

[PBS HOME](#)[PROGRAMS A-Z](#)[TV SCHEDULES](#)[WATCH VIDEO](#)[DONATE](#)[SHOP PBS](#)[SEARCH PBS](#)NEW PERSPECTIVES ON **THE WEST**[THE PROGRAM](#)[PEOPLE](#)[PLACES](#)[EVENTS](#)[RESOURCES](#)[LESSON PLANS](#)[QUIZ](#)**PEOPLE****A-C**[Austin, Stephen](#)[E.](#)[Bent, William](#)[Big Foot](#)[Black Kettle](#)[Brannan,](#)[Samuel](#)[Brown, John](#)["Buffalo Bill"](#)[Cabeza de Vaca,](#)[Alvar Nuñez](#)[Carson, Kit](#)[Chivington,](#)[John M.](#)[Chief Joseph](#)[Clark, William](#)[Clemens,](#)[Samuel](#)[Cody, William](#)[E.](#)[Coronado,](#)[Francisco](#)[Cortina, Juan](#)[Crazy Horse](#)[Crocker,](#)[Charles](#)[Crook, George](#)[Cushing, Frank](#)[Hamilton](#)[Custer, George](#)[Armstrong](#)**D-H****Francisco Vázquez de Coronado****(1510-1554)**

Although he failed in his quest for treasure to enrich the Spanish empire, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado led one of the most remarkable European explorations of the North American interior.

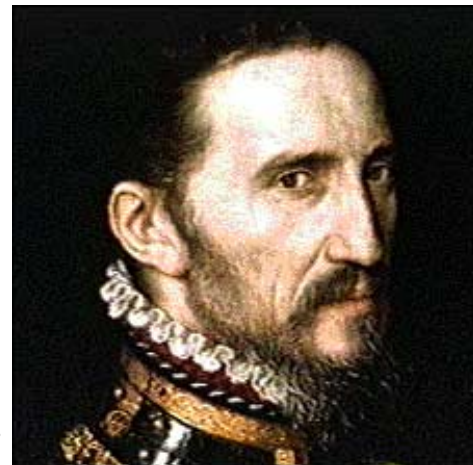
Coronado was born into a noble family in Salamanca, Spain, in 1510. He came to the Americas at the age of twenty-five as an assistant to New Spain's first viceroy.

Within three years of his arrival in Mexico, Coronado had married the daughter of the colonial treasurer (which garnered him an enormous estate), put down a major slave rebellion, and become governor of an important Mexican province. But he wanted more. Inspired by rumors of seven cities of gold and the travels of [Cabeza de Vaca](#), Coronado led a royal expedition of about 300 Spanish soldiers, over 1,000 Tlaxcalan Indians, and enormous herds of livestock north into what is now the American West.

In July [1540](#) Coronado and his advance party of Spanish cavalry encountered a Zuni pueblo, Hawikuh, which already had some experience with the Spanish. Estevan, one of the survivors of Cabeza de Vaca's expedition, had led a small scouting detachment to the Zuni about a year before and the Zuni had killed him, they later explained to Coronado, because of his presumptuousness with Zuni women.

Coronado arrived at the pueblo during the high point of Zuni summer ceremonies. Understandably, they were not receptive to his recitation of the *requirimiento*, the standard Spanish exhortation to native peoples, which began with the order to "acknowledge the Church as the ruler and superior of the whole world, and the high priest called Pope, and in his name the King and Queen" of Spain. The next part of the *requirimiento* warned the Zuni that if they failed to obey orders "with the help of God we shall forcefully... make war against you... take you and your wives and children and shall make slaves of them." Unimpressed but perhaps angered, the Zuni began firing arrows at the Spaniards, at one point very nearly killing Coronado himself. The better-armed and mounted Spaniards quickly entered the pueblo and forced the Zuni to flee.

Coronado and his men found no gold in the Zuni pueblos, which drove them to make even more arduous [journeys](#). Coronado sent out parties that ranged all the way to the Colorado River on the present border between California and Arizona, exploring the



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[Grand Canyon](#) and much of what is now New Mexico. Coronado himself led a party in search of the city of Quivira and its mythic riches, into what is now Kansas, but found only a small village of what were probably Wichita Indians.

Disappointed, Coronado returned home to Mexico, where the Viceroy branded his expedition an abject failure. Coronado managed to resume his governorship, but within several years he was found guilty of numerous atrocities against Indians under his authority. He was removed from office in 1544 and moved to Mexico City to work in a modest position in the municipal government. He died in 1554, decades before the [chronicle](#) of his expedition was finally published.

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