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### Castillo San Felipe del Morro

Christopher Columbus, an Italian explorer, landed in Puerto Rico on November 19, 1493.

There he found the “taínos,” peaceful and generous Indians that inhabited Puerto Rico. They called the island “Borikén.” Columbus named the island San Juan Bautista in honor of Saint John the Baptist. Juan Ponce de León became the first governor of Puerto Rico. The taínos were forced into slavery.

Puerto Rico’s geographic position in the Caribbean makes the port of San Juan one of the most important ports in the Spanish domain. King Phillip IV named Puerto Rico the most coveted port by their enemies. San Juan served as an important port-of-call for ships of all European nations for purposes of taking on water, food and other commercial provisions and mercantile exchange. Various forts were built to protect the strategic port of San Juan from numerous European invasion attempts.

In 1539, King Charles V of Spain authorized the construction of Castillo San Felipe del El Morro. Named in honor of King Phillip II. Castillo de San Felipe del Morro is located in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This fort was built in the entrance to the San Juan Bay to protect the Old San Juan City from enemies. They needed to control the entry to the harbor and protect the port of San Juan.