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Juan Ponce de Leon



Juan Ponce de Leon received permission from the Spanish crown to search for and see the Bimini, an island in the Bahamas that the Native Americans said had the Fountain of Youth – “making old men young again.” Ponce de Leon sailed into the Bahamas and after failing to find the magic waters, crossed the Gulf Stream, and made landfall somewhere near St. Augustine. He claimed Florida for Spain in April 1513. Juan Ponce de Leon called the land La Florida because it was the Easter season, the Feast of Flowers.

Returning south, Juan Ponce de Leon turned into the Jupiter Inlet and met the fierce and hostile Jobe Indians. At first the Indians appeared to be friendly and called the Spanish sailors to shore. When Juan Ponce de Leon went ashore, the Jobe Indians immediately “tried to take his boat, the oars, and their weapons.” After a short fight, Juan Ponce de Leon was able to return to his ship.

De Leon visits the Loxahatchee: Later Juan Ponce de Leon tried again, and visited the river he named La Cruz (Loxahatchee), but “sixty Indians went there to hinder him.” Before moving out, because of the constant attacks, Ponce de Leon and his men captured one Indian from La Cruz, who gave him the name of a village to the South—Abacoa.

Ponce de Leon sailed to the south and found the Indians there friendly, unlike the Jobe. The town of Abacoa is named after that tribe of Indians. (The spelling of the tribes name was changed to make it easier to remember.)

