

FORT SAMAIPATA

Fort Samaipata (Spanish: El Fuerte de Samaipata), also known simply as 'El Fuerte', is an archaeological site and UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the Santa Cruz Department, Florida Province, Bolivia. It is situated in the eastern foothills of the Bolivian



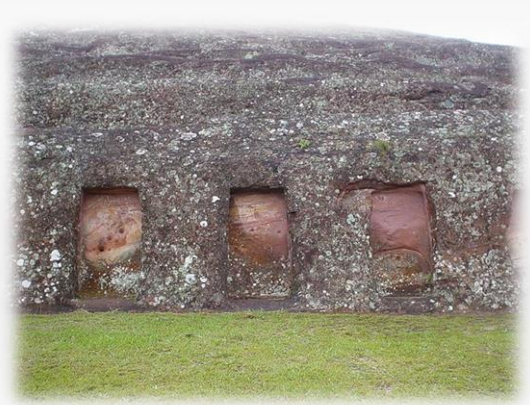
Andes, and is a popular tourist destination for Bolivians and foreigners alike. It is served by the nearby town of Samaipata.

It is not actually a military fortification but it is generally considered a pre-Columbian religious site, built by the Chanes, a pre-Inca culture of Arawak origin. There are also ruins of an Inca city built near the temple; the city was built during the Inca expansion to the southeast. Both Incas and Chanes suffered several raids from Guarani warriors that invaded the region from time to time. Eventually, the Guarani warriors conquered the plains and valleys of Santa Cruz and destroyed Samaipata. The Guaranis dominated the region well into the Spanish colonial period.

The Spaniards also built a settlement near the temple and there are remains of buildings of typical Arab Andalusian architecture. The Spaniards abandoned the settlement and moved to the nearby valley where the town of Samaipata is currently located.

The archeological site at El Fuerte is unique and it encompasses buildings of three different cultures: Chanes, Incas and Spaniards.

El Cascabel. The most important feature of El Fuerte seems to be El Cascabel. El Cascabel can be translated as 'The Rattle'. Two parallel lines point to certain points in the eastern sky at a position of azimuth 71° and an altitude of about 6.75° . One could have looked along the parallel lines, standing on the place of



observation in front of the Inca-wall at the foot of El Fuerte and watched the parallel rising of two planets at sunrise on August 20, 1066 above both lines against the background of constellation Leo: Venus and Jupiter. Some archaeologists contend that unusual carvings on the rocks may be from a pre-Inca civilization on this Amazonian slope that was commemorating the flyover of Halley's Comet in March 1066.

More recently, it has been pronounced to be an ancient flying object launching and landing site by the pseudo archeologist Erich Von Daniken, well-known author of Chariots of the Gods.

PROTECTION. Due to damage caused by visitors walking on the symbols cut into the rock and by erosion caused by waterfall, the inner area is cordoned off to prevent more damage. However, most of it can still be viewed. Access to the site is easy, many operators run buses from nearby Samaipata. There is a small entrance charge. The site is under the care of Stone watch, which is a nonprofit society and academy for conservation and documentation of rock art.

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