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The Spanish fleet was composed of three caravels, the Santa Maria, the Niña, and the Pinta, and commanded by Christopher Columbus. It arrived in sight of the coasts of the New World on October 12, 1492.

Cristoforo Colombo was Italian by birth and served the Catholic Kings of Spain, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon. In Spain, he is known as Cristóbal Colón. He was commissioned by Queen Isabella of Castile, nicknamed Isabella the Catholic, to find a new route to the Indies (East Asia).

On October 12, 1492, thinking to arrive in the Nippon archipelago, he disembarked on an island which he named San Salvador, inhabited by the Tainos. He was appointed Viceroy and Governor General. On October 28, he disembarked on an island that he named Juana in honor of the son of the Spanish kings, Prince Don Juan. He believed to be on the Asian continent. On this island, he discovered tobacco leaves and he and his crew learned to smoke on the island that is known today as Cuba. The natives indicated to the admiral another island, which they call Bohio, located in the east. He left Cuba on December 4 in the direction of this island. Two days later, he arrived in a bay on the island of Bohio.

Christopher Columbus named this island Hispaniola, and it is known today as Haiti and Santo Domingo.

During the night of December 24 to 25, 1492, a young sailor was left at the helm of the Santa Maria. The caravel ran aground on a reef and was completely destroyed. Columbus, with the help of the natives, landed a large part of the cargo. With the wood recovered from the ship, he built a small fort and left 39 of his men behind. Christopher Columbus set sail for Spain on January 16 aboard the Niña. During the return to Spain, the Pinta sank during a storm.

Back in Spain, Christopher Columbus' ambition was to return to the island of Hispaniola to create the first colony of the New World. He armed a fleet of 17 ships with 1,500 men, including seven hundred colonists and twelve missionaries. He also embarked cattle, horses and other farm animals.

On December 25, 1493, he set sail for Hispaniola and the Bay of Natividad where he had left 39 of his men. When he arrived there, all his men were dead and the fortress destroyed. He decided to set sail again and headed east along the northern coast of the island. On January 2, he began to found the first permanent colony in the New World; La Isabela, located near the present-day city of Puerto Plata.

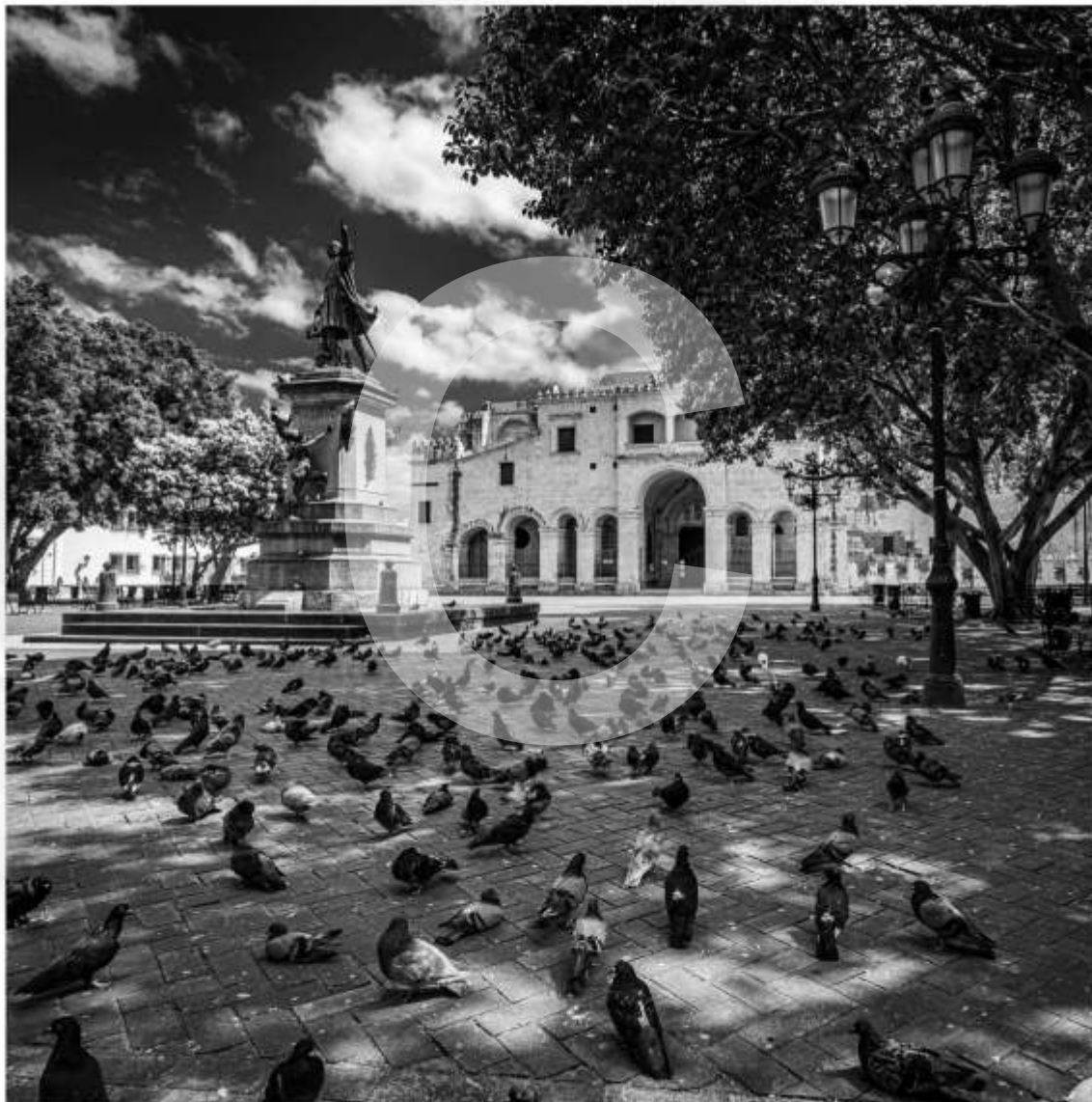
In 1496, his brother Bartholomew Columbus founded the city of Nueva Isabela on the south coast of the island, which became the new capital and remains today the oldest continuously inhabited European city in the Americas. The city was built at the mouth of the Ozama River. The rugged coastline around the capital protected it from pirate attacks.

