

# Chichén Itzá



MAYAN  
PENINSULA

THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL GUIDE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chichen Itza was a cosmopolitan city, with great openness and interaction with foreign cultures, which contributed to its development and made it different from other Classic Mayan cities.

This place represents the most complete and spectacular example of the combination of Mayan and Toltec cultures that flourished and reached a remarkable extension under the influence of the "colonizers" from Tula.

## LOCATION OF CHICHEN ITZA

Chichen Itza is located in the State of Yucatan in Mexico, 120 km southeast of its capital Merida, and 200 km southwest to the city of Cancún.



## HOUSING PERIODS

The most important housing period of Chichen Itza has been divided into three; one corresponding from the years 550 to 800 which corresponds to a stage of pure Mayas; another from 800 to 1000 known as transitional, where the settlers from central Mexico arrived and brewed a new culture with the Maya, now called Mayan-Toltec; and the last one from 1050 to 1300 corresponding to the decline of the city.

## ARCHITECTURAL AND STYLISTIC ASPECTS

The archaeological sources and the historical tradition, offer interesting indications for the study of the architectural and stylistic aspects of this Yucatecan City, characterized by the evident mixture of two different cultures.

In Chichen Itza, numerous decorative elements, especially in the form of sculptures and stone bas-reliefs, testify the strong presence of the cult of Quetzalcoatl, known as Kukulcan to the Mayas.



## KUKULKAN, THE NEW MAYAN GOD

It was probably the Toltecs who superimposed the anthropozoomorphic figure of this ancient and mysterious divinity, legacy of the Teotihuacan civilization, its cultural hero Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, the mythical king of the legendary city of Tula, identified by so many archaeologists with the city of modest dimensions brought to light in the state of Hidalgo. Quetzalcoatl, after many years of reign over the city of Tula and its inhabitants, was dethroned by his evil brother Tezcatlipocatl, an event that according to sources occurred in the year 987.



Different traditions are intertwined and superimposed on the fate of this civilizing hero, after his expulsion from Tula: according to one of them, he emigrated eastward, with a group of followers to the territory of Yucatan, which he probably reached by sea. This is consistent with Yucatecan documents from the colonial era, which narrate the arrival to Chichen Itza of a character of noble lineage, cultured and refined, which the Maya gave the name of Kukulcan, which in Yucatec means precisely "snake-quetzal", or more simply "Feathered Serpent".

No doubt he brought to Chichen Itza much knowledge, especially in the field of arts and medicine, as well as the culture of his hometown, whose assimilation by local people must have given great impetus and prosperity to the city.

Many historians have interpreted oral tradition and colonial sources as the "fictionalized" reflection of events actually occurring: the "invaders" of Chichen Itza were probably exiled from Toltec lineage, expelled from Tula. Since the end of the tenth century, Chichen Itza assumed the role of the guiding city of Yucatan; its architecture represents a hybrid between the elements inherited from the Classic Maya known as Puuc style and new Toltec contributions.

## HUMAN SACRIFICES IN CHICHEN ITZA

What inevitably surprises and impresses those who stop to visit the vestiges of this prestigious archaeological zone are aspects linked to human sacrifices; they were always practiced in Yucatan and other Mayan regions, but the Toltecs further accentuated these rituals as seen in the altar of skulls, also known as the Tzompantli, where the heads of the decapitated victims were nailed.



## THE ONE OF A KIND SACRED CENOTE

At Chichen Itza, the worship of the Sacred Cenote remained alive until the time of the conquest. Victims were thrown in this murky and deep well to please the god of Rain Chac.

The term "Cenote" adopted by the Spaniards is actually a deformation of the Yucatec Mayan word ts'onot, which was used to indicate the circular natural wells caused by the sinking of the calcareous strata, a typical karstic phenomenon.

In many places, the cenotes were used as wells to sacrifice human victims and were considered an entrance to Xibalba, the kingdom of the afterlife.

It was an important Mayan ceremonial center at what is known as the classical period, which is usually established between the 5th and 10th centuries, and even after the Spaniards arrived in Mexico.

## HISTORY OF CHICHEN ITZA

The History of Chichen Itza reflects a glorious past, typical of a ceremonial center where most of the life of a civilization took a decisive course.

The archaeological site of Chichen Itza was a Mayan city from the period between the years 525, when it was founded, and 1,200, when they fell into a rapid decline and Mayapan became the new Capital.

The name Chichen Itza means "By the well of the Itzá people" in reference to the Sacred Cenote that is in the area.

The pre-Hispanic city of Chichen Itza was the most important capital of the Mayan area at the end of the Classic period and the beginnings of the Postclassic period.

Towards the end of the 10th century, the city was invaded by a predominant warrior tribe: the Toltecs. This last invasion brought with it a new series of cultural elements, highlighting the repre-

sentation of the serpent-god Kukulcan. By 1250, the city was abandoned for reasons not entirely determined.

So great was the power of this city that centuries after its decline, it was still a place of pilgrimage, and even around 1540, when Francisco de Montejo, the founder of Mérida, thought to raise the capital there.

Chichen Itza reached an area of 25 km<sup>2</sup>; the religious, cultural and administrative center covered about 6 km<sup>2</sup>. Within a short distance of it, the elite lived in palace-like buildings, carefully decorated and painted in bright colors. Around these, in green fields, lived between 50 thousand and 100 thousand people in palm roof palapas.

The Sacred Cenote Chenku (Cenote of sacrifices), was the heart

of the religious activities, not only of the city of Chichen Itza but of the entire Mayan zone. It was a cult of the god of rain, Chaac.

Objects of gold, jade, copper, cloth, and basketry have been extracted from its muddy bottom, which were apparently thrown off as ceremonial offerings.

