



Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's Voyage of Exploration

On September 28, 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a 16th Century Iberian explorer and navigator, sailing under the flag of Spain, guided his flagship, *San Salvador* into “an enclosed harbor which was very good” that he named San Miguel. Cabrillo claimed the land for Spain in the name of King Carlos the First. With this act of possession he secured his place in the history of the New World as the first European to explore the west coast of what would become the United States of America.

Who was this man Cabrillo? He first appears on the pages of history as a corporal of crossbowmen with Hernán Cortés during the conquest of the Aztec Empire in 1520. In 1523 he joined Pedro de Alvarado in the conquest of Guatemala, where he later settled, raised a family and became a wealthy miner, farmer and merchant.

The Viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza, gave Cabrillo command of three vessels-*San Salvador*, *Victoria* and *San Miguel*, and sent him north to explore the coast of Nueva España in search of the Spice Islands, the Strait of Anian, a legendary passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, and gold. On June 27, 1542, Cabrillo left the port of Navidad on the west coast of Mexico. Sailing north up the west coast of Baja California, he and his men soon entered uncharted waters. After a brief stay at San Mateo, known today as Todos Santos, Ensenada, Cabrillo continued north, landing at San Diego on September 28.

Here Cabrillo and his men traded with the native Kumeyaay people living around the bay. He gathered supplies, wood and fresh water. After riding out a storm, he sailed north once again. Cabrillo went on to make other “discoveries,” but never completed this expedition. On January 3, 1543, he died of injuries suffered in a fall and was buried in an unmarked grave on one of the Channel Islands.

Cabrillo’s name lives on at the Cabrillo National Monument on top of Point Loma overlooking his original landing site. The annual Cabrillo Festival, produced by San Diegans from several ethnic backgrounds with the support of the City and County of San Diego, the Cabrillo National Monument Foundation and the National Park Service, commemorates Cabrillo’s achievements. It is one of the most colorful and culturally enriching family events of its kind in America. During the Cabrillo Festival you can watch Cabrillo, his soldiers and a priest land again on Ballast Point. You may also enjoy the 16th century soldiers living history encampment, with displays of weapons, food, clothing, and the mariner’s art of knot tying. There are Kumeyaay basket weaving and acorn grinding demonstrations, and children’s activities, along with Kumeyaay, Mexican, Portuguese and Spanish dancing and singing, and Native American, Mexican, Portuguese and Spanish food. Please join us on **Cabrillo Festival Day 2017** for a day of fun, food and history for the entire family.

For information on last year’s event, please check out the web site at www.cabrillofestival.org.

Please check the web site this summer for updated information on the festival.