In 1502, this city was destroyed by a hurricane and rebuilt by Nicolás de Ovando and was given the name "Santo Domingo de Guzmán" (Santo Domingo). Santo Domingo grew and became the seat of the first viceroyalty of the Americas.

During the 16th century, Santo Domingo was quickly embellished with the construction of many palaces and churches, the first cathedral erected in America, the first castle of the continent with the Alcazar of Columbus, the first monastery and the first convent, or the oldest fortress of America with the Fortaleza Ozama.



Plaza de España o de la Hispanidad - Alcázar de Colón





Parque Colón - Estatua de Cristobal Colon





Parque Colón - Estatua de Cristobal Colon







Calle El Conde



Parque Colón

The Minor Basilica of Santa María or Cathedral of Our Lady of the Incarnation is better known as the Cathedral of America.

The first cathedral built on the American continent



Catedral Primada de las Americas - Basilica Catedral de Santa María la Menor





Parque Colón





Parque Colón - Estatua de Cristobal Colon



Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Carmen





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Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Carmen





Parque Duarte - Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Carmen



In 1511, the Dominican Order began the construction of the Dominican convent. This religious complex was to be the origin of the first university in America, the University of Saint Thomas Aquinas.



Parque Duarte - Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Carmen







Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Carmen





Calle Padre Billini





Calle Padre Billini





The Monastery of San Francisco was the first religious building of its kind in America and was built in 1508 with the arrival of Franciscan monks.



Monumento Ruinas de San Francisco





To the north of the Plaza de España we find the former “Palacio Virreinal” of Diego Colón, known as the “Alcázar de Colón” and built between 1511 and 1514 in a Mudejar Gothic style with Renaissance influences. This immense palace of 55 rooms was the property of Diego Columbus, the son of the admiral. The palace hosted conquistadores like Hernán Cortés and Pedro de Alvarado and remained in the hands of the Columbus family until 1577. Plundered by Francis Drake in 1586, the building fell into ruins and it was not until 1955 that the restoration of this historical monument began. The Alcázar de Colón Museum is located here and displays works of art dating from the 14th to the 16th century. There is a magnificent Flemish painting from 1500 representing the death of the Virgin.



Plaza de España o de la Hispanidad



Alcázar de Colón



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