The Sacred Cenote Chenuk is almost circular, with an average of 60 m in diameter. The surface of the water is 22 m from the upper shore and has just over 13 m of depth in the central part, where the bottom is muddy. It contains a volume of water of approximately 23,000 cubic meters.

There is evidence of an almost uninterrupted occupation in the current area of the archaeological site of Chichen Itza, especially in the

period called Late Preclassic (400 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.) and until the arrival of the Spaniards.

If so, we would refer to a story that oscillates between 500 B.C.E. up to 1,500 C.E.

The earliest periods are still poorly documented, and the evidence is based solely on ceramic materials, without having identified or excavated a housing structure or any architectural construction.

The earliest evidence of architectural construction on the site corresponds to the Late Classic period, which according to the traditional nomenclature for Northern Yucatan, occurred between the years 600 and 800.

The settlement for this period, according to the available data, extends over a large part of the

protected area and consists mainly of large masonry terraces. Only one building has been dated so far with certainty for this period: the Sub-structure of "Los Estucos", although the earliest phases of the Edificio de las Monjas (The Nunnery Building) belong with great certainty to this time, and several buildings of the late classic may be covered by later structures.

In any case, during the Late Classic, it must have been of secondary importance, when compared with other contemporary developments located in northern Yucatan, such as Ek Balam, Coba, Uxmal, Oxkintok, among others.

## THE DEVELOPING STAGE

Chichen Itza began its urban development during the Late Classic period, traditionally dated between the years 800 and 1000.

This new development was characterized by vaulted monumental architecture, of a style similar to that of the cities of the Puuc mountainous area, reason why this architecture has been denominated of Mayan or Puuc style.

Some of the most emblematic and artistic buildings of the city belong to this period, such as The Observatory, The Nunnery, The Church, or The Red House, among some others.

One of the characteristics of these Puuc buildings is the presence of hieroglyphic inscriptions, inscribed in Maya-Yucateco language, which make constant reference to a ruler named Kak'upakal, which means "fire in his shield", which was mentioned in colonial sources.

Such inscriptions, which are concentrated in the second half of the ninth century, were not limited to the site but appeared in nearby prehispanic settlements, such as Yula and Halakal. Almost all the inscriptions were dated with the system of notation known as Tun-Ahau, with the exception of the Lintel of the Initial Series, which holds an inscription in the long count system.

The Early Postclassic period, traditionally dated between the years 1000 and 1200, corresponded to the maximum peak of the site, which reached the dimensions and volume that we know today.

In that period there was a dramatic change with the introduction of a new architectural style, which integrated elements similar to those

present in the archaeological site of Tula, Hidalgo, such as the Atlante and snake columns, along with the technique of masonry and certain elements of the previous style.

### NEW ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The new architectural style of Chichen Itza was named Tolteca, due to its similarities with Tula, without this implying an ethnic affiliation or a direct relationship between both sites.

During this period, the inscriptions in Maya-Yucateco style ceased, being the last building that presented such inscriptions the Ossuary or Temple of Skulls, dated in the year 998.

They presented abundant representations of individual characters in columns and processions, and in many occasions, the characters presented nominal hieroglyphics in a style similar to that used in the Central Mexico area.

The power of Chichen Itza during this time was manifested not only in the impressive architecture of emblematic buildings, such as the Pyramid of Kukulcan, the Temple of the Warriors or the Great Ball Court, but also in the impressive sculptures in bas-relief, the murals,

and the quantity and quality of the imported objects.

During the Middle Postclassic period, which is traditionally dated between the years 1200 and 1350, the city entered a period of decline.

For this reason, the monumental constructions ceased, imports of objects were suspended, and the city struggled to maintain its dominance in the area, in the midst of political struggles that unfolded in the replacement of Chichen Itza by the city of Mayapan.

In this gradual period of loss of power, the city continued, but the population dropped down considerably.

The remaining population occupied old buildings and even reused objects from the previous period, which is why it was almost

impossible to find objects from their greatest period, in their original places of use or storage.

This occupation factor affects the contextual interpretations that are attempted to make about the life and customs of the inhabitants of Chichen Itza, in their periods of maximum development.

### PILGRIMAGE CENTER

Because it was the origin of many of the important lineages of northern Yucatan, and an indispensable reference of legitimation, it was the capital of the Sacred Cenote that became the most important pilgrimage center of the Mayan Peninsula, only rivaled by the Island of Cozumel.

The Sacred Cenote was a focus of attraction, as was the sacred character of the city that lasted until the arrival of the Spaniards.

Derived from the above, Bishop Diego de Landa came to compare the pre-Hispanic site of Chichen Itza, with the city of Jerusalem or Mecca. Also due to the number of offerings found on the banks of the Great Cenote, it was compared to the Pantheon in Rome.

When the Spanish arrived to the Yucatan Peninsula in 1517, Chichen Itza was already abandoned, but this place was still receiving visitors from all around the Mayan Peninsula used as a pilgrimage center, which means that while Europe lived in the Middle Ages, Chichen Itza had already created an even more precise calendar than the Gregorian one, its knowledge

of Astronomy was much more advanced, and they handled the concept of the number zero.



## VERSIÓN EN ESPAÑOL

También puedes descargar la versión en español.

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# Uxmal



MAYAN  
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Visit [mayanpeninsula.com](http://mayanpeninsula.com) to learn about Uxmal.

## CHAPTER 2

### NORTH GROUP BUILDINGS

The North Group basically includes the buildings you find when you first enter Chichen Itza and surround the Great Pyramid including the Sacred Cenote.



