

Run time: 102 minutes • Language: English with Spanish subtitles • Unrated
A [Benenson Productions](#) and UTL Productions film
Teaser Trailer [here](#)

THE LOST CITY OF THE MONKEY GOD

**A film chronicling the thrilling modern day expedition which inspired
Douglas Preston's New York Times bestselling book
The Lost City of the Monkey God**

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Artifacts Unearthed in Expedition

Log Line: *The Lost City of the Monkey God* follows explorer Steve Elkins and a team of scientists, filmmakers, journalists, and special forces soldiers as they overcome torrential rains, poisonous snakes and deadly parasites on an expedition to one of the last unexplored places on Earth to search for a legendary lost city.

Short Synopsis: *The Lost City of the Monkey God* follows explorer Steve Elkins and team as they use advanced laser mapping technology to find a 'lost' city hidden in the almost impenetrable Mosquitia Jungle. With the support of the president of Honduras and the Honduran military, they are able to save the site from certain destruction and looting, arrange for a proper excavation of artifacts, and begin to preserve the area for future generations.



Unearthed Jaguar head

Full Synopsis:

In the early 1990s, adventurer Steve Elkins became captivated by the legend of La Ciudad Blanca, or the White City, a great ruin rumored to exist in the interior mountains of the Mosquitia region of Honduras. He spent the following 20 years trying to find it.

In May of 2012, Elkins and filmmaker Bill Benenson engaged a team of scientists from the National Center for Airborne Laser Mapping at the University of Houston to fly a Cessna Skymaster over three areas identified by Elkins in the Mosquitia mountains, to look for La Ciudad Blanca. These targeted areas were among the last scientifically unexplored places on Earth. The plane was equipped with a million-dollar LiDar machine, capable of mapping the terrain under dense, triple-canopy rainforest. LiDar, which stands for Light Detection and Ranging, is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges (variable distances) to the Earth.

In an unnamed valley known as “Target One” (T1), the team discovered a ruined city of about five square kilometers. The images showed what appeared to be a large pyramid, a ball court, ceremonial buildings, house mounds, terracing, irrigation canals, and other features. The T1 valley lies about 275 miles east of Copán, and while the people who built the city were not Maya, they were certainly influenced by this ancient civilization, which existed at the same time as the Maya, and seems to have experienced a similarly rapid collapse.

On February 16th, 2015 after three years of planning, the team’s small A-Star helicopter with British special forces soldiers flew into the valley of T1. The team jumped out in a natural clearing near a river and began setting up camp. Two miles away, Honduran soldiers dropped into a larger clearing for their larger Huey helicopter, and set up a secondary camp.

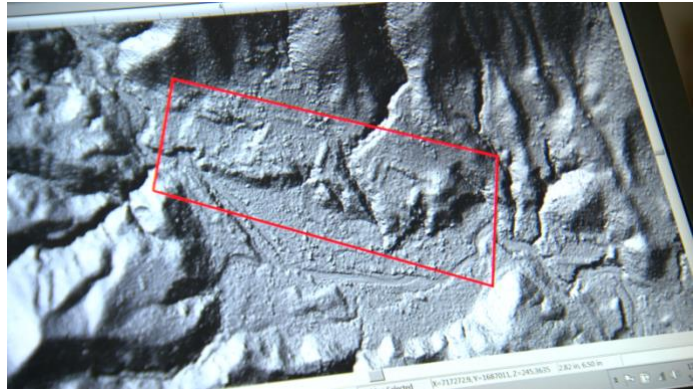
They were followed by a team of archeologists, anthropologists, scientists and journalists, who were ferried in by helicopter from the closest town, Catacamas, to survey and explore T1. The primary landing zone lay a short distance from the site’s central plaza; machete-wielding soldiers cut a trail from the landing zone to the complex. Among the scientists were Dr. Juan Carlos Fernandez Diaz, a senior LiDar engineer from University of Houston; the Mesoamerican archaeologist Dr. Chris Fisher; chief Honduran archaeologist Dr. Oscar Neil Cruz, and Dr. Alicia González, an anthropologist and former senior curator at the Smithsonian.

Three days into the expedition, the crew discovered a cache of 52 carved stone artifacts peeking out from beneath the ground - perhaps a ceremonial offering - which would be guarded around the clock by Honduran military personnel until months later, when an archaeological team commissioned by the government and National Geographic excavated 509 artifacts from the area.

