

Francisco Pizarro and the Incas.

*Cortes replied with one of those Latin tags which came so easily to him, and which seem to have convinced Las Casas that he was a “good Latinist”: **Qui non intrat per ostium fur est et latro.** (Anyone who does not enter by the front door is a thief and a robber.) - Conquistadors by Michael Wood.*

On a map South America looks like a giant parsnip. But that is misleading. Along the West Coast lie some very high mountains – the Andes – but crossing them led, in the 1520s, to endless miles of tropical forest with rivers which stretched into the far distance.

Francisco Pizarro did not have a promising start. His father was a soldier who never got round to marrying his mother. He came from Estremadura, in the south west of Spain, along with many other explorers and conquistadors including Cortes. As soon as he could, the young lad joined the army and saw service in the Italian wars.

By the time he arrived in the new world, he was already a tough and experienced soldier. This was as early as 1502, exactly ten years since Columbus first landed and while Columbus was still exploring. He was actually with Vasco Nuñez de Balboa's party when the Pacific Ocean was discovered.

Pizarro settled in Panama, starting a gold mine with Diego de Almagro.

He was a man who lived very simply, unmarried but full of a burning desire to open up this strange and very rewarding new world.

Expeditions set out and sailed along the coast, even reaching the San Juan River in 1522. Pretty soon, Pizarro was buying ships and sailing down the coast himself. There was no shortage of volunteers. This was just a couple of years after Cortes had discovered the fabulous wealth of the Aztecs.



Illustration 1: Francisco Pizarro: middle aged, a man possessed.



Illustration 2: Illustration 2: South America at this time. Cuba is in the dead centre. North America is a mystery. South America is small because it is unimportant. Regio Gigantum means Land of Giants. Novus Orbis means the New World. Just off the coast of Mexico lies Zipangu - Japan. Some way after that is Cathay – China - just below (!) India.

With 80 men and four horses, the first exploration set off in 1524.

It was a disaster. After just a couple of hundred miles, they grew fed up with sailing past the endless mangrove swamps and the biting insects. By the time they did land, they were very hungry and Almagro lost an eye in a fight with the very unfriendly natives.

Two years later (1526) Pizarro set about a second attempt. This time there were to be 160 men and several horses in two ships. This was slightly more successful: they travelled twice the distance and found a river mouth to get fresh water and something to eat.

Almagro went back to get fresh supplies and the pilot, Bartolemé Ruiz, took the other ship south. He was the first European to cross the Equator along the Pacific coast.

Up to now, the expedition had been a waste of money. The coast was barren: mangrove swamps. The local people had nothing to offer the Spanish. The prevailing wind was trying to blow the Spanish sailing ships back to where they had started out. Pizarro and the men who had been left

when the other two ships departed were now starving with no prospect of getting anything either. It was certainly no place to found a new colony on this uninhabited sweaty island.

Then Ruiz returned. He reported that he had seen a large balsa wood raft which had been loaded with “many pieces of silver and gold.....belts, bracelets, body armour, clusters of beads and precious stones, rattles and strings....there were many wool and cotton mantles and tunics.”¹ There was a crew of about twenty people.

Three of the crew were captured when the Spanish boarded the raft and taken back to learn Spanish as interpreters. They told of a golden land called “Biru” farther to the south.

It was time for a decision. The men were hungry and fed up. Many had already died. There were now just 80 left (50% mortality). They had expected a bit of fighting and then riches. Instead they got endless hunger and biting insects. All the other food was gone and they were reduced to snakes and shellfish. Even the land itself was hostile. They wanted to go back to Panama.

They smuggled a message back with the returning Ruiz and the Governor dispatched a rescue ship. When it arrived, Pizarro drew a line in the sand with his sword:

“Comrades and friends, on that side lies the part which represents, death, hardship, hunger, nakedness and abandonment; this side here represents comfort. Here you return to Panama – to be poor! There you go on to Peru – to be rich. You choose which best becomes you as brave Spaniards.”

The glorious thirteen stepped over the line.