# Chichén Itzá



MAYAN  
PENINSULA

## KUKULKAN PYRAMID

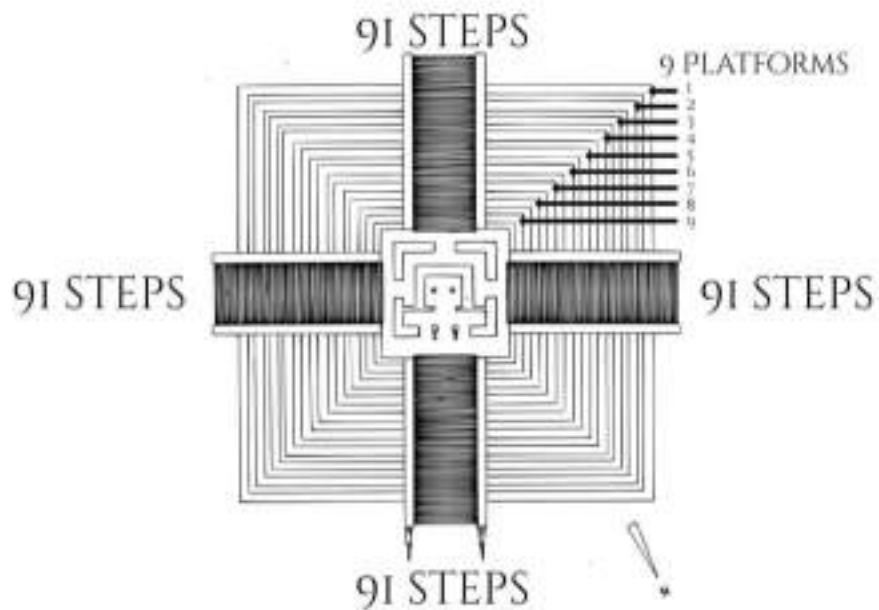
The Kukulcan Pyramid, also commonly known as El Castillo (The Castle), is the most impressive building in the Archeological Site of Chichen Itza, and one of the highest of all Mayan architecture.

Kukulcan comes from the words "snake-quetzal" in Yucatec Mayan. The Quetzal is a long-tailed bird found in the region, so Kukulcan can be interpreted as "Feathered Serpent".

Built in the XVI century, this monumental building is a pyramid of nine staggered bodies 24 meters high, with a staircase on each side and a temple at the top. The decorative motifs of the facade are snakes and jaguars of Toltec influence, which confirms that the construction of the building corresponds to the stage of greatest flourishing of the Itza culture.

## KUKULKAN PYRAMID, THE CALENDAR BUILDING

The Kukulcan Pyramid in Chichen Itza demonstrates the deep knowledge of mathematics, geometry, acoustics, and astronomy that the Maya possessed. Being an initially agricultural society, the Mayans observed carefully the behavior of the stars, the variations of the trajectories of the Sun and the stars, and combining their knowledge, they managed to register them in the construction of the temple dedicated to their god Kukulcan.



It's thought that this pyramid is the representation of the Mayan Calendar: each step is a day of the year, and since each side has 91 steps, multiplied by four sides totaling 364, plus one that represents the platform, we get 365 days of the solar year, so it is thought that the monument was erected in honor of the sun god. Also, if you see the pyramid on one side, the corners of its overlapping platforms add up to 18, which are the months of 20 days of the Mayan Haab Calendar.

## INSIDE THE KUKULKAN PYRAMID

In April 1931, seeking to confirm the hypothesis that the structure of the Kukulcan Pyramid was built on top of another older pyramid, excavation and exploration work began finding a box with objects of coral and obsidian and turquoise inlays were found next to human remains.

Then a figure of Chac Mool was found inside the Substructure's Temple with nacre shell on his nails, teeth, and eyes, the room where the discovery was made is known as the room of offerings or north chamber.



Only a few meters away, a second enclosure called the Sacrificial Chamber was discovered, where more human bones were found.

Also, a sculpture of a jaguar was found. This is a red sculpture with 74 jade incrustations that simulate the characteristic spots of the jaguar; the eyes are simulated with the same stone and the fangs and teeth are painted white flint.



## ONE OF THE 7 WONDERS OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

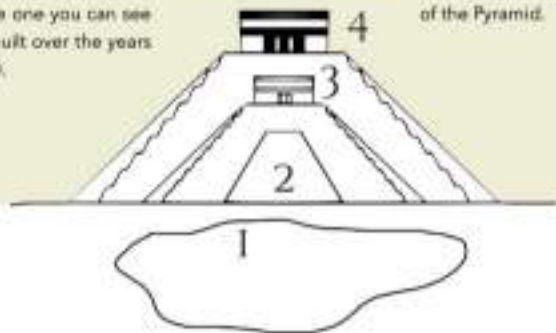
It's now considered one of the "New Seven Wonders of the Contemporary World" by means of the New Open World Corporation a global election based on the internet and in which theoretically anyone with access to the network could vote. It's worth mentioning that it was the Kukulcan Pyramid in Chichen Itza and not the archaeological site as a whole that was the winner.



## THREE LAYERED PYRAMID

The Pyramid you see now is the third "layer" of buildings with a total of three structures that correspond to different time periods: the oldest one was built between the years 500 and 800, then a second one was built on top of it. The third Pyramid in Chichen Itza, the one you can see right now was built over the years 1,050 and 1,300.

The Mayans didn't destroy buildings because they were sacred, instead, they built on top of them.



This second Pyramid has an entrance through a narrow passage by one of the sides of the north stairway. A jaguar painted red with inlaid jade was discovered which probably used as a throne, it's now closed to the public just like climbing to the top of the Pyramid.

