

Sailing to St. Augustine

(Grades 6-8)

This unit discusses the founding of St. Augustine. Students use early maps, readings, and aerials to determine what factors might have been critical in the development of Spanish colonies.

Discovery of Florida by Don Juan Ponce de Leon



Although Columbus was on the high seas in 1492, it wasn't until 1513 that the first Spanish explorer sighted the mainland of North America. During the Christian holy season of Easter, Juan Ponce de Leon of Spain sighted the subtropical land that is now the southern-most state of the United States of America. On March 27, 1513 he landed near what is now St. Augustine and he gave this new land the name "La Florida," meaning "Land of Flowers."

Don Juan Ponce de Leon sailed to Florida from the Spanish islands of the Caribbean, namely Hispanola and Puerto Rico. Ponce de Leon had settled on these islands after accompanying Columbus on his second voyage to the Americas in 1493.

Although we do not know exactly where de Leon landed, it was somewhat north of present day St. Augustine. He claimed the area, which he believed to be an island, for Spain and then sailed south around the peninsula and part way up the west coast of Florida, exploring and mapping his newly discovered territory. Ponce de Leon would make several exploratory trips to Florida. He died in Cuba from an arrow wound inflicted by the Calusa Indians of Florida.

In 1565 the king of Spain sent Don Pedro Menendez de Aviles to try to establish settlements in Florida.

When Menendez arrived, he knew that the French had recently settled at Fort Caroline, at the mouth of the St. Johns River. Part of his mission was to eliminate the threat of French settlement in Florida.

Additional Readings: [Don Juan Ponce de Leon](#), [Don Pedro Menendez de Aviles](#)

St. Augustine Worksheet



Student Name:

Class:

Date:

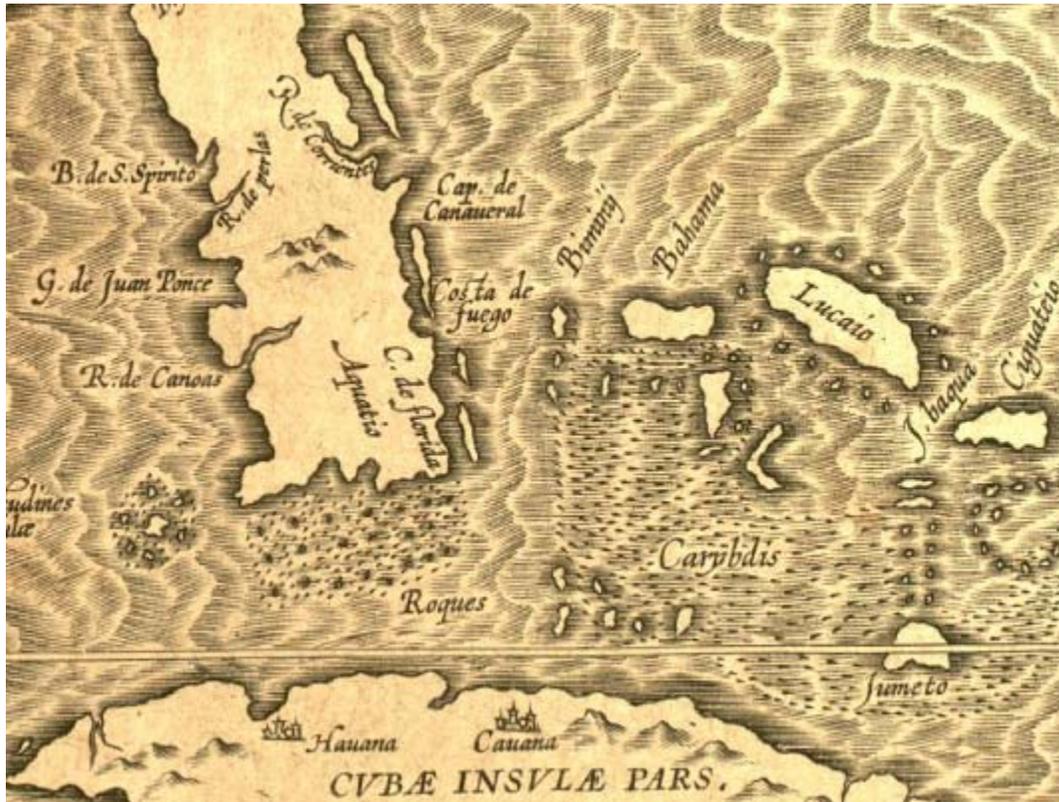
1. It is 1565 and you and Menendez de Aviles have been commanded by the King of Spain to set up two Spanish colonies in Florida. He has selected St. Augustine. Describe the physical characteristics of the site you would select.

2. You must survive on resources available from the surrounding land. Describe what resources are essential for the survival of your colony.

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3. The first map below was drawn in 1597, about 30 years after Pedro Menendez de Aviles established the first Spanish colony in Florida and 80 years after Ponce de Leon first landed in Florida. Referring to your [Sailing to St. Augustine](#) article for clues, label the approximate locations on the map of:

1. St. Augustine
2. The French fort Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River
3. The Caribbean
4. Cuba, where Ponce de Leon died
5. Taking into consideration the factors you listed above, put a star on the location you have chosen to start your Florida colony.



