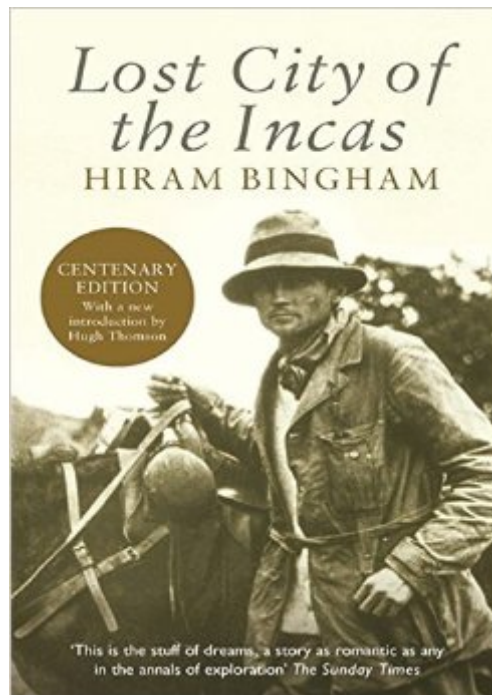


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Lost City Of The Incas (Phoenix Press)



Synopsis

A special illustrated edition of Hiram Bingham's classic work captures all the magnificence and mystery of the amazing archeological sites he uncovered. Early in the 20th century, Bingham ventured into the wild and then unknown country of the Eastern Peruvian Andes--and in 1911 came upon the fabulous Inca city that made him famous: Machu Picchu. In the space of one short season he went on to discover two more lost cities, including Vitcos, where the last Incan Emperor was assassinated.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is valuable for many reasons. First and foremost, it presents us with the views and attitudes of one of the world's foremost anthropologist-explorers from the beginning of the 20th century. This means lots and lots of passion and enthusiasm, a willingness to risk one's life in pursuit of an elusive goal and an ability to follow one's gut instincts. All traits which, sadly, have practically disappeared from modern anthropology. In addition, of course, the book is permeated with the spirit of the times (1910-40ies) - which means patronizing attitudes toward the natives (the "savages", who for the most part clearly resented the tasks of having to clear the jungle, build bridges across impassable rapids and climb hills infested with snakes) and an eurocentric view of the world which now seems a bit naive. All this being said, I must emphasize that this book is a treasure and a must read for anyone about to visit Macchu Picchu - if only to contrast the conditions encountered by Bingham and his Indians to those that exist today, when busloads of clueless

tourists are delivered straight to the Temple of the Sun. The first third of the book consists of a superb Introduction including a recapitulation of the 16th century records of the Incas and their empire (including the awesome Pachakuti Inca), very competent review of Inca technology (many of their and an excellent recapitulation of the life stories of the last 4 Incas. The last part describes the actual "discovery" of Macchu Picchu which occurred by procuring, for a silver coin, the services of Anacleto Alvarez, a local Qechua who had been living among the ruins all along. Macchu Picchu therefore had never been truly "lost" and "discovery" has in this context many interesting connotations. For my part, I have a respect for Bingham and for his guts that served him so well. In time, for example, they led him to the US Senate (from Connecticut). I suspect it will take many a pachakuti (turning of the Wheel of Time) till another anthropologist gets an opportunity to represent Democracy and the People.

I recently came back from Machu Picchu and had an interest in learning about its discovery directly from Hiram Bingham. I thought it was overall an interesting read. A majority of the book gives you a history of the Incas and how they fell from power. Hiram also speaks about his desire to locate what he knew to be Vilcabamba, the last Inca holdout before the Spanish Conquistadors ended the Inca rule for good. It's important to note that although it's mentioned in Hiram's book, some of his theories about the purpose of Machu Picchu were later disputed. The most important one was the fact that Machu Picchu was NOT the last stronghold of Tupac Amaru. I know some people disagree over whether it's better to read the book before or after visiting Machu Picchu, but I'm honestly glad I read it after my trip. It was interesting to go through the last chapter on his excavations and think to yourself: "I know EXACTLY where he's talking about!" I can picture his route there because the trip was still fresh in my mind and I had a great understanding of the altitude and appreciation for climbing through the jungle for more than an hour to get to the top of Machu Picchu. The most interesting read to me was about his companion who attempted to climb Huayna Picchu. I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to climb it during my trip and that was honestly the most challenging thing I've ever done. Huayna Picchu is a vertical hike and it took tremendous effort to climb all the way to the top. That makes me appreciate the time it took Bingham's companion, Mr. Heald, to get there even more. Apparently Mr. Heald had to cut his way through lots of jungle and fell at one point, badly hurting his arm. When I got to the top of Huayna Picchu I saw lots of home structures built into the side of the mountain. What I find most fascinating is the fact that Hiram Bingham mentions that when he and his men first explored Huayna Picchu in 1912 there were NO structures on Huayna Picchu, simply several stairs, a few terraces and three caves. That means all

of the home structures on Huayna Picchu were built later by the modern Peruvian government. The best part of the book, however, were copies of original photos taken by Hiram Bingham in 1912. You get to see what Machu Picchu looked like when he discovered the ruins and began his excavations. It's amazing to compare his photos side-by-side with what the Peruvian government has done today. Several of the structures were literally rebuilt but there are still a few that haven't been touched and are in their original form from 600+ years ago. At least one of the structures is an altar that the Inca used for animal sacrifices. The right portion of the structure has crumbled, and I easily spotted it in Bingham's original photo. I'm pleased to say that as of 2012 there were no changes and it looked exactly as it did when Hiram saw it in 1911. For any history buff, this is certainly a good read. It's perfect for the Machu Picchu visitor.

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