## THE DESCENDING SERPENT IN THE EQUINOX

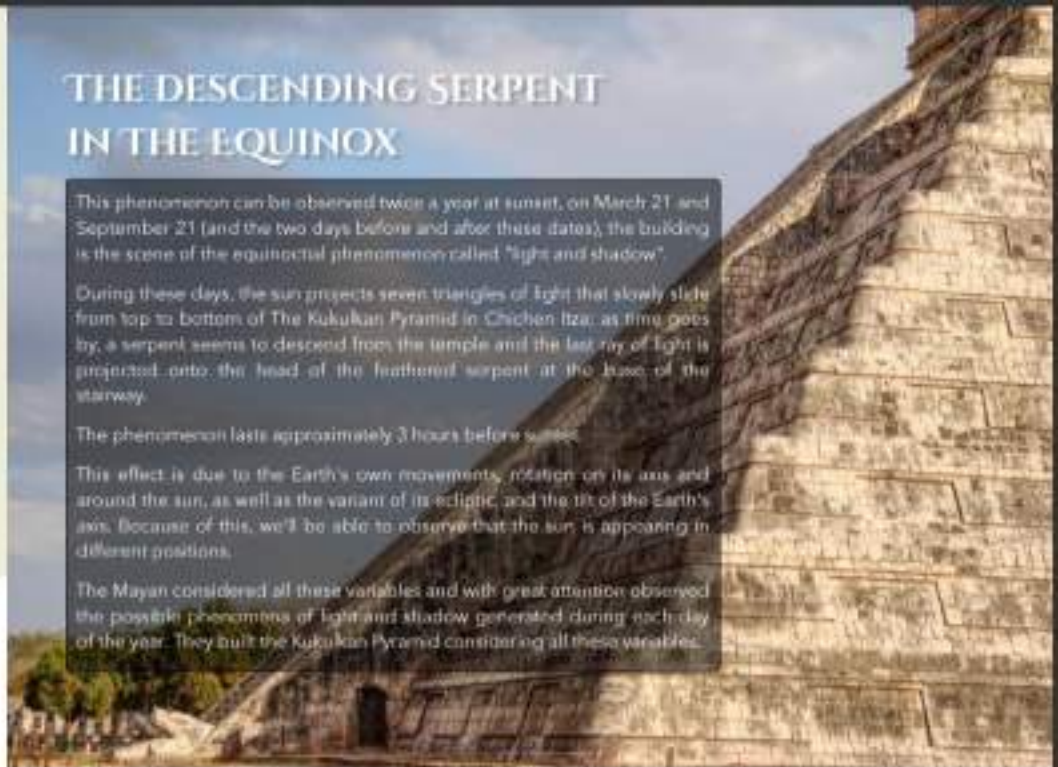
This phenomenon can be observed twice a year at sunset, on March 21 and September 21 (and the two days before and after these dates), the building is the scene of the equinoctial phenomenon called "light and shadow".

During these days, the sun projects seven triangles of light that slowly slide from top to bottom of The Kukulkan Pyramid in Chichen Itza; as time goes by, a serpent seems to descend from the temple and the last ray of light is projected onto the head of the feathered serpent at the base of the stairway.

The phenomenon lasts approximately 3 hours before sunset.

This effect is due to the Earth's own movements, rotation on its axis and around the sun, as well as the variant of its ecliptic, and the tilt of the Earth's axis. Because of this, we'll be able to observe that the sun is appearing in different positions.

The Mayan considered all these variables and with great attention observed the possible phenomena of light and shadow generated during each day of the year. They built the Kukulkan Pyramid considering all these variables.



## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE KUKULKAN

This construction is composed of a base with a square floor plan of 55.5 m per side. It has nine staggered and sloping bodies that reach a total height of 24 m, decorated with slightly protruding rectangles that look similar to Zapotec culture and El Tajin architecture.

Access to the temple was through any of the four staircases bordered by rafters, the north one has heads of feathered serpents.

The temple on the top's main entrance consists of three gaps formed by two serpentine columns, whose heads are the bases and the tails support the levels that were made of wood. The sanctuary or chamber with vaulted ceiling has two pilasters decorated with bas-reliefs that supported the roof; behind this chamber, there's a narrow gallery with three doors that lead to the west, south and east stairways.

The temple has a sloping and smooth vertical wall; then follows the frieze between two molded cornices, whose central strip has three sunken panels, one of them with a Chac mask or god of rain. The jambs of the doors and the interior pilasters show figures of warriors and other richly attired characters.

An interesting fact is that the Kukulcan Temple is not perfectly aligned in the center. On the top of the main staircase, there's a bigger space between the last step and the wall. If you see it from the west side, you will notice how the door isn't aligned with the temple and the top niche, but it is aligned with the staircase.



## 360° VIEW OF THE KUKULKAN PYRAMID



360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE KUKULKAN PYRAMID IN CHICHEN ITZA



El Castillo is the first thing you see when entering Chichen Itza after a short road. It's in the middle of the main square surrounded by the Great Ball Court, Tzompantli, Temple of the Eagles and Jaguars, Venus Temple, and the Warriors Temple.



Chichén Itzá  
MAYAN  
PENINSULA  
GREAT  
BALL  
COURT

The Chichén Itzá Great Ball Court shows the arrival and development of the Itza people, the evolution of religious ideas, and a style called "Maya-Yucateco" because it's mixed with elements of the original Puuc zone. This style combines architecture, sculpture, and painting in function of militarism and the cult of Kukulcan, which began to spread towards the Mayan region in the Classic period, producing a rebirth of culture and society in the lands of Yucatán.

