

Machu Picchu



Machu Picchu is a 15th-century Inca citadel located in the Eastern Cordillera of southern Peru on a 2,430-meter (7,970 ft) mountain ridge.[2][3] Often referred to as the "Lost City of the Incas", it is the most familiar icon of the Inca Empire. It is located in the Machupicchu District within Urubamba Province[4] above the Sacred Valley, which is 80 kilometers (50 mi) northwest of Cusco. The Urubamba River flows past it, cutting through the Cordillera and creating a canyon with a tropical mountain climate.[5] In reference to the site's name, for most English or Spanish speakers, the first 'c' in Picchu is silent. In English, the name is pronounced /ˌmɑːtʃuː ˈpiːtʃuː/ MAH-choo PEE-choo[6][7] or /ˌmætʃuː ˈpiːktʃuː/ MATCH-oo PEAK-choo,[7][8] in Spanish as [ˈmatʃu ˈpitʃu] or [ˈmatʃu ˈpiɣtʃu],[9] and in Quechua (Machu Pikchu)[10] as [ˈmatʃʊ ˈpiktʃʊ].

IN THE QUECHUA LANGUAGE, MACHU MEANS "OLD" OR "OLD PERSON"

Etymology

In the Quechua language, machu means "old" or "old person", while picchu means "pyramid; pointed, multi-sided solid; cone," though it may also refer to a "portion of coca that is chewed." [17] Thus the name of the site is sometimes interpreted as "old mountain". [18] The site is on a narrow saddle between two mountain peaks: Machu Picchu and Huayna Picchu. [19]

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History

Machu Picchu was previously believed (by Richard L. Burger, professor of anthropology at Yale University) to have been built in the 1450s. [22] However, a 2021 study led by Burger used radiocarbon dating (specifically, AMS) to reveal that Machu Picchu may have been occupied from around 1420 to 1530 AD. [23] [24] Construction appears to date from two great Inca rulers, Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui (1438–1471) and Túpac Inca Yupanqui (1472–1493).

A consensus among archaeologists is that Pachacutec ordered the construction of the royal estate for his use as a retreat, most likely after a successful military campaign. Although Machu Picchu is considered to be a "royal" estate, it would not have been passed down in the line of succession. Rather it was used for 80 years before being abandoned, seemingly because of the Spanish conquests in other parts of the Inca Empire. [22] It is possible that most of its inhabitants died from smallpox introduced by travelers before the Spanish conquistadors even arrived in the area. [27]

DAILY LIFE IN MACHU PICCHU

Ancient life

During its use as an estate, it is estimated that about 750 people lived there, with most serving as support staff (yanaconas, yana) [28] [page needed] [29] who lived there permanently. Though the estate belonged to Pachacutec, religious specialists and temporary specialized workers (mayocs) lived there as well, most likely for the ruler's well-being and enjoyment. During the harsher season, staffing was reduced to about one hundred servants and a few religious specialists focused on maintenance alone. [28] [page needed]

Studies show that, according to their skeletal remains, most people who lived there were immigrants from diverse backgrounds. They lacked the chemical markers and osteological markers they would have if they had been living there their entire lives. Instead, research into skeletal remains has found bone damage from various species of water parasites indigenous to different areas of Peru. There were also varying osteological stressors and varying chemical densities suggesting varying long-term diets characteristic of specific regions that were spaced apart. [30] These diets are composed of varying levels of maize, potatoes, grains, legumes, and fish, but the last-known short-term diet for these people was overall composed of less fish and more corn.

ENCOUNTERS WITH WESTERNERS

Spanish conquest

In the late 16th century, Spaniards who had recently gained control of the area documented that indigenous individuals mentioned returning to "Huayna Picchu", the name that is believed to be originally given to the site by locals.[14] The Spanish conquistador Baltasar de Ocampo had notes of a visit during the end of the 16th century to a mountain fortress called Pitcos with sumptuous and majestic buildings, erected with great skill and art, all the lintels of the doors, as well the principal as the ordinary ones, being of marble and elaborately carved.[40]