

500 years connecting the Pacific, the Atlantic

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AMBASSADOR OF PANAMA



On behalf of the government of the Republic of Panama, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all Panamanian citizens in Japan on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of our independence.

I would also like to greet Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as the noble Japanese people.

On this occasion, I would like to mention that this year Panama is celebrating the Fifth Centennial of the Discovery of the South Sea (Pacific Ocean) by the Spaniard Vasco Nunez de Balboa, which took place Sept. 25, 1513.

It is a historical event of great relevance to our country as it led to the establishment of a route to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and consequently, to the settlement of the first Spanish city on

the Pacific side of the American continent: Panama City.

According to historical records, Balboa started explorations of the Isthmus of Panama in 1509 from the newly established city known as Santa Maria La Antigua del Darién, located on the Caribbean (Atlantic) side of Panama, near the border with Colombia.

In 1512, Balboa arrived at the land of chieftain Comagre, where the chieftain's son, Panquiaco, told him about the existence of a kingdom in the south where people were so rich that they utilized gold plates and vases to eat and drink.

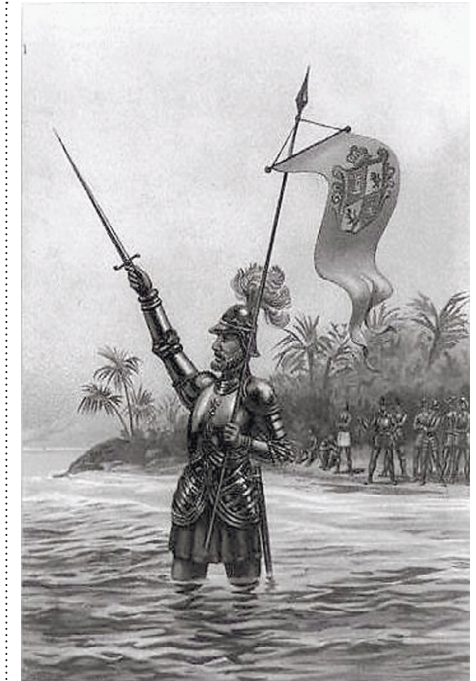
In view of this, on Sept. 1, 1513, Balboa organized an expedition with 190 Spaniards and 1,000 native Indians, provided by chieftains from friendly tribes.

After crossing the Isthmus of Panama, on Sept. 25, 1513, from the top of a mountain, Balboa saw the South Sea (Pacific Ocean) and immediately took possession of the vast body of water in the name of the Spanish crown.

Balboa's journey to the Pacific Ocean became a turning point in the history of Panama and the world as it opened the door for the conquest of the Inca Empire from Panama City, which served as the operational base of Spaniards to further explore and conquer the South American continent.

Likewise, it led the Spanish crown to establish two land routes in Panama, the Camino Real (Royal Road) and Camino de Cruces (Cross Road), which served to transport gold from South America to Spain as well as merchandise from Spain to the New World.

Later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the United States took advantage of Panama's narrow land path and privileged geo-



Pioneer: Spain's Vasco Nunez de Balboa claims the discovery of the Pacific Ocean in Panama in 1513.
EMBASSY OF PANAMA

graphical position to build the first transcontinental railroad (1855) as well as the Panama Canal (1914), consolidating the position of our country as an important trade route of the world, connecting not only two oceans but also the larger regions of Asia and Europe.

Thanks to the journey of Balboa to the South Sea in 1513, the role of Panama as the crossing point of the world remains unchanged even in the 21st century, with one of the modern wonders of the world, the Panama Canal.

Congratulations
on the 110th Anniversary of
the Independence of
the Republic of Panama

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