



Bio4Kids: Christopher Columbus (1451-1506)

Brief Outline

Christopher Columbus dreamt of finding a water route to India. Instead he opened the door to the expansion of European power in the Americas. This famous explorer was born in 1451 in Genoa, Italy. As a teenager, Columbus took to the seas on several voyages. He almost lost his life on one journey after his ship was sunk by the French in 1475.

Columbus grew to become a great sailor and explorer. He wanted to find the best way to India by water so he went to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain to see if they would support his expedition. With their help, Columbus went on his fateful first trip in 1492. Columbus took three ships on his quest: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. In October of that year, he reached an island he thought was part of India, but it was really an island in Caribbean Sea (now part of the Bahamas). Columbus visited other nearby islands. He returned to Spain in 1493 and welcomed back by the royal court, who was excited by his discoveries.

In all, Columbus went on four expeditions to the Americas, but he was still unable to find a way to the Indian Ocean. On his last journey in 1502, he made it as far as the eastern coast of Central America. He returned home to Spain in 1504 and died two years later in Valladolid.

Since his death, Columbus has been heralded as a hero for his discoveries but has also become a figure of controversy for the disastrous effects of his explorations on native peoples in the Americas. Still he is celebrated every year

with the Columbus Day holiday in October, which marks his arrival in the New World.

Related Websites

[Explore the online Columbus exhibit at the Library of Congress](#)

[More on the expeditions from the National Mariners' Museum](#)