

THE INCA EMPIRE OF TAWANTINSUYU

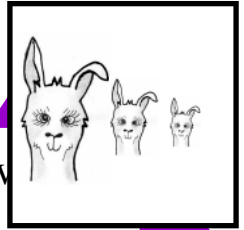
Tawantinsuyu, or ‘The Land of the Four Quarters’, was what the Incas called their empire. It covered the Western side of the continent of South America, from 1438 until 1535, and was one of the most remarkable in human history.

Its ‘secret’ city of **Machu Picchu** is still world famous. Machu Picchu was a fortress, palace, temple and farm all at the same time. It was deliberately landscaped to impress the Inca nobles, priests and peasants who lived there. It still impresses millions of visitors each year. Throughout their empire, the Incas built awesome buildings like the ones in Machu Picchu. They used huge blocks of stone, each different in size and shape, which were fitted together perfectly. Some of these buildings are still standing, despite being in an active earthquake zone and being over 500 years old.

According to some accounts Tawantinsuyu was remarkably peaceful and law-abiding; millions of people did precisely what the government told them to do; a **Sapa Inca** (Inca Emperor) ordered all the people to stop working and have a meal at the same time in the afternoon every day – and that is what happened!

The empire was linked by roads. Along the side of some roads drinking water and fruit trees were provided to keep travellers refreshed! At intervals along it there were storage buildings with enough food for an Inca army. Runners were stationed like relay runners at intervals along the roads. They could bring messages to the Sapa Inca, at a speed of over a hundred miles a day.

The Inca empire of Tawantinsuyu



What made Tawantinsuyu different was *where* it was. It was set in some of the highest mountains in the world, the Andes. Even the flat areas of the empire were nearly 10,000 feet high, where the air is thin and difficult to breathe. The Incas lived in this challenging environment. They built roads through the mountains and turned mountainsides into giant terraces where they could grow crops.

Tawantinsuyu reminds us of the ancient civilizations of the Middle East and the Mediterranean area. The Incas mummified their dead, just like the Ancient Egyptians. They built a great road network just like the Ancient Romans. But the Incas did not live in the 'ancient' world of 2000 or more years ago. Their empire reached its maximum power, and then was destroyed, when Henry VIII ruled England (1509–1547).

This was the time when a sudden advance of science and technology gave Europe an advantage over other people and

nations in the world, in w trade and technology.

A few Spanish adventurers, with guns, horses, and iron weapons and armour, overcame thousands of Inca warriors armed with clubs and axes. Eventually they drained the empire of its gold and silver treasure, and in 1532 killed its last emperor Atahualpa. Tawantinsuyu disappeared, and became part of the worldwide empire of the King of Spain.