The project continues to have the support of the Honduran government, and the goal of preserving the archaeological sites and the surrounding jungle has become a high priority for Honduras. A new research center and museum has been built just outside of Catacamas, and President Juan Orlando Hernández issued a directive to halt deforestation and continue archaeological and conservation efforts. The land has also been renamed in honor of the indigenous people who live in the surrounding area.

In the 21st century, when all the mysteries of the globe seem to have been settled, it is truly astonishing that a large, unknown city - indeed a civilization - could still be found in the rainforest. The story continues.

Based on the original LiDAR data from 2012, the government of Honduras immediately created the Mosquitia Patrimonial Heritage Preserve to protect the discoveries. Now the government is seeking international cooperation and assistance to study and conserve both the cultural sites and natural patrimony, especially in light of the increasing encroachment of deforestation.



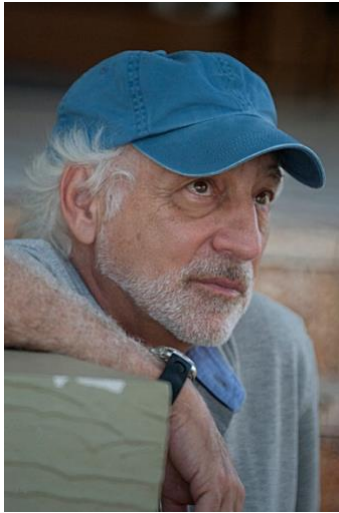
LiDar map of sites

The expedition was a cooperative effort between Benenson Productions, UTL and the government of Honduras under the auspices of the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia (IAAH) with logistical support from the Honduran military.



Uncovering artifacts

Biographies:



Bill Benenson: Producer/Director

Bill Benenson is known for his award-winning documentary *Dirt! The Movie*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009 and was broadcast on PBS/ITVS for the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day. His film *The Hadza: Last of the First*, produced in association with The Nature Conservancy, was screened as part of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. As a result of his work on *The Lost City of the Monkey God*, about the search for a lost Pre-Columbian city in Central America, Bill was awarded the prestigious [Leading Global Thinkers Award](#) from [Foreign Policy](#) magazine. He was the executive producer of "Beasts of No Nation," producer of "Boulevard Nights," and has been involved as a producer or executive producer on dozens of films, including *Patti Cake\$*, *Atomic Homefront* (HBO) and the upcoming *Fantastic Fungi*, *Kiss the Ground* and *Changing of the Gods*.

After graduating from Columbia University, Bill served in the Peace Corps in Brazil, which is where he was inspired to make his first film *Diamond Rivers* (aired on PBS in 1975) about an abandoned diamond region in the interior of the North Eastern state of Bahia. He is a passionate environmentalist, a supporter of The Natural Resources Defense Council, Conservation International, Bioneers, Rainforest Action Network, Defenders of Wildlife, the Union of Concerned Scientists and The Nature Conservancy.



Laurie Benenson: Producer

Laurie Benenson founded [Movieline](#) Magazine, serving as its editor-in-chief for six years. She went on to write for the New York Times Arts and Leisure Section for five years, as a West Coast correspondent on film and television. An ardent environmentalist, she is on the board of Tree People, is a member of the Leadership Council of the Natural Resources Defense Council, and is a strong supporter of RainForest Action Network, Conservation International, the Union of Concerned Scientists, Bioneers, Amazon Conservation Team, Violence Policy Center, and Defenders of Wildlife. She has co-written a script about the life of environmental pioneer Rachel Carson and was the executive producer of the award-winning documentary *Dirt! The Movie*, which premiered at Sundance in 2009. She is an executive producer on the upcoming films *Fantastic Fungi* and *Kiss the Ground*.



Steve Elkins: Project Leader and Co-Producer

Steve has worked in television for 30 years as a cinematographer, editor, and producer. While filming in Honduras in 1994, Steve became fascinated with the Honduran Mosquitia and its lost city legends. In 2012, after reading about the advent of airborne LIDAR as a tool for unveiling archaeological ruins, he formed UTL (Under the LiDar) with colleagues to explore the Mosquitia jungle using LiDar, which resulted in the discovery of two “lost cities”. Three years later, Steve and his partner Bill Benenson organized a multi-disciplinary scientific ground expedition to one of the sites. The results and ongoing work have garnered worldwide media headlines including feature articles in the *New Yorker*, *National Geographic*, an episode of *National Geographic Explorer*, and a *New York Times*

bestseller non-fiction book, “*The Lost City of the Monkey God*”. He was also honored as one of 100 Leading Global Thinkers by *Foreign Policy Magazine*.

