

Read the “Machu Picchu” passage set.

Machu Picchu

Source 1: The Stones of Machu Picchu

by Duane Damon



- 1 On a steamy July afternoon in 1911, American explorer Hiram Bingham pushed aside a tangle of undergrowth and stared. For long weeks he had scoured the sweltering jungles of eastern Peru for clues. A casual remark from a native farmer . . . the hint of a trail long unused . . . a glimpse of pale stone through the trees . . . all were “ghosts” of an ancient Inca¹ city lost among the soaring peaks of the Andes Mountains long ago. Now, some two thousand feet above the rushing Urubamba River, Bingham was at last face-to-face with the find he had been seeking.
- 2 “Suddenly I found myself confronted with the walls of ruined houses built of the finest quality of Inca stonework,” he recorded later. “It was hard to see them, for they were partly covered with trees and moss, the growth of centuries.” Bingham stared in amazement at the “walls of white granite ashlar [stone building blocks] carefully cut and exquisitely fitted together.” The larger stones appeared to weigh 10 to 15 tons. How had they been moved? Did they stay together without the application of mortar?
- 3 Bingham, his nine-year-old native guide, and his military escort swarmed over the ruins. The explorer gaped in awe at a huge altar carved from the mountainside itself—the *intihuatana*, or “hitching post of the sun.” He marveled at *El Torreón*—a graceful semicircular “tower.” A pair of three-sided temples with triple windows held him “spellbound.” Bingham methodically snapped photos, scribbled notes, and sketched maps. All the while his hopes rose. Had he found it? Could these long-forgotten ruins be the remains of Vilcabamba, the last capital of the Inca?

¹Inca: a South American civilization that was conquered by the Spanish in the 1500s

- 4 Bingham was not the first white man to examine the Inca civilization. After its takeover by the Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro in the 1530s, men like Pedro Cieza de León, a soldier, and Father Bernabé Cobo, a Jesuit missionary, recorded their impressions of Inca rituals, social structure, and engineering. Bingham’s fascination had begun as a professor of Latin American history at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. The present expedition had been funded by his former classmates, who wanted to solve a 400-year-old mystery: the location of Vitcos, or Vilcabamba. This city was the secret stronghold built by the Inca ruler Manco II after he fled the Spanish Conquest in 1535.
- 5 Bingham now believed that he had found it—but not for long. Only a few days later, he came upon a larger set of ruins, some 60 miles away. This site, Bingham decided, must really be Vilcabamba. His earlier discovery was dubbed Machu Picchu, after the mountain over whose ridge it sprawled. Soon afterward, Bingham uncovered a third set of ruins, called Vilcabamba Viejo (“the old”), at Espíritu Pampa.
- 6 The following summer, Bingham returned to Machu Picchu . . . Careful digging around its ruins yielded scores of Inca graves, some stone dishes, and several bronze implements. Tantalizing clues, yes, but intriguing questions remained. What Inca chief had built Machu Picchu? When? Why? Bingham himself died uncertain as to which of his three discoveries had been the “lost” Inca capital.
- 7 Despite the mysteries surrounding it, Machu Picchu is recognized as one of the world’s great archaeological wonders. Nestled in a breathtaking natural setting, the city’s lasting beauty comes from the careful blending of its striking architecture with its mountaintop environment. Each year, thousands of fascinated visitors come to the “city in the clouds” to look, to reflect, and to wonder.

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Source 2: Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu

by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

A World Heritage Site is a place (such as a forest, mountain, lake, monument, building, etc.) that is listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as being of special importance to the common heritage of humanity. UNESCO considers it in the interest of the international community to protect and preserve each site. The document was written by UNESCO in support of Machu Picchu as a world heritage site.

Outstanding Universal Value

- 8 Embedded within a dramatic landscape at the meeting point between the Peruvian Andes and the Amazon Basin, the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu is among the greatest artistic, architectural and land use achievements anywhere and the most significant tangible legacy of the Inca civilization. Recognized for

outstanding cultural and natural values, the mixed World Heritage property covers [79 acres] of mountain slopes, peaks and valleys surrounding its heart, the spectacular archaeological monument of “*La Ciudadela*” (the Citadel) at more than [7,800 feet] above sea level. Built in the fifteenth century Machu Picchu was abandoned when the Inca Empire was conquered by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. It was not until 1911 that the archaeological complex was made known to the outside world.

