

Francisco Pizarro

(1475 – 1541)

Conquistador of the Inca Empire in Perú



- 1475 Francisco Pizarro González was born in the town of Trujillo, in the rough, poor, and dry western region of Spain known as Extremadura, a land from which many Spanish conquistadors came. He was the illegitimate son of a soldier, a profession he practiced from a young age. His mother, Francisca González Mateos, was from a poor family from Trujillo. Hernán Cortés was his second cousin. Later he was given the noble title of marqués de los Atabillos by King Carlos V.
- 1479-1516 Spain was ruled by the Catholic Monarchs (los Reyes Católicos).
- 1502 He sailed to Hispaniola in the company of Nicolás de Ovando.
- 1509 He traveled to Colombia with the conquistador Alonso de Ojeda. This expedition was a failure.
- 1513 Next he went on the expedition led by Vasco Núñez de Balboa on which Spaniards saw the Pacific Ocean for the first time. They called it the "Mar del Sur" (South Sea) because where they saw it from the coast of Panamá the sea is to the south.
- 1517-1556 Spain was ruled by Carlos V.
- 1519 Pizarro was charged with arresting Balboa, who was tried, convicted, and beheaded. Pizarro was rewarded with the position of mayor of Panamá City (1519-1523).
- 1519-1521 Pizarro joined Cortés' conquest of México as a common soldier.
- 1522 Pizarro lived in Panamá, where he heard about Perú (Pirú) and the Incas from Pascual de Andagoya, who is considered the "discoverer" (not the conquistador) of Perú.

- 1522-1524 Pizarro joined Diego de Almagro to plan the conquest of Perú with 80 men and 40 horses.
- 1524-1525 Their first attempt to conquer Perú failed.
- 1526-1528 The second attempt—this time with 160 men—to conquer Perú also failed; however, Pizarro returned to Panamá with gold, llamas, and native pre-conquest Peruvians.
- 1528 Pizarro went to Spain to get King Carlos V's support to conquer Perú. The king gave his permission for Pizarro to conquer and go get rich.
- 1530 December: he returned to Panamá with his brothers Hernando, Gonzalo, and Juan.
- 1531 Pizarro recruited 200 men to go to Perú.
Pizarro is already a pretty old man; he is ambitious; and he is known to use brutality.
In the Inca Empire, meantime, there was a civil war raging between Atahualpa and his half-brother Huáscar.
- 1532 Pizarro established his expedition's base in Perú.
With only 106 soldiers and 62 horses Pizarro meets Atahualpa in Cajamarca (November 16, 1532: the Battle of Cajamarca).
Atahualpa has an army of 80,000 Inca soldiers. Pizarro had fewer than 200 men.
He seizes Atahualpa as his prisoner; the Spanish conquistadors attack the Incas at the meeting, massacring the Inca soldiers.
- 1533 August 29: Pizarro executes Atahualpa after receiving the ransom (a room filled with gold and two rooms filled with silver) that he had demanded from the Incas.
Fall: The Spaniards under Pizarro occupy the Inca capital at **Cuzco**, thus ending the war of conquest.
Manco Cápac becomes the de facto Incan emperor.
- 1533-1541 Pizarro distributes *encomiendas* throughout Perú to his soldiers.
- 1535 Pizarro founds the city of Lima on the Spanish urban pattern.
- 1536 Manco Cápac leads a rebellion against the Spaniards.
- 1537 Almagro returns to Perú from his own expedition to Chile; Almagro reconquers Cuzco.
Almagro and his allies (Spanish and native Peruvians) fight against Pizarro and his faction.
- 1538 Pizarro captures Almagro and has him executed for insubordination.
- 1541 Almagro's followers capture and kill Pizarro.
Pizarro's remains are buried in the Catedral de Lima.

NOTES:

1. The conquest of Perú was marked by the worst kind of atrocities perpetrated by Pizarro and his men: rape, mutilation, torture, etc.
2. From the Spanish conquest of Perú and, actually, the entire Inca Empire, until the end of the 20th century, generally speaking, Pizarro was glorified as one of greatest of

all the conquistadors. However, recently Peruvians and many others have moved toward a critical evaluation of Pizarro. What he accomplished, of course, is the first implantation of the full array of Spanish civilization in Perú: culture, language, religion, politics, urban planning, and the like. In other words, the first approach to Perú as a Latin American nation dominated thinking about this issue for four centuries. Now, however, a new approach to the Latin American nature of Perú is taking shape, one which balances Spanish-American innovations alongside native-American characteristics, which, in fact, were never completely eliminated.

3. For a photo tour of some historical monuments in downtown Lima, including the now-removed statue of Pizarro, please click on the following image:



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