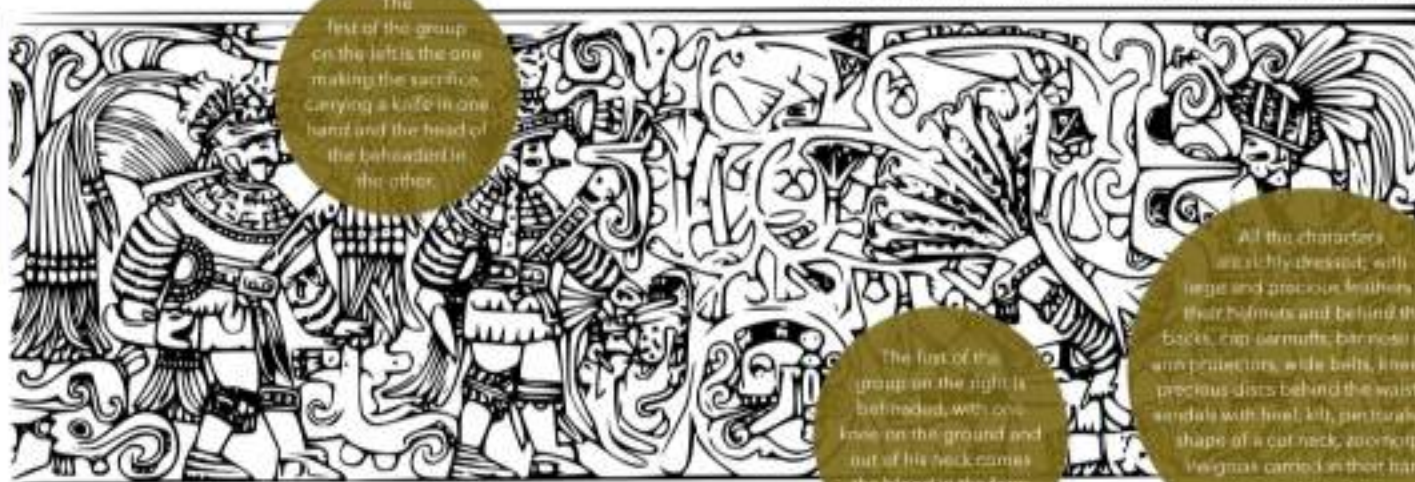
The Great Ball Court rests on a platform that supports the pyramid and the other structures. These types of ball courts were a common feature of a remarkable ritual practiced among the Mesoamerican societies. Here it received the name of "pok ta pok", originated perhaps in the term puctal-puctal which means "to squat several times". In Chichén Itzá there were about ten ball games. This being the main one, also considered the largest in Mesoamerica.

This specific court exhibits very interesting acoustics like a conversation at one end can be heard 135 meters away at the other and like in many other buildings not only in Chichén Itzá, a clap produces multiple loud echoes.

## GREAT BALL COURT'S SIDE PANELS

The central panels of the sidewalks show a procession of warrior ball players, seven on each side of a skull-shaped circular central motif, a symbol of death.

The whole composition is full of floral motifs, vegetable branches, etc., to fill in the gaps between the



Of course, this scene of the beheading of one of the players is related to human sacrifice, perhaps in relation to the fertility of the earth, water and sun, as well as with Kukulcan or Quetzalcoatl who was the god of agriculture, time, year and creator of men, a new humanity and the Fifth Sun. This concept was introduced by the Itza, which had customs and cultural elements adopted from other parts, such as the nosepiece of Huasteca type, the pectoral of the wind in the form of a cut snail, the belt yokes, zoomorphic handbags, the decapitation where the blood comes out in the form of serpents from Apacico Veracruz.

The Ball Game itself, with its panels decorated in bas-relief, is similar to those found in El Tajin, Veracruz; the realistic snakes that finish the panels at the ends are a symbol of Quetzalcoatl, whose cult originated in Xochicalco. We can conclude that these ideas and people who came to Chichen Itza, began to influence the society and culture of the original Mayans who were settled there.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT BALL COURT

The Grand Ball Court has a rectangular plan of 168 m long by 70 wide, it consists of a central corridor or court bounded by two parallel platforms, one in the east and one in the west; the central corridor communicates with two other lateral corridors, one in the north and one in the south, limited by walls that leave four entrances, all this forming the "T" shape, common to other ball games in Mesoamerica.

The platforms are 95 m long with a wide stairway to ascend to the upper part, where there are three small almost square structures, perhaps temples or rooms for priests, judges, players, and people of the nobility, to contemplate the game.

Each platform was composed of a stool decorated with bas-relief panels, one in the center and one at each end, followed by a vertical wall 8 m high, in whose central part was a stone ring, decorated with an entwined feathered serpentine, the symbol of Kukulcan or Quetzalcoatl.

## THE GREAT BALL COURT NORTH AND SOUTH TEMPLES

The north and south sections of the ball court are limited by a medium height wall and by two temple-like constructions. The southern one simply called the South Temple is unfortunately very destroyed.

The temple of the north, also known as the Temple of the Bearded Man is of smaller dimensions and has been considered the sanctuary for the excellence of the rites of fertility, associated with the heat of the Sun and the fecundity of the earth.

## THE GREAT BALL COURT'S TEMPLE OF THE JAGUAR

In the upper and lower parts of the southern side of the eastern face there are two lavish temples; the one above, called the Temple of Jaguars, looks towards the field and is distinguished by its columns with descending serpents.

The lower temple has its facade facing the outside of the court where you can still see a jaguar throne that made sure that at the end of the ceremony the head of the beheaded would be placed on the wall of skulls, or Tzompantli, a construction that bounded on the east to the great building of the court.



Chichen Itza  
MAYAN  
GREAT BALL COURT



## 360° VIEW OF THE GREAT BALL COURT




360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE GREAT BALL COURT IN CHICHEN ITZA



You can't miss the Great Ball Court to your left when you first enter this Archeological Site. My recommendation is to first admire and take some pictures of the Kukulcan Pyramid, and then turn left to visit The Great Ball Court.



Chichén Itzá



TEMPLO  
DEL  
JAGUAR

The Temple of the Jaguar in Chichen Itza was built between the years 1000 and 1150. It takes its name from a sequence of jaguars located in front of the structure. It consists of different layers that are intricately carved and show different types of images. Two gigantic feathered serpents formed the columns in the entrance hall, while the interior walls were richly decorated in stone.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE JAGUAR

To construct this building, the long stairway of the eastern platform of the Great Ball Court had to be made, as well as the small structure at its southern end; all of which were built after the Temples of the North and the South.

