

Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya

National Curriculum Objectives:

English Year 5 & Year 6: Retrieve, record and present information from non-fiction.
[More resources with this objective.](#)

Differentiation for Challenge Activity:

Section A Match the words from the text to their meanings.

Section B Tick the correct answer.

Section C Decide whether the statements are true or false. Correct the false statements.

Section D Fill in a table using information from the text.

Did you like this resource? Don't forget to review it on our website.

Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya

Visit the Ancient Maya

Excavations of the Mexican and Guatemalan jungle have revealed the intriguing remains of the lost cities of Ancient Maya which seemed to be abandoned at the height of their power. The mysterious ruins left behind by the Ancient Maya civilisation are amongst the most fascinating historical sites to be found on Earth. A visit to one of these mystical sites offers lots for both the history expert and the interested sightseer alike. So, why not plan that special trip? Use our travel guide to help you decide which of these amazing places you should visit first.



D: (Q8) Why do you think the title refers to the 'Lost Cities of Ancient Maya'? Many of these sites have recently been discovered; there is still much more to discover in these areas; the areas are hidden and well preserved.

E: (Q1) How do the pictures help the reader? They show the reader what each site looks like and helps them to make a decision on which one to visit.

E: (Q2) In which countries can you find many of the Ancient Maya sites? Mexico and Guatemala

E: (Q3) The text refers to 'intriguing remains'. What does the word 'intriguing' mean in this context? Something which is interesting or unusual which makes people curious.

M: (Q21) What does the word civilisation mean in this context? A group of people or human society which have their own culture.

D: (Q9) Summarise the main ideas in the first section 'Visit the Ancient Maya'. The Ancient Maya have many interesting sites, which can be found in Mexico and Guatemala and are great places to visit.

D: (Q10) What is the purpose of this travel guide? To inform readers about potential Maya sites they could make a visit to on their holidays.

M: (Q22) Who would you recommend this text to and why? A holiday maker who is intending on making a visit to Mexico, or someone who is interested in the Ancient Maya Civilisation.

Chichen Itza



The most popular and well-known of all Maya sites is Chichen Itza. Dating from the 6th Century, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is located in the depths of the Yucatan Peninsula in Southern Mexico. It has recently been named one of the New Seven Wonders of the World and is one of Mexico's most famous tourist destinations. This may be because the site is just a two-hour bus ride from the popular tourist resort of Cancun and can receive over one million visitors per year.

Chichen Itza is actually comprised of many buildings, including the El Caracol observatory temple, the Great Ball Court and the Temple of the Warriors. However, the most recognisable structure is the huge stepped pyramid which is known as El Castillo or 'the castle'. This dominates the northern skyline and is approximately 30 metres high and 55 metres wide!

Palenque

If you want to avoid the busy Chichen Itza, then why not try the breath-taking jungle ruins of Palenque. This is one of the best examples of Ancient Maya architecture in Mexico. The picturesque and atmospheric site is located in the area now known as Chiapas, Mexico, which is 128 kilometres south of Ciudad del Carmen. It is a much smaller site than Chichen Itza, but has some of the finest Maya sculptures and carvings that have ever been discovered. The site was swallowed by the surrounding jungle, but was excavated and restored, so it has now become a world-famous archaeological site. It is said that less than 10% of the total area of the city has actually been uncovered, which means there are more than 1000 structures still hidden. The most famous structure in Palenque is the Temple of Inscriptions which is so called due to the many symbols found preserved in the temple's structure.

E: (Q4) Which is the most popular and well-known of the Ancient Maya Sites? Chichen Itza

E: (Q5) From reading the section 'Chichen Itza', give three reasons why you think it has so many visitors. It is the most well-known, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site; it was named as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World; it is near to the tourist resort of Cancun.

D: (Q11) The text describes Palenque as 'atmospheric'. What does this word mean in this context? Having a certain feeling or 'atmosphere,' in this case mysterious.

S: (Q14) The Palenque jungle ruins are described as 'breath-taking'. How does this word help to create a picture in the reader's mind? It makes the reader feel it is a beautiful place which will literally take their breath away.

Tikal



Tikal is one of the most interesting and important Ancient Maya sites to visit. It is located in the far north of Guatemala, 300 kilometres north of Guatemala City. It was once a bustling city, home to over 60,000 inhabitants and became one of the most powerful kingdoms in Ancient Maya.

Despite being much quieter than both Chichen Itza and Palenque, it is still visited by many visitors throughout the year. It is also a smaller site than other more popular destinations, but Tikal has some of the finest sculptures and carvings that have ever been discovered.

