

Columbus is credited with the discovery of America in 1492. In the United States, we celebrate his discovery with a special holiday called Columbus Day. Columbus Day always falls on the 2nd Monday in October.

Can you imagine what it would be like to live on a crowded school bus for eight long months? Columbus and his men had a little more room than that, but not much. It was an amazing adventure!

Nearly everyone knows that "Columbus sailed the ocean blue in fourteen hundred ninety two (1492). "The question is - Was Columbus smart about safety?

**He built sturdy ships.** It is a matter of record that Columbus carefully planned the construction of his three ships - the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*, and the *Nina*. He even ordered "crooked pines" from the Pyrenees to be dragged down to the sea to be used to make the frames, beams, and decks, for extra sturdiness. He had no idea what dangers he would face, but he was sure that one of them might be storms at sea.

**He protected his maps and charts.** Columbus had a small cabin built on the *Santa Maria* that held his bed, a few personal belongings, and his maps and charts. It was the only cabin on board. He built space below the deck to store ample supplies. The hold - the space below deck - was used to store food, tools, ropes, extra sails, cannon balls, guns, and other supplies Columbus felt they might need on the trip.

**He ordered the crew to catch fresh fish every day, to avoid illness.** The crew caught fresh fish every day they could. Along with fish, they ate salt meat, cheese, beans, rice, almonds, honey and raisins.

**He told his men that they could not drink the ocean water.** Instead, Columbus and his crew drank water from wooden barrels they had brought on board, and wine from big casks.

**He ordered his men to cook their meals.** All meals were cooked in small fireplaces on deck called sandbox cookers, to reduce the risk of illness. Sandbox cookers were designed to allow cooking on deck safely, without catching the wood ship on fire.

**He had at least one man on watch at all times.** At least one member of the crew was always on watch, on the lookout for any danger including pirates, men overboard, reefs, and land. The man on watch was tucked high up on the 80-foot mainsail, in the "crow's nest."

Once he set sail, it took Columbus only two months to catch his first sight of the New World. Still, that was a very long time for 90 men to live in a space about the size of a schoolbus. Yet, there is no record of any outbreak of disease. No one fell overboard. Everyone arrived safely. When they spotted land, they did not rush in. They must have been glad to spot land for many reasons. Still, they did not land right away. Columbus and his crew sailed along the shoreline. They stopped at a couple of places and established some base camps. They met the natives - some friendly, some not. His careful planning and sturdy ships saved their lives.

When Columbus and his men decided to leave the New World and return to Spain, they ran into a little trouble. By then, they were down to only two ships, which made things even more crowded. A storm had wrecked the *Santa Maria* on Christmas Day that year. (Columbus returned to Spain on the smaller ship, the *Nina*.) They ran into another storm as they were returning to Spain. They were tossed about by waves higher than a sixty foot building! The *Nina* and the *Pinta* were separated in the storm. Yet, both ships safely found their way home.

The round trip, including their adventures in the New World, took eight months. Columbus was paid well for his trip. Columbus was highly respected and, thanks to his adventures, he was also quite wealthy. He was happily married. He had a couple of kids. He was incredibly stubborn. To the day he died, he never once admitted that he had found a New World. He insisted that he had, in fact, discovered the back door to China.

Source: <https://holidays.mrdonn.org/columbusday.html>