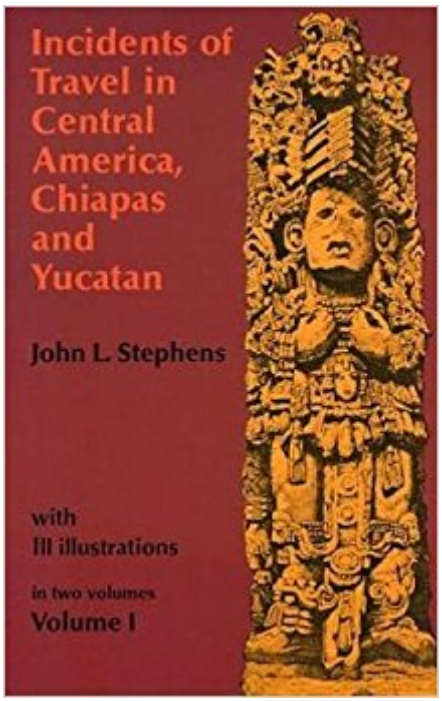
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Incidents Of Travel In Central America, Chiapas, And Yucatan, Volume I (Incidents Of Travel In Central America, Chiapas & Yucatan)



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Synopsis

Few explorers have had the experience of uncovering a civilization almost entirely unknown to the world. But Stephen’s two expeditions to Mexico and Central America in 1839 and 1841 yielded the first solid information on the culture of the Maya Indians. In this work, and in his other masterpiece Incidents of Travel in Yucatan, he tells the story of his travels to some 50 ruined Mayan cities.In this book, he describes the excitement of exploring the magnificent ruined cities of Copan and Palenque, and his briefer excursions to Quirigua, Patinamit, Utatlan, Gueguetenango, Ocosingo, and Uxmal. For all these cities, his details are so accurate that more recent explorers used the book as a Baedeker to locate ruins forgotten by even the Indians.In addition to being a great book on archaeological discovery, Stephen’s work is also a great travel book. Telling of journeying by mule back on narrow paths over unimaginable deep ravines, through sloughs of mud and jungles of heavy vegetation, describing dangers of robbery, revolution, fever, mosquitoes and more exotic insects, Stephen’s narrative remains penetrating and alive. His account of his attempt to buy Copan for $50 is told with the adroitness of a Mark Twain, and his descriptions of Indian life Ã¢â ¬â • primitive villages a few miles from the ruins, burials, treatment of the sick, customs, amusements, etc. Ã¢â ¬â • never lose their interest.Frederick Catherwood’s illustrations virtually double the appeal of the book. Highly exact, remarkably realistic drawings show overall views, ground plans of the cities, elevations of palaces and temples, free-standing sculpture, carved hieroglyphics, stucco bas-reliefs, small clay figures, and interior details.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stephens's book, first published in two volumes in 1841, has been abridged by Karl Ackerman, a freelance writer. Stephens made his journey in 1839-40, accompanied by an artist, Frederick Catherwood, who made detailed drawings of the Mayan ruins. The book was extremely popular upon publication; it remains an exciting 19th-century travel work and one of the early descriptions--and an incisive one--of the Mayan ruins. Ackerman's abridgment makes a handsome volume, but the continuity is not smooth, and the work could do with more explanatory footnotes. There are no contemporary photographs, of course, but later ones by Edward Muybridge and others are used, including some of Tikal, which Stephens did not visit. The book is useful but will not replace the original work or subsequent reprints with Catherwood's drawings.- George M. Jenks, Bucknell Univ., Lewisburg, Pa.Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

John Lloyd Stephens (1805-1852) was an American politician who is renowned for his pioneering research into the ancient Maya civilisation. First published in 1841, this book describes the ancient Mayan sites he visited in 1839 and 1840. Volume 2 contains his descriptions of Palenque, Uxmal and other Mayan sites. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