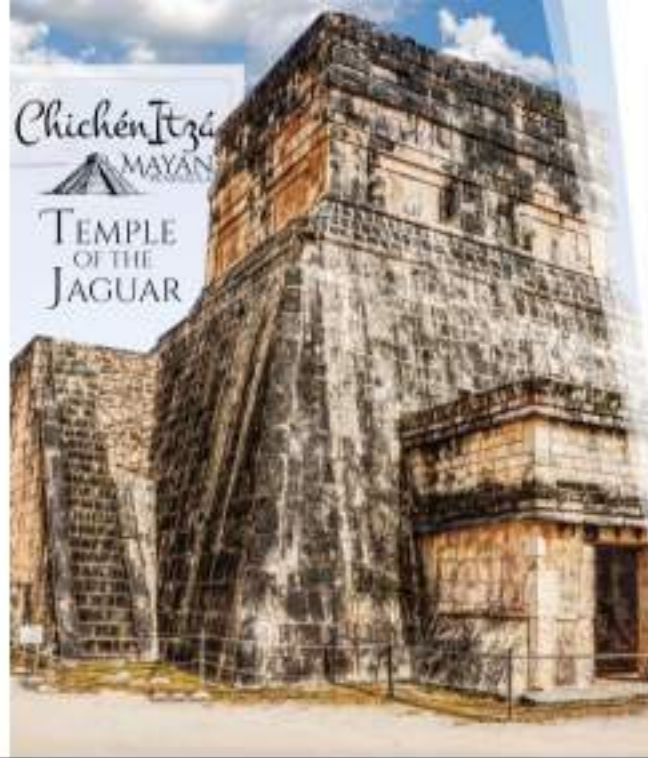
In order to reach the top level, which is about 10 m high, a pyramidal base and a narrow ladder attached to its southern side were built.

### Top of the Temple of the Jaguar

The top of the Temple is supported by solid pillars shaped like serpents covered with elaborated sculpted ornaments. In the interior, the walls and roofs were covered with drawings and paintings, representing human figures, battles, houses, trees, and scenes of the domestic life.

### Bottom of the Temple of the Jaguar

This building and a staircase were constructed on the base facing to the exterior plaza with reliefs alluding to the god Kukulcan, which looks towards the west. The façade consists of a sloping and smooth vertical wall, a slightly protruding strip and a frieze between two molded panels, fully decorated with bas-reliefs based on a stone mosaic.



The front of the building has its walls decorated with warriors and quads of the man-bird-support, as well as three gaps formed by two pilasters, which also display figures of warriors and panels with the representation of the god Kukulcan as lord of the earth and the vegetation.

The entire interior is decorated, with rows of warriors wearing atlatl, headdresses of leathers, butterfly pectorals, belts with mar discs, padded sleeves, etc. There you can see a man sitting on a jaguar throne, similar to the one between the two pilasters of the building, and a war chief with a plumed serpent as a background. The rest of the composition is filled with hooks, volutes and interlaces, some vegetables, but within a more calligraphic style that seems to indicate that the original aesthetic sense is being lost.

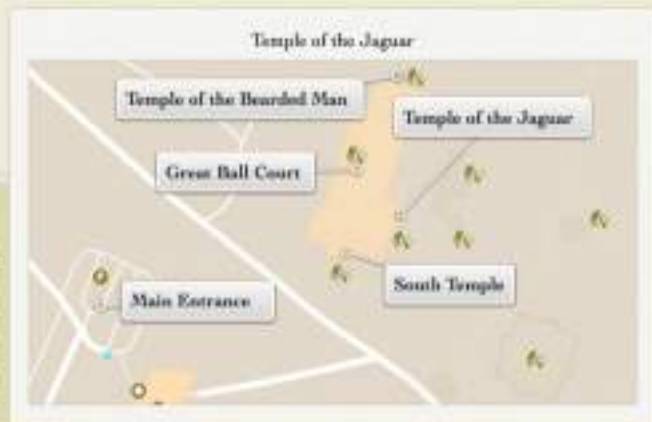


## 360° VIEW OF THE TEMPLE OF THE JAGUAR



360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE JAGUAR IN CHICHEN ITZA



The bottom part of the Temple of Jaguar is located in one of the long sides of the Great Ball

Court with its front looking towards the Grand Plaza with the Tzompantli platform in the front-right side followed by the Eagles and Jaguars Temple. On your front-right, you can see the Kukulcan Pyramid.

The upper part of the Temple of the Jaguar is located on the same long side of the Great Ball

Court as the bottom part, but on the upper part. This Temple is looking towards the Great Ball Court's field with the South Temple on the left, and the Temple of the Bearded man on the right.



Chichén Itzá



GREAT BALL COURT'S  
SOUTH TEMPLE

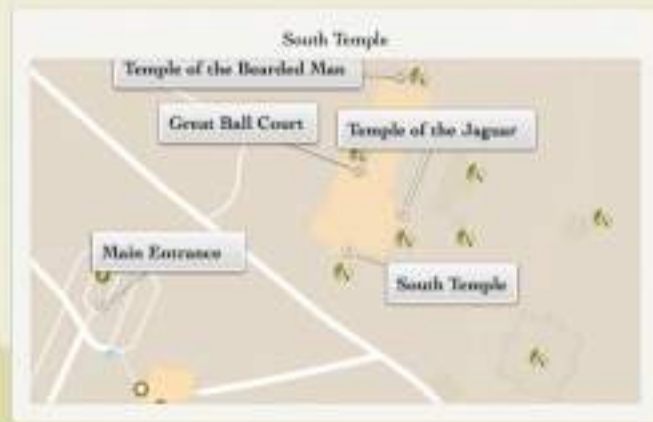
This Temple is unfortunately very destroyed, probably due to its wide dimensions. It had pilasters to support the roof that served to protect the high hierarchy from the Sun and rainy days.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SOUTH TEMPLE


Built after the ball court, this building has a rectangular floor and measures 25 m long by 8 wide. It's also composed of a slope with light molding, frieze, and inverted cornice; it also has seven entryways, formed by six pilasters decorated with figures of warriors carrying hieroglyphics indicating their names at the base with the effigy of the man-bird-serpent or Kukulcan emerging from the jaws of a feathered serpent.



## LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE SOUTH IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Great Ball Court's South Temple is located in one of the ends of the Great Ball Court, like its name says, on the south side. In front of it, all the way on the other side of the Court you will find the Temple of the Bearded Man, and on its right, the Temple of the Jaguars.



Chichén Itzá



TEMPLE  
OF THE  
BEARDED  
MAN

The Temple of the Bearded Man is perhaps the best preserved of the buildings that surround the Great Ball Court, the Temple gets its name from a strange bearded man who heads the scene. It is based on a wall of three stepped bodies that, together with the staircase that sits on a platform.

The effect of the Itza people and its religious ideas can be seen in this building, which was subsequently built into the Grand Ball Court, attaching to the north wall that enclosed it.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE BEARDED MAN

It's also known as the Grand Ball Court's North Temple measuring 10 m long and 6 m wide, with slanted walls and a central staircase facing south. The Temple sits on top of a platform 14 m long and 8 m wide.

It consists of a single chamber or room with an inverted roof. In its façade there is a slope that ends in a slight protruding molding; then a vertical wall comes up to the height of the lintels that are supported by two columns with bas-reliefs. It's followed by a board strip that ends in a molded cornice and then comes the smooth frieze, finished off in another inverted crown with molding.

It has flagstones decorated with trees that have their roots in the earth, with plant branches that climb spiraling on its trunks. Butterflies and birds flutter around the trees, while others stand on the branches. Above these trees, Quetzalcoatl or Kukulcan appears as man-bird-serpent with his face emerging from the jaws of a serpent with a forked tongue and feathered body.



## INTRODUCTION OF A NEW ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE

The Temple of the Bearded Man introduces a new architectural feature, the slope and vertical wall that was common in Xochicalco, Morelos; which becomes of general use in Chichen Itza also presented other modalities, such as the columns decorated with bas-reliefs, the high jambs with figures of warriors, the inferior panel with the effigy of the man-bird-serpent, and the Mayan vault totally decorated with a variety of everyday and religious scenes.

## THE BACK WALL OF THE TEMPLE

In a part of the back wall there is a scene in which the deity Kukulcan appears seated on a jaguar throne, marked by an oval formed by a feathered serpent; on each side of the god there are seven characters, chiefly warriors with an atlatl or spear, darts and rear discs in the belt, one of them looks like a chief with a snake in the background.



In the next row you find the priest and ruler, with a robe clothed with chalchihuites or precious stones, with seven people sitting on his left, all of whom have butterfly pocs; on his right, six other dignitaries are also seated.

Below them, there's another row of individuals, seven on the left, two of them in eagle costumes, and seven on the right, two of them standing on the roof of a house or temple, inside which there are two characters seated.

Finally, below, you can see the Lord and priest Kukulcan dead, dressed in his tunic of chalchihuites and with a two-headed serpent that starts from his waist towards the head and feet, as if to protect him; on either side of him there are two seated individuals, one of them as if coming out of a snail, with vegetal interlacing.

The whole set is related to the Itzaes and Kukulcan, with the god that appears in the upper part or sky, with the lord-priest who bore the same name and who relied on warriors, nobles and priests on the earth, guarded by the deity and the gods of the four directions, perhaps the Bacabes or Pauhtun.

The wardrobe of the characters is the same as of the Great Ball Game: cotton padded sleeves, nose bar, back discs on the belt, feathered headdresses, eagle or bird costumes, butterfly breastplate, as well as vegetal interlacing and scrolls.

## LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE BEARDED MAN IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Temple of the Bearded Man is located in the north side of the Great Ball Court. In front of it, all the way on the other side of the Court you will find the Great Ball Court's South Temple, and on its left, the Temple of the Jaguars.



The inhabitants of Chichen Itza placed pointy poles on the platform in which the bleeding heads of the enemies were threaded, four by four. Archeologists found buried figures of the Chac Mool in the Tzompantli of Chichen Itza, as well as skulls with offerings and a broken ring from the Great Ball Game.

The cult of the dead, one of the oldest of humanity, is present among the Mayans in this interesting platform, considered "a true monument to the cruelty of war". The name Tzompantli means "skull wall" in Nahuatl, but it's widely used in Spanish for these types of representations.

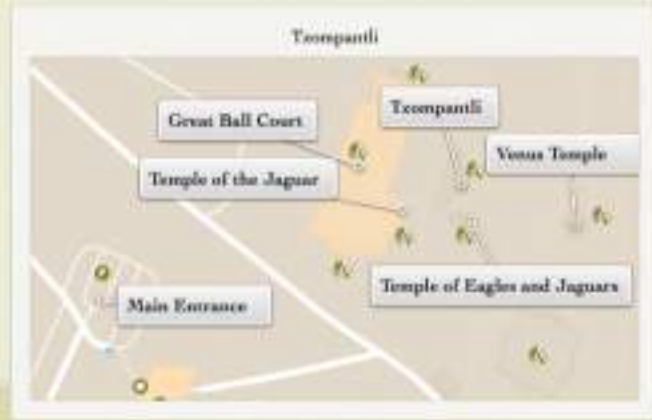
## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TZOMPANTLI

In its structure, shaped like a "T", the base of the Tzompantli supports three panels decorated with skulls and divided by moldings. Those at the ends have skull reproductions in high relief; the one in the center is wider and has two rows of skulls. In total, more than 500 skulls carved in high relief have been found.

