

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shipwreck discovery in the Gulf of Mexico brings evidence of the real life of Jose Gaspar, a famous figure in Florida folklore.

TAMPA, Fla - On 9/21/23, A National Geographic research team uncovered a previously undiscovered shipwreck which holds ties to Jose Gaspar, a local legend in the Tampa Bay area. The shipwreck was found during a research survey of the Gulf of Mexico's sea life, where the wreck was picked up on sonar.

"When the scans first picked it up, I didn't think it was real," said Ved Chirayath, a marine explorer for National Geographic. "This is a huge discovery that took us completely by surprise. Who knows what other pieces of lost history are lying at the bottom of the gulf."

The salvage operation was able to salvage fragments of the ship's voyage log, which gives details to the story of the ship. The log appears to be written and signed by Jose Gaspar, a famous pirate in Florida folktales, giving previously unheard of evidence that the pirate legend actually existed.

"Gasparilla is a very exciting time for Tampa," said Jane Castor, the mayor of Tampa. "To know that our favorite pirate myth could actually be real brings a new level of depth to our culture and celebration. Maybe our little legend can grow into a nationwide historical figure!"

Gasparilla is an annual pirate themed festival held in Tampa on the last Saturday of January. The festival is framed around a friendly "invasion" by the pirate Jose Gaspar, previously thought to be only myth. Gaspar is said to have operated off the west coast of Spanish Florida from the 1780s to the 1820s, establishing a "pirate kingdom" on Gasparilla island, which is located south of Tampa Bay in Charlotte Harbor.

For more information, go to <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/society/> for more details.



Jose Gaspar (1756-1821, supposedly), also known as Jose Gasparilla, is a famous pirate in Florida's folklore. According to legends, Gaspar was a spanish navy officer turned pirate that had an active career plundering treasure and prisoners for ransom. He held many ships at his base on Gasparilla Island, becoming the number 1 fear in the Gulf of Mexico.

About National Geographic

The National Geographic Society is a nonprofit organization that works to fund efforts to protect the environment and educate future explorers to join the cause. The Society aims to fund explorers that innovate and change the way we think about our world, leading a diverse set of programs to fulfill our mission of protecting the world. Our five focus areas take explorers all around the world to change it for the better, as well as bringing what we learn back to educate the next generation. All proceeds we collect go towards our explorers and programs, making sure they get the most we can offer.

Mission statement

We at National Geographic use the power of science, adventure, and creativity to protect and document the natural wonders of our world, so that we may educate and leave behind the inspiration for the next generation.