- 9 The approximately 200 structures making up this outstanding religious, ceremonial, astronomical and agricultural centre are set on a steep ridge, crisscrossed by stone terraces.¹ Following a rigorous plan the city is divided into a lower and upper part, separating the farming from residential areas, with a large square between the two. To this day, many of Machu Picchu’s mysteries remain unresolved, including the exact role it may have played in the Incas’ sophisticated understanding of astronomy and domestication of wild plant species
- 10 Standing 2,430 m above sea level, in the midst of a tropical mountain forest in an extraordinarily beautiful setting, Machu Picchu was probably the most amazing urban creation of the Inca Empire at its height. Its giant walls, terraces and ramps seem as if they have been cut naturally in the continuous rock escarpments. The natural setting, on the eastern slopes of the Andes, encompasses the upper Amazon basin with its rich diversity of flora and fauna.
- 11 Machu Picchu [is] in some of the scenically most attractive mountainous territory of the Peruvian Andes. As the last stronghold of the Incas and of superb architectural and archaeological importance, Machu Picchu is one of the most important cultural sites in Latin America; the stonework of the site remains as one of the world’s great examples of the use of a natural raw material to provide outstanding architecture which is totally appropriate to the surroundings. The surrounding valleys have been cultivated continuously for well over 1,000 years, providing one of the world’s greatest examples of a productive man-land relationship; the people living around Machu Picchu continue a way of life which closely resembles that of their Inca ancestors, being based on potatoes, maize and llamas. Machu Picchu also provides a secure habitat for several endangered species, notably the spectacled bear, one of the most interesting species in the area. Other animals include: dwarf brocket, the otter, long-tailed weasel, pampas cat and the vulnerable ocelot, boa, the Andean cock of the rock, and the Andean condor. . . .
- 12 Machu Picchu is a world renowned archaeological site. The construction of this amazing city, set out according to a very rigorous plan, comprises one of the most spectacular creations of the Inca Empire. It appears to date from the period of the two great Incas, Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui (1438–71) and Tupac Inca Yupanqui (1472–93). . . .
- 13 Without making a judgement as to their purpose, several quite individual quarters may be noted in the ruins of Machu Picchu: a quarter ‘of the Farmers’ near the colossal terraces whose slopes were cultivated and transformed into hanging gardens; an ‘industrial’ quarter; a ‘royal’ quarter and a ‘religious’ quarter. Inca architecture reveals itself here in all of its force

¹terraces: flat areas created on the side of a hill and used for growing crops

Protection and management requirements

- 14 The state-owned Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu is an integral part of Peru's national protected areas system and enjoys protection through several layers of a comprehensive legal framework for both cultural and natural heritage. The boundaries of the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu are clearly defined and the protected area is surrounded by a buffer zone² exceeding the size of the property.
- 15 The Management Unit of the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu (UGM) was established in 1999 . . . [and] is indispensable for the management of a property which forms part of Peru's very identity and is the country's primary domestic and international tourist destination. . . .
- 16 Tourism itself represents a double-edged sword by providing economic benefits but also by resulting in major cultural and ecological impacts. . . . The planning and organization of transportation and infrastructure construction, as well as the sanitary and safety conditions for both tourists and new residents attracted by tourism requires the creation of high quality and new long-term solutions, and is a significant ongoing concern.

²buffer zone: a space that cushions against shock or damage due to contact

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Writing Prompt

You have been asked to write an informational article on Machu Picchu for a website that focuses on travel to places of historical interest. Write an article that explains to tourists the significance of Machu Picchu as a travel destination. Your article must be based on ideas and information that can be found in the “Machu Picchu” passage set.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to

- use evidence from multiple sources; and
- avoid overly relying on one source.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.