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Spanish Conquistadors

**Introduction**

The Renaissance & Elizabethan Age of Exploration to the New World was dominated by the Spanish Conquistadors. The success of the Spanish Conquistadors in acquiring monopolies on much of the Eastern spice trade and their expeditions to the New World brought great wealth and power to Spain. The new discoveries made by the Spanish Conquistadors brought untold riches in terms of gold and silver and spices and it also brought power and influence.

**The History of the Spanish Conquistadors**

Spain had successfully taken the Iberian peninsula from the Muslim Moors after nearly eight hundred years of conflict. This victory was referred to as the 'reconquista'. The conflict with the Muslim Moors had been seen as a continuation of the Medieval Crusades. The crusades were a series of religious Holy Wars which had been given the blessing of the Pope.

They were fought by Roman Catholic soldiers. The Spanish explorers / soldiers saw their mission to conquer new lands as a natural extension of the Medieval crusades. Roman Catholic Priests and Friars always accompanied the Spanish explorers who were expected to convert ***heathen*** natives to Christianity. The explorer / soldiers who travelled to the New World adopted the name 'Conquistadors'.

**The Motives of the Spanish Conquistadors**

The motives of the Spanish Conquistadors and their patrons were prompted by:

Wealth - gold, silver and spices

Power

Prestige

Increasing opportunities for Spanish trade

**Spreading the Catholic Religion to heathen natives**

Building a Spanish Empire

The people of Spain adhered to the Catholic religion. Many were fanatical about their religion - the Spanish Inquisition was an example of this. The idea of spreading the Catholic faith to ***heathen*** races was seen as a primary reason for the Spanish Conquistadors to undertake voyages of discovery.

**The Attitudes of the Spanish Conquistadors to the Natives- the Encomienda system**

The attitude of the Spanish conquistadors to the natives was that they were savage and ***pagan***. The Spanish government had decreed that the Encomienda system should be established in the New World - it came to signify the***oppression*** and ***exploitation*** of the Native Indians, although this was not their original intent. The the Encomienda system was similar to the Medieval Feudal system. The primary purpose of the Encomienda system was to indoctrinate the Indians in the Catholic faith. The Indians were expected to pay a tribute to the Spanish Conquistadors in return for protection and religious instruction. The Encomienda system was totally abused - the Conquistadors were thousands of miles away from Spain and they behaved as they saw fit. The natives were abused, oppressed, exploited, ill-treated and decimated by the Spanish Conquistadors. The Indians lost their freedom, their rights, their culture and their religion. The Spanish Conquistadors were feared and hated and the very name 'Conquistador' still conveys these terrible impressions - 'el conquistador'. The Encomienda system was replaced by new laws in 1542.

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| **List of Famous Spanish Conquistadors in the New World** |

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| **Name of Conquistador** |

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| **Dates** |

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| **Land** |

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| Hernan Cortes  |

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| 1518 - 1522 |

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| Mexico |

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| 1524 |

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| Honduras |

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| 1532 - 1536 |

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| California |

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| Vasco Nunez de Balboa |

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| 1510 - 1519 |

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| Panama |

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| Juan Ponce de Leon  |

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| 1508 |

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| Puerto Rico |

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| 1513 |

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| Florida |

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| Francisco Pizarro |

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| 1509 - 1535 |

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| Peru |

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| Hernando de Soto  |

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| 1539 - 1542 |

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| Florida & South East United States |

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| Francisco Vazquez de Coronado |

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| 1540 - 1542 |

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| Arizona and New Mexico |

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| Cristobal de Olid |

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| 1523 -1524  |

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| Honduras |

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| Gonzalo Pizarro  |

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| 1532 - 1542  |

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| Peru |

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| Juan Pizarro |

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| 1532 - 1536 |

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| Peru |

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| Hernando Pizarro |

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| 1532 - 1560 |

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| Peru |

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| Ines Suarez |

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| 1541 |

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| Chile |

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| Pedro de Valdivia |

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| 1540 - 1552 |

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| Chile |

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| Diego de Almagro |

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| 1524 - 1535 |

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| Peru |

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| 1535 - 1537 |

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| Chile |

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| Pedro Menendez de Aviles  |

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| 1565 - 1567 |

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| Florida |

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| Pánfilo de Narvaez |

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| 1527 - 1528 |

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| Florida |

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| Pedro de Alvarado |

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| 1519 - 1521 |

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| Mexico |

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| 1540 - 1541 |

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| Mexico |

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| Diego Velazquez de Cuellar  |

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| 1511 - 1519 |

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| Cuba |

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| Sebastian de Belalcazar |

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| 1533 - 1536  |

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| Ecuador and Colombia |

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| Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada  |

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| Colombia |

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| 1569 - 1572 |

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| Venezuela |

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| Martin de Ursua |

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| 1696 - 1697  |

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| Guatemala |

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| Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba  |

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| Yucatan |

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| Martín de Goiti |

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| 1570 - 1571 |

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| Manila, Philippines |

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| Miguel Lopez de Legazpi |

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| 1565 - 1571 |

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| Philippines |

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| Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba  |

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| Yucatan |

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| Juan de Grijalva |

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| 1518 |

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| Yucatan |

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| Francisco de Montejo |

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| 1527 - 1546 |

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| Yucatan |

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| Francisco de Orellana |

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| 1541 - 1543 |

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| Amazon River |

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| Juan de Salcedo |

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| 1570 - 1576 |

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| Philippines |

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| Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca  |

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| 1527 - 1536 |

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| South West United States |

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| 1540 - 1542 |

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| South America |

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| Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon |

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| 1524 - 1527 |

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| East Coast United States |

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| Diego de Nicuesa |

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| 1506 - 1511 |

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| Panama |

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