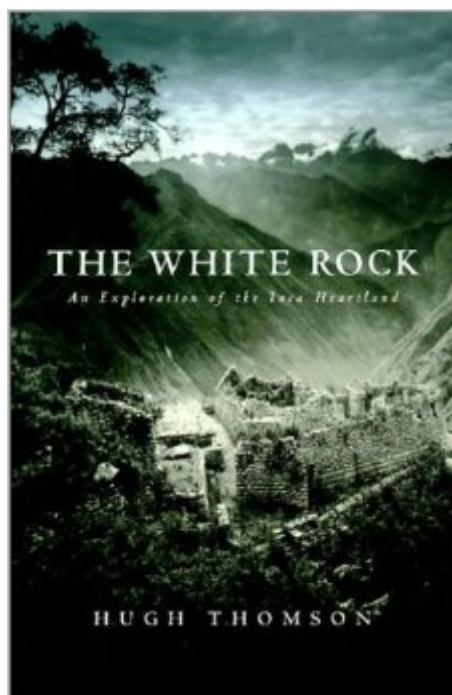


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The White Rock: An Exploration Of The Inca Heartland



Synopsis

More than twenty years ago, acclaimed documentary filmmaker and explorer Hugh Thomson first set off into the Peruvian cloud forest on foot, to find a ruin called Llactapata which, although it had been discovered by Hiram Bingham in 1912, had been "lost" again. With the backdrop of the ever-intriguing Andes mountains, *The White Rock*, Hugh Thomson's intoxicating history of the Inca people and their heartland, is a thrilling mix of information and adventure. The author, an acclaimed documentary filmmaker and explorer, expertly weaves accounts of his own discoveries and brushes with danger with the history of those who preceded him—including the explorer Hiram Bingham, who discovered Machu Picchu; the twentieth century South American photographer, Martín Chambi; the poet Pablo Neruda; and the Spanish conquistadores who destroyed the Inca civilization—and the eccentric characters he meets on his travels.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Where does an explorer go these days? There is no more "terra incognita" on the maps, and ballooning, sailing, or crossing Antarctica are often reduced to webcasted stunts. If you long to go through jungle, battling snakes and mosquitoes, to find previously undiscovered ancient sites, Hugh Thomson can tell you where to go: Peru. In fact, twenty years ago, he was working in a pub, and a drinker there told him a story involving an Inca fortress that had been discovered, but was so poorly documented, it had gotten lost again. "Not only was it a glamorous idea, it was, unlike most of those told in the pub, a true story." Finding that ruin seemed more attractive than continuing to tend bar: "I had nothing to lose. So I went." This is the start of the story of Thomson's *The White Rock: An*

Exploration of the Inca Heartland_ (Overlook Press). It is no surprise that in this lively and intelligent exploration memoir, Thomson does re-discover the re-lost archeological site, but it is surprising that this is only the first part of the book, not the climax. By the time the book has finished, he has hiked to many lost cities in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and reviewed the remarkably complicated Inca history all along the way. Of course the book is full of recountings of mistakes and scares, from embarrassingly split pants to humorous misunderstandings between the gringos and the natives (including a young girl who precipitously falls in love with the author). This is not a how-to manual, but those preparing to explore the area would do well to heed Thomson's words on snakes, guinea pigs, gnats, pack mules, and especially, guides. Much of the book is not just a history of the Incas, but a history of exploration of Inca sites.

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