had captured. The King of Spain was happy and agreed to fund more journeys.

Other voyages

Columbus made three more journeys to the Americas, even bringing horses to the new world on his second voyage. When he died in 1506, he believed that he had found a shortcut to Asia across the Atlantic Ocean. He was originally buried in Spain, then his remains were moved to Santo Domingo, and finally back again to Spain.