



# THE LOST CITY OF MACHU PICCHU

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This beautiful, quiet place is covered in sunshine and has very high mountains all around it. Its name is Machu Picchu. It's sometimes called the 'Lost City of the Incas,' and it's nearly 8,000 feet up in the Andes Mountains of Peru.

The story of Machu Picchu is the story of a place where the ancient world and the modern world meet.

Julio is a tour guide and he knows Machu Picchu very well. He thinks that it has a special quality. It has something which brings people to it. "It's a magic attraction that you can feel here," he explains. "It's known all over the world that Machu Picchu is one of the magnetic centres of the ancient world," he says.

Machu Picchu is a city with a history, it's more than 500 years old. Today, it's a favourite place for visitors. These visitors are not only people from Peru. People from all over the world visit Machu Picchu. They want to attempt to step back in time and to understand the Inca civilisation. They don't only go there in the sunshine, either. Even in the fog, many think it's wonderful to climb up the mountain and walk through the ruins of the city.

When the Inca civilisation ended, few people knew that Machu Picchu existed. For a long time Machu Picchu was lost to the outside world. Then, in 1911, an explorer called Hiram Bingham found it again.

At first, very few people visited the ruins of Machu Picchu. But now, hundreds of tourists come here every day. They walk up the steps of the ancient city and climb over the ruins. Machu Picchu is no longer quiet. It's currently full of the sounds of visitors. And not everyone likes it. Some people want the tourists to come, but other people don't.

Some people in Peru hope that even more tourists will come to Machu Picchu. They think it will mean more business and money for the country. These people want to make it easier for tourists to get to Machu Picchu. They also want to establish better, more modern, tourist services. They say that tourism will improve things for Peru and its people.

However, some conservationists worry that more visitors won't be good for Machu Picchu. They say that tourism may not be good for the environment or for the old ruins. Others worry that the ancient city will change. They worry that it will lose its special quality. They think it may become just like any other city.

One man, however, is not worried about this at all. Jose owns a local hotel. He says that Machu Picchu and Peru need more visitors. The 'Lost City' is a very special place, he claims, and everyone should be able to see it.

"Why not be like the rest of the world?" he says. "Why not expose and show Machu Picchu to the rest of the world?" He then adds, "It's such a wonderful place, why keep it to a few?"

It's obvious that some people, like Jose, support tourism, and some people are against it. So what does tourism mean to Peru? The truth is that parts of Peru are very poor. The tourist industry brings a lot of money to some communities.

Aguas Calientes is a good example of a tourist community. Aguas Calientes is a town that is in the area where visitors get on buses to go to the summit of Machu Picchu. Because of this, it grew suddenly and developed from nothing into a town.

Aguas Calientes has no industry except tourism. The town is just a group of stalls. The local people there sell art and other things they have created to visitors. The people there live completely on money from tourists. It's their only income.

What is happening to the special quality and beauty of Machu Picchu today? Tourism is certainly changing the area. But are the effects good or bad? No one can decide.

However, one thing is certain: the 'Lost City' is no longer lost. Tourists have found it and the modern world is coming closer to this ancient world every day. In the end, it's this modern world that could bring an end to the ancient city. Time may be running out for the 'Lost City of the Incas.'

- THE END -

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