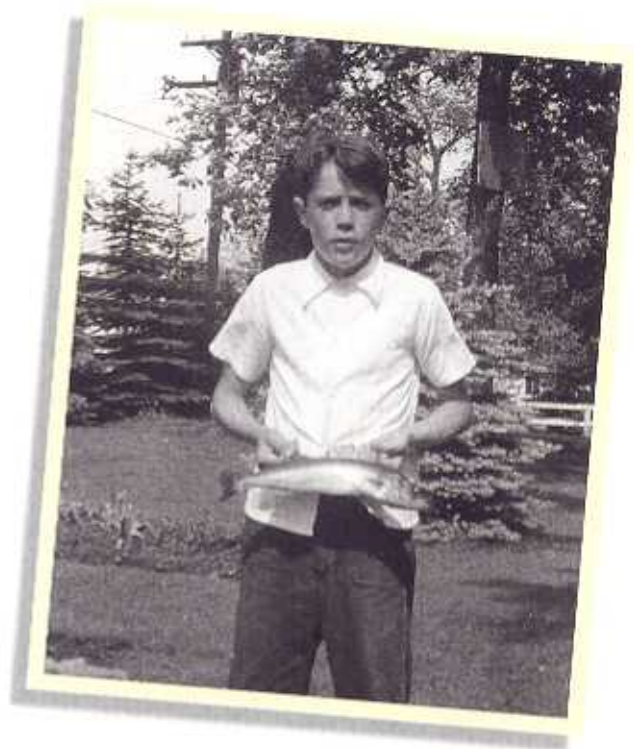


# Johan Reinhard

ANTHROPOLOGIST

Birthday: December 13, 1943



Everyone seems surprised when I tell them that I grew up in a small town in the Midwest. I have lived most of my life outside the United States, and even my name is foreign. But the truth is I was born and lived the first 18 years of my life in New Lenox, a village of 800 people in Illinois farm country.

My early adventures were hunting, fishing, and camping along Hickory Creek, which flowed through our town. Like many of my friends, I collected fossils and arrowheads, read *The Hardy Boys*, and experimented with rockets, most of which exploded on the launch pad. Unlike my friends, I began to read more about explorers and was soon dreaming of visiting faraway lands. One book in particular, *The Book of Marvels*, got me interested in exploration and in thinking that I could do what the author did when he was still a boy.

At 16, my first chance to be on my own came when I joined a railroad line gang of men from the South working throughout the Midwest. Digging holes by hand, we put up telegraph poles. The men were much older than I and came from much different backgrounds. They seemed like people from another world, and in a way they were. As a young Northerner, I had to act and talk like them to be accepted. Unknowingly, I was behaving like an anthropologist, always learning about how these strange men thought. Maybe more important, I found I could do hard labor and earn my own keep—and thus my independence.

When I graduated from high school, I traveled alone to South America with money saved from working on the line gang. It was during that trip that I knew

I was fascinated by other cultures. I decided that I wanted to learn more about civilizations of the past and about people living totally different lives from mine in other parts of the world. I could not believe my luck when I found there was an actual profession for this type of work—anthropology.

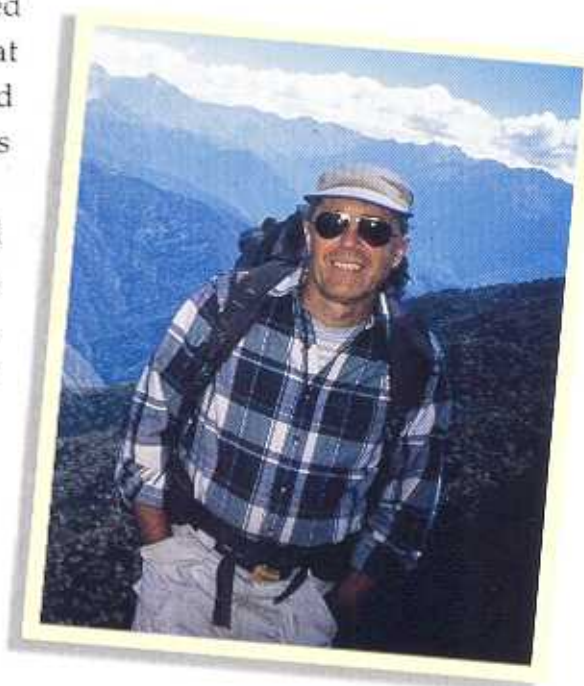
The more I read about anthropology, the more I thought that I should learn various tools to use in different locations or situations in the future. Some of these tools were academic ones like linguistics, which taught me how to learn languages still unknown and unwritten. Others were less academic and included skydiving, scuba diving, mountain climbing, cave exploring, and sailing. I thought that these skills would enable me to undertake exploration in places that few, if any, anthropologists had worked before.

