

Machu Picchu



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In July 1911, Hiram Bingham, a Yale University professor, led an expedition to the Andes Mountains in Peru. While struggling through thick rain forests, up rugged slopes, and across rushing rivers, Bingham's team made maps and looked for two ancient cities of the Incan Empire. During the search for those cities, Bingham found something much more spectacular. He found Machu Picchu. In the 1400s, this grand royal estate had been the winter home of Pachacuti, a powerful Incan emperor, but the city had been abandoned for hundreds of years. Only a few local people knew about it. One year later, Bingham returned to Peru to excavate Machu Picchu. His workers cleared away dense vegetation and dug through layers of soil. They uncovered white granite temples and stone stairways, and in the surrounding areas they found houses, fountains, terraces, and graves. When the expedition was through, the New York Times called Bingham's work at Machu Picchu "the Greatest Archaeological Discovery of the Age." Bingham's expeditions to Machu Picchu helped reveal the history and splendors of the great Incan Empire. Later scholars learned even more about Machu Picchu and the Incans. Read this detailed account to find out how Bingham discovered this breathtaking "city in the clouds."

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