

# **Columbus Day –A Holiday to Remember an Explorer**

Columbus Day is observed on the second Monday of October in the United States, and in some other countries around the world. For a long time it was observed on a specific date, October 12. It is named after Christopher Columbus, the Italian sailor who led three Spanish ships to claim new lands in 1492. There is even a child's poem remembering the date. It reads, "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue". Some people say Columbus "discovered" North America, although not everyone agrees with this interpretation. For example, Columbus never landed on North America proper. He only got as far as to the islands in the Caribbean Sea.

Columbus Day has been a federal holiday since 1937; government offices, schools, and post offices are closed. Many Italians take the day as a day to celebrate their own ethnic heritage since Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy. Columbus's explorations, however, were conducted in the name of Spain. Major cities, like New York City and San Francisco, host large parades. Some cities, like New York City, also hold a parade celebrating the Hispanic or Latino community.

Not everyone thinks Christopher Columbus should be honored. Some states like South Dakota do not observe the holiday at all. Instead they call the day Native American Day or Indigenous Peoples' Day. In Hawaii the holiday is also known as Landing Day or Discoverer's Day. This is because European arrival in North America meant the loss of land and lives for many Native people. Many people hold protests or vigils on this day to remember the Native Americans that were killed or enslaved as a result of the European arrival. Another name for the holiday is "Dia de la Raza" which translates into English as Day of the Race.