After studying anthropology for a couple of years in the United States, it seemed only logical that, if I was going to be an anthropologist and live in other cultures and speak other languages, I might as well study anthropology in a foreign country and kill two birds with one stone! So I went to Europe, studied German, and then continued my studies at the University of Vienna, in Austria.

My first cultural anthropological field experience with sponge divers in Greece was soon followed by my first archaeological experience underwater in the Mediterranean. But my main desire was to gain experience in a culture as different from my own as possible, so I focused on studying nomadic hunter-gatherers. Only a few such societies existed in the world, and one was in the foothills of the Himalaya. I was interested in how they maintained their way of life and what happened when some groups of their tribe settled down and took up agriculture. Above all, I was fascinated by their religion.

My interests in mountains, religion, and archaeology all grew together until I found that they merged in a unique way in the Andes. There, mountain worship led people to build the world's highest known archaeological sites, and my research over a 16-year period eventually led to the discovery of the Inca Ice Maiden.

Johan Reinhard



### What was the job that got you started in your field?

Ironically, my first job in archaeology was also one of the most interesting that I have ever had. I was 21 years old and studying anthropology at the University of Vienna, in Austria, when I got to work with one of the fathers of underwater archaeology, Peter Throckmorton. We spent the summer of 1965 conducting underwater archaeological surveys in the Mediterranean and in a lake in Italy.

First, we recovered Roman artifacts off the coast of southern Italy. Then, in the north we surveyed a village site of the 3,000-year-old Villanovan culture, 16 feet below Lake Bolsena. We uncovered never-before-seen artifacts. Not only did I learn how to do archaeology in the field (even if underwater!), but I participated in some of the most exciting research being done at the time.



At work in Lake Titicaca, in Bolivia

*"Most people think you need physical strength and scientific intelligence, but one of the most overlooked things anthropologists and explorers need is the desire to understand and respect people who think differently than they do. Patience, hard work, and a good sense of humor are indispensable and may be enough for you to be an asset to many expeditions."*

*Johan Reinhard*

### What was the scariest thing that ever happened in your work?

I have had many close calls while working or training for work, especially while in the mountains. But the scariest was the one that lasted the longest. I was 20 years old and climbing alone (very foolishly) on a mountain in Europe, when I started falling down a snow-covered slope. I frantically used my ice ax to slow myself by putting my weight on its point while holding it against my chest. I could hardly believe my luck when I gradually stopped. But to my horror, I soon found myself falling again, and only then did I realize that I actually was on top

**Reinhard tackles a crevasse on Cerro Morado, in Chile.**

of a slab of falling ice! I was being swept off the mountainside toward a drop of more than 2,000 feet and certain death. There was nothing I could do.

After what seemed like several minutes—but must have been only seconds—the slab came to a stop. This time I knew that if I moved it might start sliding again. I waited awhile, then slowly, very slowly, made my way sideways to a stable area. I was still so frightened that I continued down using both hands and feet, although the descent was easy the rest of the way.

Working on mountain summits is occasionally dangerous, more due to weather than difficulties in climbing. Electrical storms are especially to be feared, and even a twisted ankle can cause serious problems at heights of more than 20,000 feet. But I view this as part of the job and not much more dangerous than walking city streets at night or driving in rush-hour traffic. Accidents can mostly be avoided if you are physically and mentally prepared and carefully plan your work.

### **How do you choose a project?**

I choose a project after weighing several factors: Will it potentially provide new knowledge or be beneficial to people? Will I learn from it, both in a scientific sense and in terms of my own personal growth? Can I do the job as well as, or better, than others who might do it? Will I regret not having done it even if it is unsuccessful? If I can answer yes to those questions, then the rest is easy.





The Inca Trail leads to Machu Picchu.

site to begin surveying and excavating ruins. At the end of the day, we make sure our finds are well protected and our notes are up to date, then return to camp to discuss the next day's program, write up any further notes...and have a very welcome hot meal.

In the city, my day consists of writing, reading, answering correspondence—in short, the normal hard work that turns discoveries and information obtained on the mountain into data others can use.

### **Where do you work?**

These days I am mostly in mountain environments, either in the Himalaya or the Andes. Usually, various forms of transportation take me to work: first, a plane to reach the country or city; then a vehicle to get nearer to the mountain; then sometimes a mule or horse to get to the foot of the mountain; and finally, a trek or a climb to the archaeological sites higher on a mountain. I have worked in deserts and jungles before, but I much prefer the mountains.

