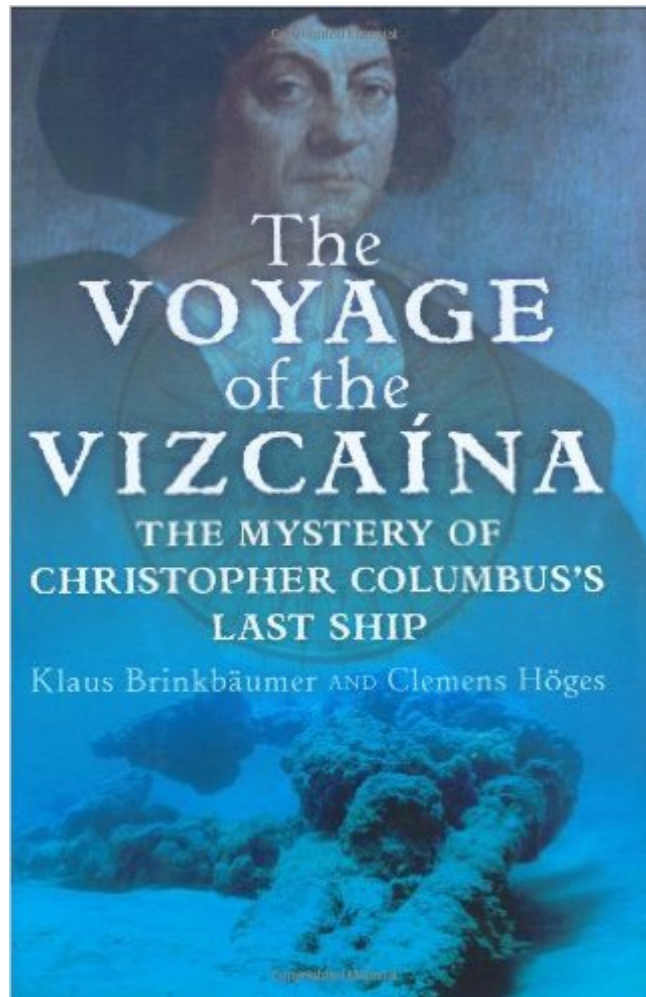


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The Voyage Of The Vizcaina: The Mystery Of Christopher Columbus's Last Ship



Synopsis

Lying in only twenty-five feet of water in a small gulf off the coast of Panama, a shipwrecked vessel managed to escape detection for centuries before it was discovered in the mid-1990s. In 2002, Klaus BrinkbÄumer and Clemens HÄlges, journalists with the German newsmagazine Der Spiegel and also amateur divers, were the first to assemble a team of experts to analyze the remains. They determined that it was not only the oldest wreck ever found in the Western Hemisphere, but also very likely the remains of the VizcaÃna, one of the ships Christopher Columbus took on his last trip to the New World. The Voyage of the VizcaÃna, set to be published on the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's death, combines investigative journalism, archaeology, and historical re-creation to give us the fascinating story-and startling truths-behind Columbus's final attempt to reach the East by going west.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a truly exciting read. Although the title and subtitle both suggest that the book is mainly about the Vizcaina, in fact, only about 20% of it contains discussions that directly pertain to that ship; most of these discussions deal with efforts towards determining whether the wreck that was found in the Bay of Playa Damas (Panama) is indeed the Vizcaina. Naturally, when something of such historical importance is found, some form of politics must step in to play its important frustrating role of slowing down, with utmost efficiency, any exciting archaeological progress; this case is no exception. However, the main bulk of the book is about Christopher Columbus: his life, his travels and his adventures. Also presented are fascinating outlines of current disputes as to his true origins

as well as where his bones are currently located. Published in 2006, this is an English translation of a book that was originally published in German in 2004. Although the original German title seems to be more appropriate than the current English one, the translation is well done in the sense that the writing is so clear and engaging that the book is very difficult to put down. It will likely be indispensable reading for most history buffs, but it can be enjoyed by anyone.

Spoiler Alert!The authors wanted to tell us about a sunken ship off the coast of Panama that seems to be from the correct time frame as Columbus's last voyage but the evidence is not available to make a firm statement of fact due to salvage rights and political concerns. It feels like the reader is left hanging when it comes to the *Vizcaina*. Actually, most of this book is a study of Columbus himself.

In the mid-1990s, divers discovered the wreck of a large ship just off the coast of Panama, feeding the rumors that this might be the remains of one of the ships from Columbus's final voyage. Columbus was able to persuade Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castille to give him a fleet of four ships in 1502 to return to the New World in search of more riches. Although he reached the Americas, his ships, all victims of shipworms eating through the hulls' wood, began to sink one by one. Columbus reported abandoning the fourth ship, the *Vizcaina* near Portobelo. It was said that this ship has three masts and a loading capacity of fifty tons. But when divers went searching, they couldn't immediately determine that the abandoned ship off the bay in Playa Damas was the *Vizcaina* because of the contents of the ship and the relative integrity of the ship's structure. The authors combine Columbus's history, and the discovery of the ship buried beneath the ocean for decades. Divers and archeology experts are quoted throughout the book, which makes it a bit of a hybrid historical read. The past and present converge by finding the *Vizcaina*. Yet, it's a true adventure whether you like history or archeology. The history of the man who founded the New World is fascinating as he was a true adventurer. *Armchair Interviews* says: Thrilling historical, yet scientific reading that leaves you satiated with a host of historical facts and awe about modern archeology.

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