

The Mayan Empire

THE MAYANS BUILT CITIES DEEP IN THE FORESTS OF CENTRAL AMERICA. THEN, SUDDENLY, THEY LEFT. NOBODY KNOWS WHY.

The Mayan people lived in the south of Mexico and parts of Central America. Their empire started about 2600 BCE and finished around 800 CE. It was about 250,000 square kilometers in size. That's not very big. In fact, it's about as big as Great Britain. They built many wonderful cities, and we can still see many of these today. The most famous is Chichén Itzá.

They bought and sold things with their neighbors. They were very good at this and made a lot of money. They were good doctors, too. Mayan doctors were called shamans, and they used plants to make medicines. There were even some Mayan dentists.

Chichén Itzá



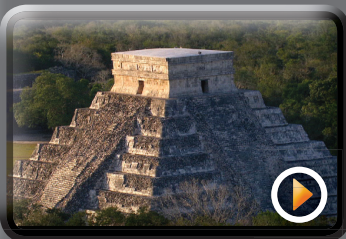
The Mayans were very **religious** people. They believed in many gods, not just one. There were gods of the wind, of the rain, and of the sun. They even had a god of chocolate called *Ixcacao*. They built special buildings, temples, where they talked to their gods.



A Mayan temple

So what happened to the Mayans? Maybe they got sick and died. Maybe there was a terrible war. It is possible that they moved or died because they didn't have any food. Another answer could be the weather. Maybe it got too cold or too wet to live in their cities. But nobody knows for sure.

Video Quest



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Watch this video to learn about the Mayan city of Chichén Itzá. How many steps are there?