### **What is a normal working day like for you?**

At a mountain site, I usually have a simple breakfast while waiting for the sun to rise and warm up (a little, anyway!) our campsite. I check my gear, the weather, and my teammates to see that all is well. We go over the work plan, then climb to the actual

### **Do you have any children? Is your family involved in your work?**

I have never had children—my way of life would be mentally and physically hard for them. In the field, I thought they might lack good schooling; and left behind, they would grow up without a father around much. I also did not think I could earn enough money to live such a life and also raise a family.

Unlike even many other anthropologists, I prefer to spend long periods in the field. I lived most of the last 28 years outside the United States, and once I did not set foot in the United States for 9 years solid! But I have been in the field with close companions who have shared in the work in some way.

### **What special preparations do you have to make for your work?**

My work involves using not only the usual tools of archaeology (such as measuring tapes, notebooks, cameras, trowels, brushes, etc.), but also mountaineering equipment (like ice axes, backpacks, ropes, altimeters, climbing boots, and special sleeping bags, clothing, stoves, and tents) and medical supplies for emergencies. I keep a checklist with categories for each kind of equipment I need.

By necessity, I was often alone when I began years ago, but now I work with others. With a team of about six people, the minimum necessary to do a high-altitude excavation well, a couple of people can work while the others rest.



**Reinhard with the Inca Ice Maiden, discovered when her 500-year-old tomb broke apart in the Andes**

### What is the hardest part of your work?

The hardest thing is to keep a team working hard over several days when everyone suffers some effects of the altitude. We usually work above 17,000 feet, and often much higher. People tire quickly, lose their appetites, do not sleep well, and often feel ill with headaches, nausea, coughs, sore throats, and colds.



Amid ice formations in Argentina

In the city the hardest thing is keeping up with all of the reports, project proposals, people who want something from me or whom I must contact for information, and reading new scientific publications that relate to the project.

### What was your biggest discovery? What are you most proud of?

The biggest discovery I ever made was probably the frozen Inca mummy—the Ice Maiden—that I located at 20,700 feet. It is one of the best preserved mummies from ancient times, and it has provided a wealth of information.

I am most proud, however, of the totality of my work relating to mountain worship and high-altitude archaeology. This is because it has led both to new discoveries, like the Ice Maiden and many other rare artifacts, and to an increased understanding of Andean cultures. I have developed better explanations for some of archaeology's greatest mysteries, like the giant drawings in the desert in Peru and the ruins of Machu Picchu. Discoveries I have made in my mind have been more exciting to me than those I have made in the field.

### What is left for you to explore?

I could never undertake all of the projects on my list, even if I were a billionaire. I hope to do more high-altitude excavations in the Andes. Few scientific excavations have been done there, and they yield unique, well-preserved artifacts and a wealth of information about Inca religion. At the top of my list, so to speak, is the world's highest known archaeological site at 22,000 feet, which I have surveyed twice but never excavated.

Check it out:

## The Mountain Institute



The Mountain Institute (TMI) brings over 25 years of experience to community-based conservation of natural and cultural resources, environmental education, and outdoor adventure. Working in some of the oldest, longest, and highest mountain ranges in the world—the Appalachians, the Andes, and the Himalaya—TMI's learning-by-doing approach provides geology lessons atop a summit or within a cave, along a mountain waterway, or in an old-growth hemlock grove. Learn the specific skills needed for backcountry travel and exploration: rock climbing, canoeing, backpacking, orienteering, kayaking, and caving. Every distant mountaintop is a new adventure.

Dr. Johan Reinhard is a senior research fellow at the Mountain Institute. In 1997 he set up a portable communications office on a Peruvian mountaintop and transmitted firsthand information about his expedition via his Web site. Using advanced technology and rugged equipment, Dr. Reinhard was able to communicate with the rest of the world, even under the harsh conditions of an extremely high altitude. A sophisticated satellite phone links the mountaintop office to anywhere in the world, and a digital camera and camcorder transmit photographs and videos.

The National Geographic Society, which helped sponsor Dr. Reinhard during the many years of exploration that led to the discovery of the Inca Ice Maiden, maintains information about the Inca Ice Maiden and about Dr. Reinhard's ongoing work on its Web site.

### Find out more:

Dr. Johan Reinhard: [www.reinhard.sympatico.ca](http://www.reinhard.sympatico.ca)

The Mountain Institute: [www.mountain.org](http://www.mountain.org)

The National Geographic Society:  
[www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)





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