Map from 1597 showing Florida

Map Credit: Courtesy of the Special Collections Department, University of South Florida.
Digitization provided by the USF Libraries Digitization Center

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4. The map below is from 1861. Double click on it and look closely at the eastern coast of Florida. If your colony survived until 1861, what town would it have become? _____

Would you change the location of your colony? ___Yes ___No

If yes, where would you move it and why?



Birds eye view of Florida and part of Georgia and Alabama, by John Bacman, 1861
Map Credit: Courtesy of the Special Collections Department, University of Florida.

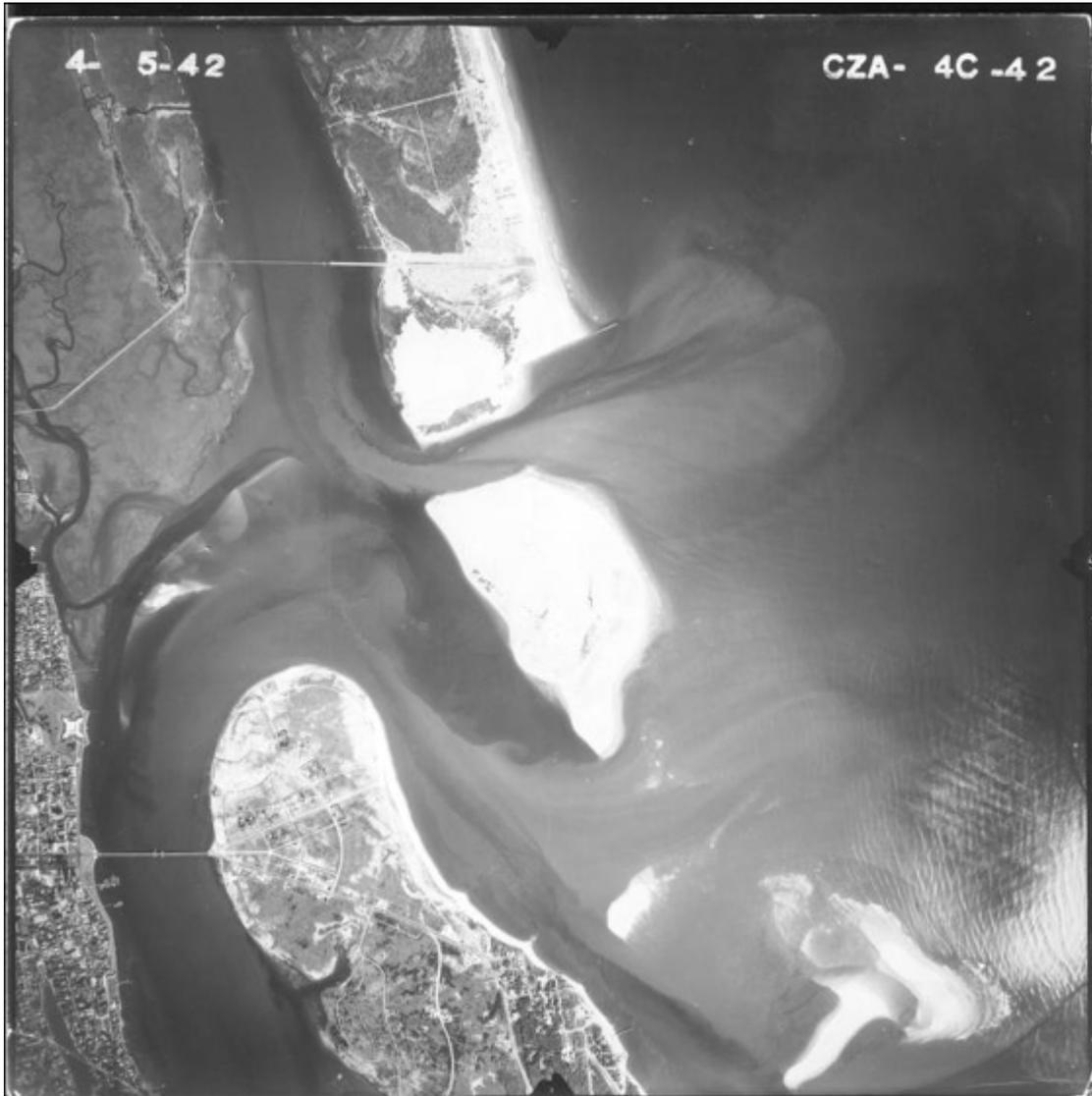
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5. The St. Augustine aerial photograph below was taken in 1924 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

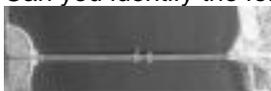
What modern features does it show?

Why would this type of photograph have been useful to early explorers and settlers?



Circle the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine on the aerial.

Can you identify the following feature:



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6. Use the indexes to the aerial photographs to find the current day site of your colony and answer the following questions:

1. What was the earliest aerial photograph you found?_____
2. Describe the current physical location of your colony.