

Mayan Civilisation

Key Facts

- The golden age of Maya was between 250 and 900 AD. At its peak, the civilisation was made up of 40 great cities and almost 2 million people.
- The Mayans became expert mathematicians, astronomers and architects.
- In 900AD, many of the significant Maya settlements were abandoned—no one is sure why. It is possible that changes in climate or over population made the cities uninhabitable.
- The Mayans still live in the same areas of Central America today and carry on some of the same traditions.
- They worshipped different nature gods, including gods of the Sun, the Moon, rain and corn. The rulers of Maya society were the kings, or holy lords, who claimed to be related to gods. They performed many rituals, including human sacrifice, to pay respect to their gods.
- Each city-state was ruled by an Ajaw (king) and became a centre for trade, religious worship and entertainment. The population in Maya's largest settlements was about 60,000, making them some of the most populated places in the world at the time. While the average Maya lived in small stone or thatched homes, the palaces and temples in the cities were decorated with beautiful murals and sculptures.
- The Maya people built sewer systems and there was even running water in the wealthiest people's homes.

Vocabulary

BC/BCE	Before Christ/Before the Common Era
AD	Anno Domini—after the birth of Jesus
archaeologists	People who study the past, examining remains and artefacts
abandoned	Left for a long time
agriculture	Farming and keeping animals
ceremony	A formal event where special things are done
overpopulation	Too many people
uninhabitable	Cannot be lived in
traditions	Customs that have existed for a long time

History

Knowledge Organiser



Chronology

1800 BC	Earliest Maya settlements are built
1100 BC	Hunter gatherers settle on the Pacific coast
800 BC	Instead of foraging, maize farming and trade between villages begins
700 BC	Maya writing begins to develop
40 BC	The first Mayan calendars are carved into stone
100BC	First Maya pyramids are built
200 AD	The Mayans start moving from smaller villages to larger cities
600 AD	Caracol became the most important Maya city
638 AD	Pakal the Great (King of Palenque) dies
750 AD	Maya civilisation a major power in the region
800 AD	Chichen-Itza is built
900 AD	Cities like Tikal, Copán and Palenque are abandoned
1502 AD	First contact with Europe

Useful links and sources

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-americas/maya>

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/mayans/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zq6svcw/articles/zqv6msg>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zq6svcw>