The Captain of the rescue ship dropped the fourteen castaways on Gorgon Island along with the three interpreters. The island was living hell: tropical thunderstorms, poisonous snakes, incessant mosquitoes and constantly wet clothes. But there was a good lot of fresh water and many small animals and turtles to eat. And it was hot.

They made huts out of palm leaves and beds out of seaweed. And there the castaways stayed for some seven months, unable to press on and unable to return.

At then end of March 1528, a ship arrived unexpectedly. They were overjoyed. Almagro had sent it to search for them. Ruiz was the pilot.

Pizarro got on board and determinedly set sail for the south. The sick he left with Indians to be looked after.

By late April they anchored at an inlet near the Inca town of Tumbes. The Indians were “amazed, as this was something they had never seen before. They were astonished.” They prepared food for the Spanish “without any guile or menace but rather with joy and pleasure to meet such new people.”²

Tumbes was just what the Spanish had been hoping for. Two people were dispatched first of all to make sure it was safe. They came back delighted. Then a Greek, Pedro de Candia, went ashore and confirmed what had happened. There was an Inca Governor who could talk rationally to the Spanish and through the interpreters. There were irrigation canals. Fine buildings and people with smart clothes. Women who were elegant and smartly dressed spoke in sign language.



It was quite a change for the castaways. Several of them were quite determined to marry local women and live in the town. When Pizarro left, a couple did actually stay.

What they had witnessed was the poignant end of the Inca Empire.

1 Quotations are from Cieza de Leon, and taken from Wood: Conquistadors.

2 Another quote from Wood/ Cieza de Leon.

Pizarro sailed south to the Santa river, over a thousand miles south of Panama. The further he went, the more determined he became to return and conquer the Inca Empire. It was the end of the Second Expedition.

He set off for Spain and wowed the court, including the Emperor, Charles V, with his account of Peru. In Toledo (26th July 1529) Pizarro was given a licence by the Queen “to discover and conquer Peru.” He was also made Governor.

Research: the Third Voyage: 1530

You do this bit:

Tell the story of Pizarro after he landed in Modern Ecuador with 62 horsemen and 102 foot soldiers. Here are some helpful words (people and places) to look up: why is each important to the story? Can you get a picture? See how many you can do.

The death of Inca Wayna Capak: this was a stroke of luck for the Spaniards. How did he die? Was it expected? What kind of an Inca was he?

Huascar

Atahualpa What relation were they?

Tumbes (Before 1532, it had been prosperous and growing fast. Now in 1532, it was ruined by the civil war. Google Tumbes+1532 and see what Wikipedia has to say.)

Inca road system. (Pizarro had 1000 miles to travel along these! On foot.)

Hernando de Soto and Atahualpa (Hernando had a life outside Peru: mention it in just one sentence.)

Fr Vincente de Valverde (What kind of Christian was this man? What did he do?)

“Battle” of Cajamarca

Ransom of Atahualpa

Pachamac

Cuzco

Death of Atahualpa Inca

Manco Inca Yupanqui

Quispe Cusi (Pizpita)

Meztizos (A couple of sentences on this fascinating topic, please).

Lima (History)

Santa Maria del Campo (ship) and its treasure.



Illustration 3: inca footpath: they joined up all along the Andes. Made of stone, they allowed the Inca to get rapid information about what was happening even in the remotest parts of his mountain Empire.

Once you have found out the reasons why these people and places are important to the story, collect them together (they are already in chronological order). Then tell your part of the story. Illustrations make it much more interesting. You should limit your part of the story to just one side of A4, so you

do not need to include everything.

After the looting had finished and the ship had departed to Spain, Pizarro settled down with Pizpita and started a family. He was 56, she was 18. The Pizarro family (Pizarro had at least four mothers to his children) went on to explore most of South America including sailing right down the length of the Amazon across the tropical rain forest of Brazil.

The Incas did not take happily to being ruled by the greedy and lustful Spanish, many of whom took Inca brides, while others just raped and stole. A war started, led by Manco and this dragged on for years. Peru and the old Inca Empire was no longer the happy place which it had been before the Spanish came.

But many Spanish became very rich indeed.



Illustration 4: the Incas were good with stone.