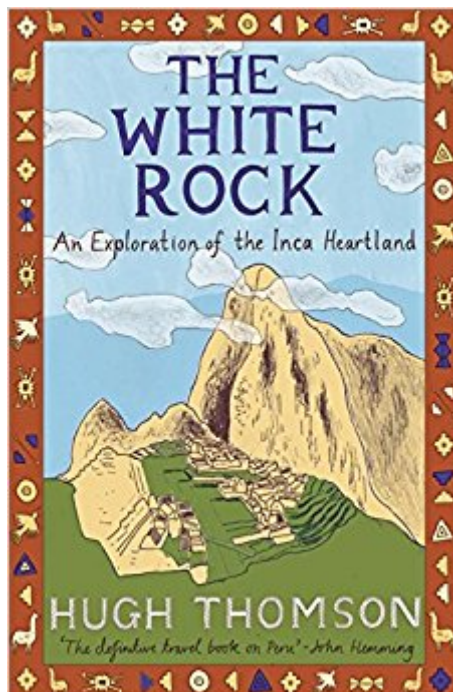


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# The White Rock



## Synopsis

Following in the footsteps of the explorers Gene Savoy and Hiram Bingham, Thomson set off into the jungle to find the lost city of Llactapat. This is the story of his journey to discover it via the interconnecting paths the Incas laid across the Andes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

So entertaining and appealing is Thomson's story of his exploration of the Inca empire that readers will wish they could take off and follow in his footsteps. The British documentary filmmaker relates his travels 20 years ago deep into the Inca empire, through the high Peruvian Andes and Bolivia, and a second trip 17 years later, to the last Inca stronghold in the basin. In his early 20s, he launched a successful expedition to find the lost Inca city of Llactapata. Believing that "what really was important was understanding what the ruin was about," Thomson began a decades-long study of Inca history and culture. The marriage of his intellectual and physical exploration is at the center of this compelling book. Thomson is a terrific storyteller, his skills apparent in both his recreation of the violent destruction of the Incas by the Spanish and his description of the ruins he discovers, the people he meets along the way, and the hardships and pleasures of traveling the abandoned Inca highways. Erudite and charming, Thomson is capable of comparing a carved Inca rock to the work of Henry Moore, and equally capable of conveying the satisfying incongruity of being on a crowded bus in the Peruvian outback, listening to a Spanish song titled "La Cosita," the little thing-the story of Lorena and Wayne Bobbitt. Thomson's wit, eye for detail and reverence for humanity set him apart from the average travel-adventure writer-he is as good a companion as a traveler could hope for. 45

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Part travelog, part history lesson, this narrative by documentary filmmaker Thomson (*Out of India, Great Journeys: Mexico*) recounts a successful expedition he led in 1982 to "refind" Llactapata, the "lost city of the Incas," and to explore other Inca sites spanning three countries. Among pages of encounters with flora, fauna, and fermented beverages, Thomson provides a good dose of Peruvian history: the Inca emperors come off as heroic defenders of the land, but we also learn that they had built their empire by subjugating other tribes, exploiting forced labor and other spoils of war. When the Spanish came, some of these conquered tribes were only too glad to help. Thomson returns in 1999 (after the Shining Path guerrilla group is gone) to visit Vilcabamba, the "last city of the Incas," where the final Inca emperor retreated before turning himself over to the Spanish Viceroy. Thomson is an impressive adventurer and an equally skilled writer. Recommended for academic and public libraries. Lee Arnold, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I read this book while traveling to Peru and couldn't have had a better companion while clambering up the stone steps of dozens of ruins and trying to make sense of the civilization we know so little about. Thomson's theories and perspectives are refreshingly unique. Thomson covers the actual and unknown significance of different sites, describes in gripping detail what it feels like to explore virgin territory as recently as the 1980's, and provides insight into the Inca's approach civilization building. For example, Thomson muses on why circuitous Inca roads are characteristically different from straight Roman roads. He concludes that Incas were marking the bounds of their conquered territory while Romans were parading through the middle of it. Different perceptions of displays of power led to different infrastructure developments. Fascinating.

