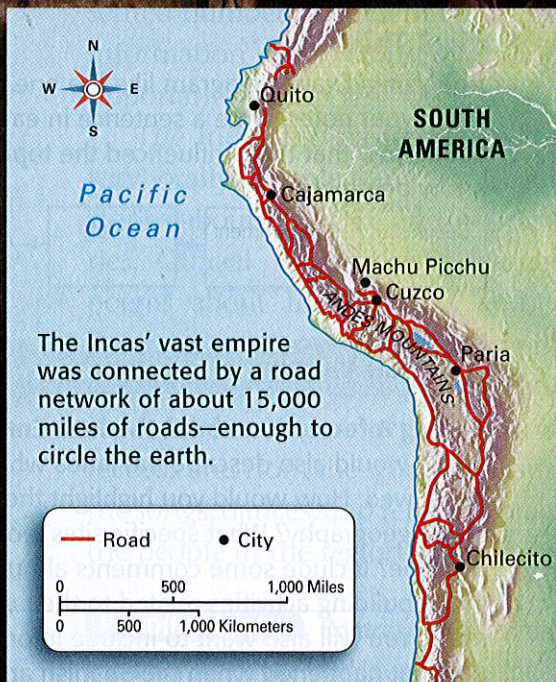


Inca Roads

Inca roads were more than just roads—they were engineering marvels. The Incas built roads across almost every kind of terrain imaginable: coasts, deserts, forests, grasslands, plains, and mountains. In doing so, they overcame the geography of their rugged empire.

Although the Incas had no wheeled vehicles, they relied on their roads for transportation, communication, and government administration. The roads symbolized the power of the Inca government.



Many roads were just three to six feet wide, but that was wide enough for people on foot and for llamas, which the Incas used as pack animals.

Inca engineers built rope bridges to cross the valleys of the Andes Mountains. Rope bridges could stretch more than 200 feet across high gorges.

Inca roads stretched from sea level to nearly 12,000 feet in elevation. Roads often followed natural features, such as valleys, ridgelines, and the coastline.

Since the Incas had no wheeled vehicles, some of their roads had steps cut into the hillsides for people and animals.

The Incas were expert stone workers. They cut huge blocks of stone and fit them together so well that they didn't need any cement.

Important messages were carried by official runners. Each would run about two miles and then pass the message on to the next runner. Using this system, the Incas could send a message 150 miles in one day.

ANALYSIS SKILL ANALYZING VISUALS

1. What are some features of Inca roads that you can see in the illustration?
2. What challenges did the Incas face in building their roads?