Interesting History

In this beautifully produced map, Mortier primarily shows the route of the annual Spanish treasure fleet, or *flota*, as it entered and then left the Caribbean Sea. The Spaniards ran such a *flota*, or massive convoy, from the mid-sixteenth century to the late eighteenth century. The fleet might number as many as fifty large vessels, and after entering the Caribbean north of Trinidad; it called at Bahamas Channel, using the Gulf Stream on its way back to Spain.

This fleet was critical to the Spanish Crown for its yearly supply first of gold and then of silver, obtained primarily from mines in Peru and Mexico. Various other European powers did their best to intercept the *flota*, but its strength was such that on only two occasions, in 1628 and 1702, were its treasure ships captured, in each case by the Dutch. Sometimes, of course, ships were lost to the sea, and twentieth-century treasure hunters have recovered many of these vessels.

For more information about Spanish treasure fleets, pirates and shipwrecks:

Exploring the Early Americas – Competition for Empire sponsored by the Library of Congress offers fascinating accounts and documents from the centuries of Spanish exploration, pirates, Spanish Florida and English Florida. *The Florida Pirate* is not to be missed.

The Spanish Treasure Fleets of 1715 and 1733: Disasters Strike at Sea sponsored by the National Park Service
http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/129shipwrecks/

Down Like Lead: 400 Years of Florida Shipwrecks sponsored by the Florida Museum of Natural History
http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/lead/down_like_lead_detail.htm

The treasure that sank the Spanish Empire, 400 Year old shipwreck reveals haul of gold, silver, pearls and even parrots Daily Mail, April 2013
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2303830/The-treasure-sank-Spanish-Empire-400-year-old-shipwreck-reveals-haul-gold-silver-pearls-parrots.html

1733 Spanish Galleon Trail sponsored by Florida Heritage
www.flheritage.com/archaeology/underwater/galleontrail/index.cfm