I enjoyed this book a lot more than I thought I would. I had just finished reading 'the Last Days of the Incas' and...let's say it didn't have a happy ending: the good guys lost! So I read this mostly to educate myself about present-day Peru--because I'm hoping to go there next year. Well this book just captivated me. I did some backpacking trips in my youth so I could relate to the author's rambles about the back country of Peru. I was thoroughly entertained by his tales of Quechuan market-women, bar-room characters, eccentric archaeologists, sweaty bus-rides and tiny Peruvian towns with one or 2 dusty bottles of beer for sale. This lucky author went to a Peru that us 2-week

tourists will never be able to see. Even more I enjoyed Thompson's depictions of the last Incas, hiding out like banditos in this wild country. He makes us see their nobility and defiance, and oh gosh, what a great movie it would make! The only thing I didn't enjoy about this book was Thompson's attempts to tear down our romantic image of the Inca civilization by telling us that they were tyrants who oppressed the Andean cultures that they absorbed into their empire. Um, yeah I suppose they did have to oppress a lot of peasants to build their mighty stone works! We know that the Incas had a system of labor taxation in which the subjects contributed a few months of labor for the State. Was that oppression, or was it about the same as the 5 months' labor every year that goes to pay our federal taxes? Or was the Inca 'mita' system more to be compared with 'public works'? We do know that the Inca system of roads, terraces and storehouses enabled them to keep everyone fed in times of famine. I guess that is like our modern 'welfare' system? Anyway, I wanted to tell the author "lay off the Incas already, whatever they did, the Spaniards were 100 times worse!" Other reviewers have noted the sense of anticlimax: Thompson's prose fails to convey the drama of actually being in these mysterious, legendary ruins. Yet he writes evocatively about the mountains, the gorgeous vistas, and his thoughts about the Incas' relationship with mountains and stone. The most memorable part of this book was the last few pages, wherein Thompson writes of the messages woven into Peruvian textiles: the story of the execution of the last Inca Tupac Amaru and the hopes of vengeance against his executioners. "The idea of an Inca who would return and set his people free became a cult called the Incario, which kept a rebellious fervour going for long after Tupac Amaru's execution."

Such a fun book to read. I tore through it while visiting Peru and Machu Picchu. Hugh Thomson's "The White Rock" was an invaluable part of the trip. It's always fun to follow in the footsteps of the author, especially when the writing is so warm and entertaining. I'll probably read this book again someday, especially if I ever visit the Sacred Valley again.

This is one of my favorite books and inspired me to take a 10 day trip to Peru. It's written in a great way as both to be educational, informative, and entertaining. It's a great introduction to Peru for someone who isn't a historical scholar and I would highly recommend it to anyone looking to be inspired to have an adventure.

If you travel to Peru to explore the archaeology, this is a must read. I read it before I went and just read it again - several years afterward. Hugh writes in a very personal way that I find delightful -

almost as if we were carrying on an extended conversation about the place over a few Pisco Sours at the Cross Keys in Cusco (wish we were!). During my second read, I re-lived my trip and Hugh brought it all back. Great job!

I read this book some years ago and as a fan of travel literature placed it near the top. However, I did not write a review at that time. Now, having recently returned from a two week vacation in Bolivia and Peru, I can see what a fine book it is. The Incas were the last of the world's great civilizations to be "discovered." Since they developed in isolation and were not literate, we must try to interpret their mind set from what has survived these 500 years. Mr. Thomson manages by observation, rigid scholarship, many miles on the trail, along with canny speculation to get inside the mind of the Inca as well as anyone. For all of you romanticists out there this book comes as close as is possible to the modern possibilities of adventure.

Very nice reading. A non-tech 1d10t reader took the liberty of highlighting non-significative and/or partial sections of some paragraphs. Since this tool can be very useful (when skillfully applied) to share knowledge and call attention to interesting passages but there's no way to delete them, this person made future annotations a waste in this particular book. Ignoring that, I recommend this book.

I enjoyed this book immensely. I have been to some of the places this author writes about and appreciate his descriptions and what he shares of his experience. Hugh Thompson writes with depth and respect for the Andean culture.

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