

Kids & Schools Tools

Chichén Itzá, Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico

Chichén Itzá is one of the 21 finalist candidates in the campaign to choose the New 7 Wonders of the World. The winners of this unique vote will be announced on July 7, 2007 – 07.07.07 and will become part of history. They will be recognized as monuments that have truly global meaning—they are part of our common cultural heritage. We can all be proud of the 21 finalists, since each of them is a unique monument that belongs to its particular culture and country in a very special way.

The Mayan name "Chich'en Itza" means "at the mouth of the well of the *Itza* (people)." This famous temple city was the political and economic center of Mayan civilization. The pyramid of Kukulcan itself was the last, and arguably the greatest, of all Mayan temples.

Since the Yucatán Peninsula has no rivers, the three natural sinkholes (*cenotes*) at Chichén Itzá made it a good place for a city, providing plenty of water all year. Two of these *cenotes* still exist—the most famous is the "*Cenote of Sacrifice*," sacred to the Maya rain god Chaac. Offerings of jade, pottery and incense were thrown into the well, and occasionally, during times of bad drought, a human sacrifice. However, there is no proof to the legend that many beautiful, young women were sacrificed.

About 987, a Toltec king named Quetzalcóatl (there is a wonderful legend about him, who became the Maya plumed serpent god Kukulcan) arrived with an army from central Mexico, and, with local Mayan allies, made Chichén Itzá his capital. The art and architecture from this period are a mix of Maya and Toltec styles, such as the "Temple of the Warriors," which features an altar statue known as a *chac mool*.

In the center of Chichén Itzá is the Temple of Kukulcan, often called "*El Castillo*" (the castle). It is a step pyramid, with square terraces and staircases up each of the four sides to the temple on top. Great sculptures of plumed serpents run down the northern staircase and, because of how the shadows fall, seem to move on the spring and fall equinoxes. Inside, visitors can enter an older pyramid and climb up to the high room with King Kukulcan's stone Jaguar Throne, painted red with jade-green spots.

There is also a large court at Chichén Itzá for playing a game called "*pok ta pok*," which we think involved throwing a ball through a ring on the wall seven meters (around 23 ft) above the ground. The captain of the team that first scored was beheaded as a sacrifice to the gods and thought to rise directly to heaven.

In 1221, a revolt and civil war broke out and the wooden roofs of the great market and the Temple of the Warriors were burnt at that time. Chichén Itzá lost power, as rulership over Yucatán shifted to Mayapan.

Chichén Itzá symbolizes Worship & Knowledge!



If you want to find out more about the exciting campaign to name the New 7 Wonders of the World, please go to the New7Wonders website at www.new7wonders.com.

07.07.07

Official Declaration of the New 7 Wonders of the World

... be part of the making of history!

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