Excerpts from Columbus’s Journals

Saturday, Oct. 13, 1492:
This is a large and level island, with trees extremely flourishing, and streams of water; there is a large lake in the middle of the island, but no mountains

Sunday, Oct. 14
… a reef of rocks, … surrounds the whole island, … There are some shoals withinside, but the water is as smooth as a pond.

    Near the islet I have mentioned were groves of trees, the most beautiful I have ever seen, with their foliage as verdant as we see in Castile in April and May. There were also many streams.

        a number of islands … so many of them that they could not be numbered; …. I determined to steer for the largest, which is about five leagues from San Salvador; the others were some at a greater, and some at a less distance from that island. They are all very level, without mountains, exceedingly fertile …

Friday, Oct. 19
Part of the shore is rocky, but the rest of it, like most of the coast here, a sandy beach….. This island is the most beautiful that I have yet seen, the trees in great number, flourishing and lofty; the land is higher than the other islands … though it cannot be called a mountain. From this part toward the northeast is an extensive bay with many large and thick groves. …. This is so beautiful a place, [with] species so new and dissimilar to that of our country, and I have no doubt there are trees and herbs here which would be of great value in Spain, as dyeing materials, medicine, spicery, etc., …. Upon our arrival here we experienced the most sweet and delightful odor from the flowers or trees of the island.

Sunday, Oct. 21
Groves of lofty and flourishing trees are abundant, as also large lakes, surrounded and overhung by the foliage, in a most enchanting manner. Everything looked as green as in April in Andalusia. The melody of the birds was so exquisite that one was never willing to part from the spot, and the flocks of parrots obscured the heavens. The diversity in the appearance of the feathered tribe from those of our country is extremely curious. A thousand different sorts of trees, with their fruit were to be met with, and of a wonderfully delicious odor.