Introduction



Click NEXT to explore the European expansion into the Americas.



Мар



Click on each country's marker to learn about its discovery by Europeans. Exit the interactivity when you have visited each marker.



Hispaniola

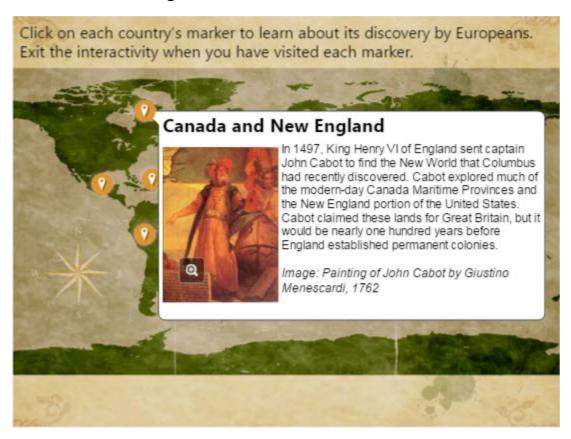


For seven year, the Italian sailor, Christopher Columbus traveled around Europe seeking someone to finance his voyage west, in hopes of circling the globe and arriving in Asia. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain were anxious to prove their power after having been caught up in civil war, and in 1492, agreed to supply Columbus with supplies, men, and the ships Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria. On his expedition, Columbus and his men discovered an island in the Caribbean that they named Hispaniola, which is modern-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Columbus returned to the Americas three more times, each time believing he was in India. The explorer never realized what he had discovered.

Image: Columbus landing in Hispaniola



Canada and New England



In 1497, King Henry VI of England sent Captain John Cabot to find the New World that Columbus had recently discovered. Cabot explored much of the modern-day Canada Maritime Provinces and the New England portion of the United States. Cabot claimed these lands for Great Britain, but it would be nearly one hundred years before England established permanent colonies.

Image: Painting of John Cabot by Giustino Menescardi, 1762



Mexico



It was not until the Europeans got a taste of gold in the Americas that explorers became conquistadors. While Spanish conquistadors were shocked to encounter people in Mesoamerica, the Aztecs assumed that the leader of the European visitors, Hernán Cortés, was the god Quetzalcoatl returning to their civilization. Cortés used this misinformation to trick the Aztec leader Montezuma and subjugate his people. By the time the Aztecs realized what was happening, there were too many Spaniards to stop them.

The native civilizations were impressed with the advanced nature of the European culture. They quickly adopted and adapted the wheel, metal farming tools, guns, and started using horses. Likewise, the Europeans marveled at the achievements of the Aztecs, who lived in a city that rivaled the size of Paris and London. Moreover, the Europeans were impressed by the clean streets of Tenochtitlán due to a methodical waste management system, which they had not yet developed.

Image: Cortes and La Malinche meeting Moctezuma in Tenochtitlán, 1550



Peru



After Cortés' success in Mexico, the Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro was determined to conquer the Incas in Peru. Although met with resistance from the natives, Pizarro and his small band of men ventured into South America in the sixteenth century and encountered an impressive empire that was larger than the Aztec empire or even the Ming Dynasty of China.

Image: Pizarro and his followers in Lima, Peru