The site features many temples and pyramid structures, including the famous Lost World Pyramid. The current site covers over 16 square kilometres of land, with almost 3000 structures present there. However, it is estimated that only a small percentage of the site has been excavated, even after years of archaeological digging.

Like Palenque, Tikal is surrounded by dense jungle, including trees such as the Giant Kapok Tree. The money raised by visits to the site help to protect the local rainforest.

Naachtun

Another authentic Ancient Maya site to be found in the far northern region of Guatemala is Naachtun, which is just 1 kilometre south of the Mexican border. Discovered in 1922 by an archaeologist called Morley, Naachtun is known as the 'Forgotten Mayan City', and it remains one of the most remote and least-visited sites in the area.

It was located at the centre of a very powerful kingdom, between two huge Maya cities: Tikal and Calakmul. This meant that it held a strategic position and was often vulnerable during wartime. The site was influenced by both sides which can be seen in the architecture within the area.

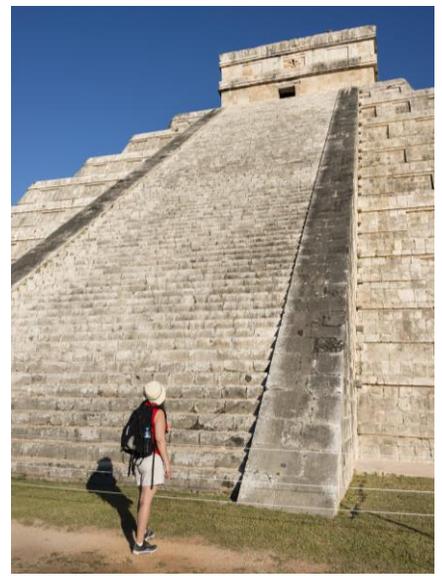
D: (Q12) Make a list of the reasons why a visitor may choose Tikal as a place to visit. It was once a huge city; it is quieter than Chichen Itza and Palenque; it has the first sculptures and carvings ever discovered.

E: (Q6) Why does Naachtun feature in many different architecture styles? It was influenced by two huge Maya cities: Tikal and Calakmul.

M: (Q23) Naachtun is described as holding a 'strategic position'. Explain what this means. It held an important position between two large cities and both wanted to claim it for their own.

Making your Visit

Tickets will need to be purchased prior to making a visit to any of these sites, as well as transport arrangements. The climate is hot, humid and sunny in these areas and so you will need to dress lightly. Remember, you will be climbing up many steep steps and monuments, so make sure you wear comfortable footwear. In some locations shade can be found due to the canopy provided by the trees, but not always. Last of all, don't forget to pack your camera as you will want to take lots of photographs!



E: (Q7) What is the climate in these locations? Hot, humid and sunny.

D: (Q13) Which words and phrases does the writer use to make the reader believe Ancient Maya sites are worth visiting? Intriguing, mysterious ruins; most fascinating historical sites; amazing places; famous tourist destination; breath-taking jungle ruins.

S: (Q15) Create a list of questions which will help your understanding of Ancient Maya. Personal response.

S: (Q16) Which of the four sites mentioned would you like to make a visit to and why? Personal response. Answers must make reference to the text.

S: (Q17) What is the purpose of the final section 'Making Your Visit'? To inform people of what they need to bring with them and prepare before they make their visit.

S: (Q18) Find three examples of facts from the text. Personal response

S: (Q19) Find three examples of opinions from the text. Personal response

S: (Q20) Why do you think that the writer suggests you will want to take lots of photographs? The experience will be a once in a lifetime and you will want to keep memories of your visit.

M: (Q24) Do you think this is an effective travel guide? Explain your answer. Personal response. Answers must refer to the text.

M: (Q25) Which words and phrases, in regards to the Ancient Maya, capture your interest and imagination? Personal response. Answers must refer to the text.

M: (Q26) How does a travel guide like this compare to an information text? A travel guide aims to persuade the reader to visit a place, whereas an information text simply aims to inform.

M: (Q27) Do you think the text is mostly fact or opinion? Explain your answer. Personal response. Answers must make reference to the text.

Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya

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The site features many temples and pyramid structures, including the famous Lost World Pyramid. The current site covers over 16 square kilometres of land, with almost 3000 structures present there. However, it is estimated that only a small percentage of the site has been excavated, even after years of archaeological digging.

