

# What Columbus Accomplished

## *HISTORICAL:*

- Columbus proved that it was possible to cross the Atlantic Ocean and back.
- Columbus founded the first permanent European settlement in the Western Hemisphere, Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic).
- Columbus was the first to open relations between Europe and the Western Hemisphere. His voyages mark the beginning of more than 500 years of cultural, economic and political relations between Europe and the Americas.
- The recorded history of the Western Hemisphere begins with Columbus. There was no written history about these vast continents before his arrival in 1492.

## *NAVIGATIONAL:*

- Columbus was the first European to realize the full importance of the Atlantic wind pattern called the prevailing Westerlies, which blew steadily west to east. This convinced him it was possible to sail west with the Trade Winds to the New World and return to Europe with the Westerlies.
- During his four transatlantic voyages, Columbus chartered the route for what today are the islands of Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, the Lesser Antilles and the coasts of Panama, Honduras and Venezuela.
- Columbus's trans-Atlantic route lay the foundation for future navigation in the region. His maps were used by Amerigo Vespucci (after whom the American continent takes its name), whose maps were used by later explorers of South America. Columbus's maps also helped Magellan follow the coasts of South America during his voyage around the world.
- The route across the Atlantic Ocean that Columbus charted in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is still used by sailors today.
- Columbus introduced the principle of compass variation (the variation at any point on the Earth's surface between the direction to magnetic and geographic north) and observed the rotation of the Pole star.