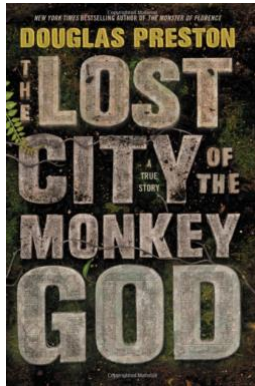
Steve continues to help lead the next phase of the project he helped start. In addition to the current archaeological work, a mission to survey the flora and fauna of the surrounding jungle was initiated in 2016. The results have shown that the Mosquitia jungle is one of the last places of its kind regarding biodiversity and is in dire need of conservation. Major cooperative efforts between the government and private entities are now underway to protect the cultural and natural patrimony of the Mosquitia well as promote continuing scientific research.



Douglas Preston is the best-selling author of *The Lost City of the Monkey God*, published in 2017 from Grand Central Publishing and wrote the narration in the documentary. The book itself grew out of his lifelong interest in archaeology and his joining the expedition put together by Steve Elkins and Bill Benenson in 2012 to try to find the site of a fabled lost city in the Mosquitia jungle in Honduras using LiDar technology. That first foray in to the Honduran jungle led to the publishing of an extensive article in the *New Yorker*: [The El Dorado Machine](#).

Preston is a former editor at the American Museum of Natural History and archaeology correspondent for the *New Yorker* magazine. In the course of his journalistic profession Preston has explored lost temples in the jungles of Cambodia, been the first to enter a tomb in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt, and ridden on horseback across thousands of miles of the American Southwest-which earned him membership in the elite "Long Riders Guild."

In 2000, Preston moved with his family to Florence, Italy, to write a murder mystery set in Tuscany. Instead of writing the novel, he became fascinated by the story of a serial killer named *il Mostro di Firenze*, the Monster of Florence. He teamed up with an Italian journalist, Mario Spezi, who was an expert on the case. In 2008 they published a nonfiction book, *The Monster of Florence*, which was a huge bestseller, spending four months on the *New York Times* list. The book won journalism awards in both Italy and the United States and is currently in development as a film. The same Italian prosecutor who charged Preston with crimes in the Monster case, Giuliano Mignini, was the prosecutor who accused Amanda Knox of murder in 2007 in Perugia. Preston became one of Knox's defenders. In 2009, Preston argued on *48 Hours* on CBS that the case against Knox was "based on lies, superstition, and crazy conspiracy theories." He appeared on numerous television shows and networks defending Knox and explaining the Italian legal system including *Today*, *CNN* and *FOX* and wrote about the case in a Kindle Single, *Trial by Fury: Internet Savagery and the Amanda Knox Case* and in *The Forgotten Killer: Rudy Guede and the Murder of Meredith Kercher*. Full bio [HERE](#).



About *The Lost City of the Monkey God* book by Douglas Preston

NAMED A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK OF 2017

#1 New York Times and #1 Wall Street Journal bestseller!

A Best Book of 2017 from the Boston Globe

One of the 12 Best Books of the Year from National Geographic

A five-hundred-year-old legend. An ancient curse. A stunning medical mystery. And a pioneering journey into the unknown heart of the world's densest jungle.

Since the days of conquistador Hernán Cortés, rumors have circulated about a lost city of immense wealth hidden somewhere in the Honduran interior, called the White City or the Lost City of the Monkey God. Indigenous tribes speak of ancestors who fled there to escape the Spanish invaders, and they warn that anyone who enters this sacred city will fall ill and die. In 1940, swashbuckling journalist Theodore Morde returned from the rainforest with hundreds of artifacts and an electrifying story of having found the Lost City of the Monkey God-but then committed suicide without revealing its location.

Three quarters of a century later, bestselling author Doug Preston joined a team of scientists on a groundbreaking new quest. In 2012 he climbed aboard a rickety, single-engine plane carrying the machine that would change everything: LiDAR, a highly advanced, classified technology that could map the terrain under the densest rainforest canopy. In an unexplored valley ringed by steep mountains, that flight revealed the unmistakable image of a sprawling metropolis, tantalizing evidence of not just an undiscovered city but an enigmatic, lost civilization.