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Naachtun

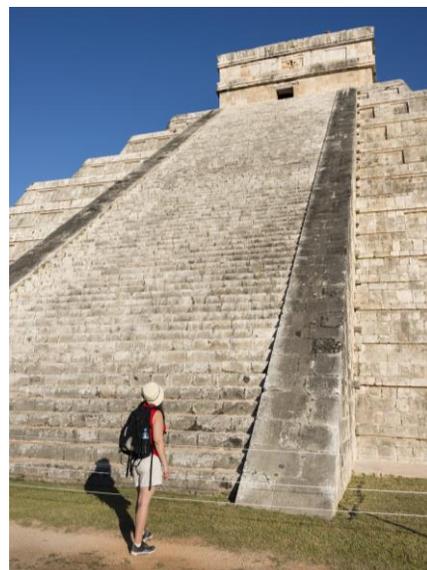
Another authentic Ancient Maya site to be found in the far northern region of Guatemala is Naachtun, which is just 1 kilometre south of the Mexican border. Discovered in 1922 by an archaeologist called Morley, Naachtun is known as the 'Forgotten Mayan City', and it remains one of the most remote and least-visited sites in the area.

It was located at the centre of a very powerful kingdom, between two huge Maya cities: Tikal and Calakmul. This meant that it held a strategic position and was often vulnerable during wartime. The site was influenced by both sides which can be seen in the architecture within the area.

Making your Visit

Tickets will need to be purchased prior to making a visit to any of these sites, as well as transport arrangements. The climate is hot, humid and sunny in these areas and so you will need to dress lightly. Remember, you will be climbing up many steep steps and monuments, so make sure you wear comfortable footwear. In some locations shade can be found due to the canopy provided by the trees, but not always.

Last of all, don't forget to pack your camera as you will want to take lots of photographs!



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Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya – Y6/P7/G5 – Text

Like this? Find more differentiated Mayan resources [here](https://www.classroomsecrets.com).

Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya – Comprehension

Section A

1. How do the pictures help the reader?

2. In which countries can you find many of the Ancient Maya sites?

3. The text refers to 'intriguing remains'. What does the word 'intriguing' mean in this context?

4. Which is the most popular and well-known of the Ancient Maya Sites?

5. From reading the section 'Chichen Itza', give three reasons why you think it has so many visitors.

6. Why does Naachtun feature in many different architecture styles?

7. What is the climate in these locations?

Section B

8. Why do you think the title refers to the 'Lost Cities of Ancient Maya'?

9. Summarise the main ideas in the first section 'Visit the Ancient Maya'.

10. What is the purpose of this travel guide?

11. The text describes Palengue as 'atmospheric'. What does this word mean in this context?

12. Make a list of the reasons why a visitor may choose Tikal as a place to visit.

13. Which words and phrases does the writer use to make the reader believe Ancient Maya sites are worth visiting?

Section C

14. The Palenque jungle ruins are describes as 'breath-taking'. How does this word help to create a picture in the reader's mind?

15. Create a list of questions which will help your understanding of Ancient Maya.

16. Which of the four sites mentioned would you like to make a visit to and why?

17. What is the purpose of the final section 'Making Your Visit'?

18. Find three examples of facts from the text.

19. Find three examples of opinions from the text.

20. Why do you think that the writer suggests you will want to take lots of photographs?

Section D

21. What does the word civilisation mean in this context?

22. Who would you recommend this text to and why?

23. Naachtum is described as holding a 'strategic position'. Explain what this means

24. Do you think this is an effective travel guide? Explain your answer.

25. Which words and phrases, in regards to the Ancient Maya, capture your interest and imagination?

26. How does a travel guide like this compare to an information text?

27. Do you think the text is mostly fact or opinion? Explain your answer.

Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya – Challenge Activity

Section A

Match each word from the text to its meaning.

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. excavate | a. a person or animal that lives in or occupies a place |
| 2. intriguing | b. the uppermost layer of a forest; something that hangs over and shades something else |
| 3. el castillo | c. something fascinating that provokes one's curiosity or interest |
| 4. inscriptions | d. susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm |
| 5. inhabitants | e. the castle |
| 6. remote | f. words engraved or etched, as on a monument or book |
| 7. vulnerable | g. remove earth carefully from an area in order to find buried remains |
| 8. canopy | h. a place situated far from the main centres of a population |

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Section B

Tick the correct answer.

Chichen Itza dates as far back as what century?

3 rd century	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 th century	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 th century	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 th century	<input type="checkbox"/>
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How much of Palenque is estimated to have been uncovered?