For some reason, was selling only volume 2 when I bought it for Kindle. I was enthralled at the account of the author's extraordinary 1839 journey from Costa Rica to the YucatÃƒÂ¡nÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •while civil war raged throughout Central AmericaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •in search of Mayan sites. The author's brilliance and erudition, his dry wit, his affectionate portrayals of locals met en route, his awe and respect for the advanced but ruined civilization he encountered, were enhanced by the meticulous illustrations of Frederick Catherwood.Volume 1 relates the first half of the journey; and, I must say, the lesser half. In its 400+ pages, Stephens and Catherwood explore exactly one Mayan site, CopÃƒÂ¡n. The rest of the pages relate the journey by boat from the U.S. to Belize, onward to Guatemala, overland to the capital, various excursions and diversions, ending with Stephens crossing from Nicaragua to Honduras. A great deal of time is spent on a blow-by-blow account of the civil war which tore Central America, until then a unitary state, into warring fragments. While this would no doubt have fascinated Stephens's contemporary audience, the exhaustive detail may try the patience of all but scholars. Further, plans were underfoot to build a transoceanic canal through Nicaragua; and Stephens spends a great deal of time exploring the region and discussing the plan's feasibility. Up to Teddy Roosevelt's administration, Nicaragua and

the Colombian isthmus (now Panama) were both in play as potential sites for such a canal, but we now know how it turned out, and the detail lavished on the losing proposition, again, might strain the lay reader’s interest.I would recommend starting with Volume II of this book, and then reading Incidents of Travel in Yucatan. Both are fascinating accounts, chock full of one fascinating Mayan site after another, and offer the thrill of original discovery that Stephens and Catherwood shared during their groundbreaking expeditions.

I have read this book several times and own both the paperback version and the Kindle one. I have recommended it to many friends and have given it as a gift on several occasions as it is a historical must read on Central America.A masterful depiction of Central America in the early 1800’s. Easy to read, a travel log that reflects the curiosity of a scholar, but written in a straightforward, easy to read language. Almost naive in some passages, Stephens admires the people and its natural surroundings, describes them vividly from his very American point of view. His relentless commitment to explain and understand better "The Lost Civilization" in Meso-America is a timeless inspiration.Lawyer, Diplomat, Explorer and Entrepeneur, he played a role as a precursor of the Panama Canal, the Panama Isthmus Railroad, which served as a shorter, safer route to California. This books tell us of the times just before big things were about to happen in Central America and at worldwide scale.The contributions of this book to Maya archaeology are huge (the detailed descriptions and beautiful drawings by Frederick Catherwood of Maya sites), basically by putting many archaeological remains later looted in its original context. A must read for archaeology students around the world and for anyone interested in Central America in the 19th Century. Mr. Stephens, your place in history is guaranteed through this book, the others you wrote and your contributions to the cause of a inter-oceanic route through Central America and the advancement of Maya archaeology.

The text is adequate but for me the Catherwood engravings were poor. They were either too light or too dark. I want the Catherwood engravings to be at least as good as the engraving in the Dover publications but they aren’t. This true for other reprints that I have seen.

For those interested in ancient Mesoamerica,Karl Ackerman has done an excellent job of editing the original two volume edition in oder to produce a single volume that preserves the essential information about Mesoamerica found in the original edition.He has also included many modern and historical photographs that add to the original Catherwood engravings and enhance the readers

ability to view and enjoy the oringal text. He has also included valuable historical data about Stephens (absent in the original) that detail how Stephens insight into the function and purpose of the engravings has been shown to be more correct than those proposed by early investigators of these cultures.The tightening of the prose and the absence of trivia makes this book a joy to read and I highly reccomend it to all those like me who are fascinated by the great cultures that existed on the American continent long before the Europeans arrived.Larry Poulsen

This book took me back in time! John’s descriptions invoke all the senses and bring the past back to life accurately portraying the day-to-day lives of the people in the regions he travelled, the beautiful natural landscapes, discomforts caused from the hardships of travel, elements, illnesses, and insects, and detailed descriptions of ancient unrestored Mayan ruins. His words are the best photographs of the time before cameras existed.

Indiana Jones in real life in 1841! Stephens and Catherwood immersed themselves in the jungles, observing the living descendants of the Maya as well as the temples. I appreciated their respect for the natives and the Spaniards, and for the "moschetos" and "garrapatas". I am planning a trip to Tikal this fall. Anyone who has read this want to join me there? Email nephthys3605@hotmail dot com.

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