

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo Encyclopedia Article

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo

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Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo

1498?-1543

Portuguese explorer who discovered the West Coast of the United States. Little is known of Cabrillo's early life, only that he appears to have fought in the army of Hernán Cortés against the Aztecs of Mexico. Later, he was one of the conquistadors of the countries now known as Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. By the mid-1530s, he settled in Guatemala, where he encouraged a flourishing trade with Spain and other parts of the New World. In 1542, Cabrillo departed from the port of Navidad, Mexico on an expedition of the coasts north and west of Mexico. After several months, he sailed into San Diego Bay, which he called San Miguel. His fleet of ships reached as far north as Monterey Bay, discovering eight islands off the California coast along the way.