

Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy in 1451. He was a sailor and an explorer and his ambition was to find a new route to Asia. In the 15th century Asia was important for commerce. European merchants went there to buy silk and spices. They sold them in Europe and made a lot of money. The journey was long and dangerous.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Columbus believed the world wasn't flat and that the short route to Asia was to go west.

For many years, Columbus tried to get money from kings in Europe for his journey. Eventually, in 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella

of Spain gave him the money. He promised them gold, spices and glory.

Columbus travelled in three ships: the *Niña*, the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*. They left Palos in Spain on 3rd August 1492. The journey across the Atlantic was very long but, after two months, they arrived on an island in the Caribbean. Columbus and his sailors were so happy they called the island 'San Salvador' (Holy Saviour). Columbus believed he was in India and called the people on San Salvador 'Indians'. He returned to Spain a hero. He brought back gold and new plants and animals to Europe. He died in 1506.

Columbus's journey was important because he discovered the New World – the world of America. It also introduced a new route across the Atlantic.

Today, Americans have a holiday on 12th October to celebrate Christopher Columbus's first journey to the New World. It's called *Columbus Day*. This holiday is particularly important for the Italo-American community because of Columbus's Italian origins. But the Native Americans don't like the holiday. For them, Christopher Columbus was an enemy, not a hero. He and other Europeans stole their land and destroyed their way of life.



Glossary

sailor *navigatore*
explorer *esploratore*
century *secolo*
merchant *mercante*
silk *seta*
spice *spezia*
journey *viaggio*
flat *piatta*
island *isola*
holy *santo*
bring back
(past brought
back) *riportare*
destroy *distruggere*

Reading

1 Leggi il brano e completa il riassunto. ES

Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa in Italy in 1451. In 1492 ¹ _____ and Queen Isabella of Spain gave him money for his journey across the Atlantic Ocean. Columbus and his sailors travelled in ² _____ ships: the *Niña*, the ³ _____ and the ⁴ _____. After ⁵ _____ they finally arrived on an island in the Caribbean. He returned to ⁶ _____ a hero. He brought back gold and new ⁷ _____ and ⁸ _____ from the New World. He ⁹ _____ in 1506.

Columbus's journey across the Atlantic was very important. It established contact between ¹⁰ _____ and America. Today in the USA people celebrate the life of the great explorer on 12th October – *Columbus Day*.