Venturing into this raw, treacherous, but breathtakingly beautiful wilderness to confirm the discovery, Preston and the team battled torrential rains, quickmud, disease-carrying insects, jaguars, and deadly snakes. But it wasn't until they returned that tragedy struck: Preston and others found they had contracted in the ruins a horrifying, sometimes lethal-and incurable-disease.

Suspenseful and shocking, filled with colorful history, hair-raising adventure, and dramatic twists of fortune, *THE LOST CITY OF THE MONKEY GOD* is the absolutely true, eyewitness account of one of the great discoveries of the twenty-first century.

Genre: Nonfiction / History / Americas (north, Central, South, West Indies)

Published January 3rd 2017 by Grand Central Publishing; Price: \$33.99 / \$44.49 (CDN)

Page Count: 448 ISBN-13: 978145556941



Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández examines unearthened artifact with archaeologist Dr. Chris Fisher

Quotes from the film:

Producer/director Bill Benenson: “From the moment we first saw our aerial LiDAR images of an unknown ruin within the Honduran rain forest in 2012 to 2015 when we went into the undisturbed jungle by helicopter and ‘ground-truthed’ our digital discoveries, this has been one of the most amazing journeys of my life. Hopefully, it will help the Honduran people preserve this site and protect the jungle for years to come.”

“Douglas Preston was both a journalist and an intrinsic member of the production team in its 2012 LiDAR mission flying out from Roatan Island, Honduras. Doug also joined the 2105 ground truthing expedition into the Mosquitia jungle itself. His 2017 international bestseller The Lost City of the Monkey God detailed the work, achievements and setbacks that occurred throughout the six years of discovery and production and brilliantly explained the 500 year history of previous attempts to find Ciudad Blanca. His journalistic perspective was a constant throughout the six year journey to bring this film to fruition

Project leader and co-director Steve Elkins: “It was a perfect expedition, 20 years in the making, that happened exactly as I hoped it would. Organizing this project and assembling the team has been a monumental effort but one I would gladly do again. This is the culmination of personal research as well as that of many others before me. It is my hope that by bringing attention to the cultural and natural wonders of the Mosquitia, global support will allow continued study as well as protection of this precious environment. Unfortunately we have noticed rapid deforestation occurring over the last several years.”

Expedition Media Coverage:



To see the *CBS Sunday Morning* feature on the expedition, click [HERE](#).

THE
NEW YORKER

For the latest *New Yorker* article and video on the expedition, click [HERE](#).



To read about the expedition in *National Geographic*, click [HERE](#).

the Atlantic

To read about the expedition in *The Atlantic*, click [HERE](#).

Bill Benenson Filmography

The Lost City of the Monkey God (2018; Producer / Co-Director)
The Soil Story (2018 – In Production) (Producer / Director)
Beasts of No Nation (2015; Executive Producer)
The Hadza: Last of the First (2014; Producer/Director)
Who Bombed Judi Bari? (2012; Co-Producer)
Suburban Kings (2011; Executive Producer)
Dirt! The Movie (2009; Producer/Director)
Feathered Fan and Silken Ribbon (2009; Executive Producer)
Trucker (2008; Executive Producer)
Diminished Capacity (2008; Executive Producer)
Watching the Detectives (2007; Executive Producer)
Mister Johnson (1990; Executive Producer)
A Walk on the Moon (1987; Executive Producer)
The Lightship (1985; Producer)
Under the Volcano (1984; Development Executive)
Boulevard Nights (1978; Producer)
Pumping Iron (1977; Development Executive)
The Marginal Way (1973; Producer/Director)
Diamond Rivers (1970; Producer/Director)
Easter Island Rises (1970; Producer/Director)

The Lost City of the Monkey God Credits:

Director:	Bill Benenson
Producers:	Bill Benenson, Laurie Benenson
Executive Producers:	Wendi Weger, Garry Spire, Sparky Greene
Expedition Leader/Co-Producer:	Steve Elkins
Co-Producers:	Terry Dawson, Tom Weinberg
Director of Photography:	Lucian Read
Editor:	Sam Lee
Music:	Gingger Shankar
Narration Written by:	Doug Preston and Jenny Hollowell
Publicity:	Maggie Begley Communications
Digital Marketing	Kluge Interactive
Photo Credit:	Dave Yoder