>10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	100%	<input type="checkbox"/>
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What site has recently been named one of the New Seven Wonders of the World?

Palenque	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chichen Itza	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tikal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Naachtun	<input type="checkbox"/>
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How much land does the current site at Tikal cover?

15km ²	<input type="checkbox"/>	16km ²	<input type="checkbox"/>	>16km ²	<input type="checkbox"/>	>16km	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Naachtun's strategic position meant it was what during wartime?

powerful	<input type="checkbox"/>	vulnerable	<input type="checkbox"/>	imposing	<input type="checkbox"/>	concealed	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya – Challenge Activity

Section C

Decide whether the following statements are true or false. Correct the false statements below.

Statement	True	False
Trees such as the Giant Kapok Tree can be found surrounding some Ancient Mayan sites in Guatemala and Mexico.		
Chichen Itza is a popular destination because it is relatively unknown and is usually quiet for tourists.		
Archaeologists have discovered thousands of structures since fully uncovering Palenque.		
Naachtun held a strategic position because it was located between Tikal and Calakmul; two huge Maya cities.		
Ancient Maya sites are free for the public to view, and most are easy for the public to access by foot.		

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Section D

Fill in the table with information from the text.

	Country	Archaeological Features	Interesting fact
Chichen Itza			
Palenque			
Tikal			
Naachtun			

Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya – Challenge Activity

Section A

Match each word from the text to its meaning.

- | | |
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| 3. el castillo | c. something fascinating that provokes one's curiosity or interest |
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| 7. vulnerable | g. remove earth carefully from an area in order to find buried remains |
| 8. canopy | h. a place situated far from the main centres of a population |

1g

2c

3e

4f

5a

6h

7d

8b

Section B

Tick the correct answer.

Chichen Itza dates as far back as what century?

3rd century

4th century

5th century

6th century



How much of Palenque is estimated to have been uncovered?

>10%

10%

<10%



100%

What site has recently been named one of the New Seven Wonders of the World?

Palenque

Chichen Itza



Tikal

Naachtun

How much land does the current site at Tikal cover?

15km²

16km²

>16km²



>16km

Naachtun's strategic position meant it was what during wartime?

powerful

vulnerable



imposing

concealed

Visit the Lost Cities of Ancient Maya – Challenge Activity

Section C

Decide whether the following statements are true or false. Correct the false statements below.

Statement	True	False
Trees such as the Giant Kapok Tree can be found surrounding some Ancient Mayan sites in Guatemala and Mexico.	✓	
Chichen Itza is a popular destination because it is relatively unknown and is usually quiet for tourists.		✓
Archaeologists have discovered thousands of structures since fully uncovering Palenque.		✓
Naachtun held a strategic position because it was located between Tikal and Calakmul; two huge Maya cities.	✓	
Ancient Maya sites are free for the public to view, and most are easy for the public to access by foot.		✓

Chichen Itza is one of Mexico's most famous tourist destinations and can receive over one million visitors per year.
It is said that less than 10% of Palenque has been uncovered and more than 1000 structures are still hidden.
Tickets are required to visit Ancient Maya sites, and many require long hikes up steep steps.

Section D

Fill in the table with information from the text.

	Country	Archaeological Features	Interesting fact (Answers may vary)
Chichen Itza	Mexico	Several buildings	UNESCO World Heritage Site
Palenque	Mexico	Sculptures and carvings	Less than 10% has been uncovered
Tikal	Guatemala	Temples, sculptures, carvings	Surrounded by dense jungle
Naachtun	Guatemala	Forgotten Mayan City	Held a strategic position

Whole Class Guided Reading – Teaching Guide

- The text is for the children to read. Give each pair a copy of the text (without questions) to read individually or as a whole class. This text has been aimed at Year 6 (Wales)/Primary 7 (Scotland)/Grade 5 (Australia).
- The teacher should use the teacher version. It shows you where to pause after each section and provides questions for you to ask. The colours refer to our levels so that you can direct specific questions at specific students in terms of difficulty (their version does not have these colours to show them which is which). The questions are also numbered in the order they appear on the comprehension sheet.
 - Beginner – (Red)
 - Easy – (Blue)
 - Tricky – (Orange)
 - Expert – (Green)
- The children can record their answers to the questions at the end of the shared read/discussion or in a different session by using the comprehension sheet. The questions have been re-grouped into abilities so that you can assign sections to specific children.
 - Section A – Beginner
 - Section B – Easy
 - Section C – Tricky
 - Section D – Expert