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Caribbean

Indians were the first inhabitants here, and then, in 1492, Christopher Columbus began his exploration of these islands, becoming the first European to venture into the area.

After landing in the Bahamas, Columbus named these islands the **Indies**, because he thought he had finally reached Asia (*and the East Indies*).

Numerous explorers followed in his path, then settlers arrived from the Americas and Europe. Included in that mix were religious outcasts, slaves from Africa, and a small army of infamous pirates.

Great military powers would fight for control of the islands, and finally, a blended mix of African and European cultures and languages transformed this large group of islands and its peoples into one of the premier tourist destinations on the planet.

Long called the **West Indies**, the overall area is now commonly referred to as the Caribbean, a name that became popular after World War II. **Note:** In reality the Bahamas are not considered a part of the Caribbean, however, we show them here because of their cultural, geographical and political associations with the Greater Antilles, and other Caribbean Islands.