

FRANCISCO PIZARRO



Francisco Pizarro was born in Spain around 1470. Pizarro grew up without learning how to read or write. His father fought in some battles against France. Pizarro became interested in adventures to the New World. In 1509, Pizarro sailed with another explorer from Spain to Central America. He joined Balboa's expedition across the Isthmus of Panama to the Pacific Ocean in 1513.

Pizarro heard tales of fantastic riches to be found high in the Andes Mountains of Peru. The Inca lived there. Their empire was the largest in South America. It stretched for 3,000 miles from north to south. For the next seven years Pizarro helped lead expeditions into Central America in search of this empire.

In 1522, Pizarro joined two Spaniards already in Panama, de Almagro and a priest de Luque. They planned to find the Inca Empire and conquer its gold. The people of Panama believed that Pizarro and the others would not succeed. Pizarro set out on expeditions in 1524 and 1526. Both failed. Almagro often returned to Panama for more men and supplies to help the expedition. Finally, Pizarro was unable to gain any more support for his expedition from Spain.

In 1528 he returned to Spain to personally seek support from the King. The King agreed and in 1530, Pizarro returned to Panama. This time he set out with Hernando De Soto and traveled the excellent system of Inca roads and bridges.

In 1532, Pizarro and De Soto arrived at *Canzmarca*, home of the Inca military leader Atahualpa. The Inca leader expected Pizarro to attack, so he met him with a large army. Pizarro returned to his camp. The next day Pizarro tricked Atahualpa and led a surprise attack. He killed thousands of Inca soldiers. Pizarro captured the Inca leader and took other hostages. He demanded a large ransom. He received thousands of pounds of gold and silver. Pizarro then killed Atahualpa and the other hostages. The Inca Empire collapsed. Spain became the richest and most powerful nation in the world.

After destroying the Inca capital of Cusco, Pizarro founded the city of Lima. He called this city *Ciudad de los Reyes* —City of Kings. The Spanish fought among themselves for the gold and riches. In 1541, Pizarro was assassinated by one of Almagro's men in Peru.