The Tzompantli of Chichen Itza is a large rectangular platform that measures about 60 m long by 12 wide, with a projection in the center that gives it a T shape. It is composed of a very small slope at the bottom, a central strip decorated with skulls that run in three horizontal rows, and at the top, a slightly edged out strip with another row of skulls.



## LOCATION OF THE TZOMPANTLI IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Tzompantli in Chichen Itza is located in the Grand Plaza between the Great Ball Court and the Temple of the Eagles and Jaguars.



Chichén Itzá



## TEMPLE OF THE EAGLES AND JAGUARS

The Temple of the Eagles and Jaguars got its name from reliefs showing Eagles and Jaguars devouring human hearts, this Temple is the smallest of the set of structures that form "the grate level plane" which includes: the Kukulcan Temple, Venus Temple, and the Great Ball Court.

It's very likely that there would be banners in the form of jaguars with spotted skin, such as those found in the Sacred Cenote. It's also assumed that on this platform there was a stockade showcasing skulls of slaughtered enemies. The outgoing body has representations of eagles and warriors that carry human heads in their hands.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE EAGLES AND JAGUARS

The Temple of the Eagles and Jaguars is a square base with four staircases on each side bordered by balustrades and decorated with bodies of feathered serpents, which change their slope to form a cube in the upper part from which the heads of serpents emerge.

The base has a slope, followed by a vertical wall with protruding panels and a cornice board. In the outer panels, there are reliefs of eagles eating human hearts and in the sunken spaces, beautiful representations of spotted jaguars, also devouring human hearts; you can find Kukulcan or Venus in the form of a recumbent warrior with a spear in his hand.



## LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE EAGLES AND JAGUARS IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Temple of the Eagles and Jaguars in Chichen Itza is located in the Grand Plaza between to the Tzompantli and the Venus Temple.



Chichén Itzá

MAYAN

VENUS  
TEMPLE

It's called the Venus Temple because there are representations in bas-relief of the planet Venus in its outer panels in the form of a Mayan Year Bundle next to a half flower with vanes in the petals; there's also the symbol of Pop or braided mat that means lordship and power. The Venus Temple is also known as the Tomb of Chac Mool because its sculpture was found in its interior.

The stone bas-reliefs still conserve remains of red, blue and yellow paint that adorned the contours of the representation of the "morning star", one of the manifestations of Kukulcan-Quetzalcoatl most admired by pre-Hispanic cultures.

In the sunken space appears Kukulcan or Venus coming out of the jaws of a serpent with feathers, forked tongue and jaguar claws.

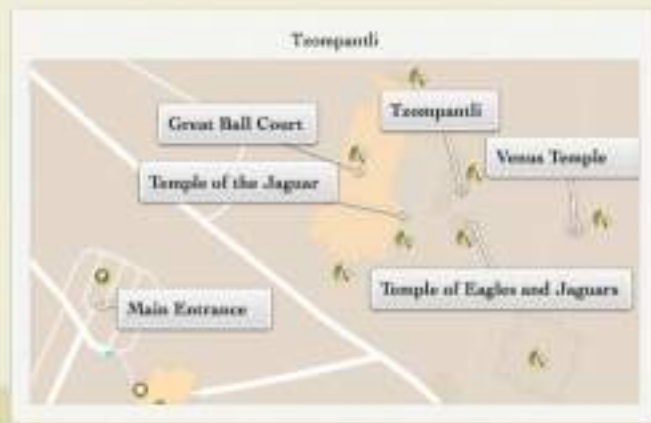
## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE VENUS TEMPLE

The Venus Temple is a base with a square floor plan more than 25 m on each side, with four staircases bordered by balustrades ending in a cube, from which a snakehead is projected.


The base is composed of a slope, a vertical wall with projecting panels that leave a sunken space, and a cornice-board as a finishing touch; the total height of the base is 4m. On the cornice board, there is a feathered serpent with fish among its undulations whose head protrudes from the cube of the staircase's arch.



## LOCATION OF THE VENUS TEMPLE IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Venus Temple in Chichén Itzá is located in the Grand Plaza in front of the main side of the Kukulcán Pyramid, where the snakeheads are found, and on the side of the Temple of the Eagles and Jaguars.



Chichén Itzá



THE SACRED  
CENOTE

The Sacred Cenote in Chichén Itzá is made because the Mayan Peninsula has most of its water currents underground, mainly because of the limestone surface that quickly absorbs rainwater. The Mayans called these natural wells ts'onot, a word that transformed into Spanish led to Cenote.

One of the distinctive features of Chichén Itzá is the cenotes, and among them, The Sacred Cenote stands out. This Cenote is also called Chenuk or Cenote de los Sacrificios - Cenote of the Sacrifices, the latter name is due to XVI century stories that they claimed that virgin women were thrown into it, and according to a prophecy they would one day return alive.

The use of the cenote for rites and sacrifices took place mainly in the Classic (800 AD-1100 AD) and the Post-Classic (1100 AD-1550 AD), from where a lot of archaeological objects and human remains were found.

The Classic Period is associated with the splendor of Chichén Itzá and the Post-Classic represents the use of the Sacred Cenote as a place of worship and pilgrimage.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SACRED CENOTE

The Sacred Cenote is a well 50 m in diameter in the north-south direction and 60.50 in the east-west direction, with almost vertical walls that widen towards the water level, forming limestone cavities. It's 22 m from the edge to the water level, and from there to the bottom there are about 20 meters of water with muddy sediments that sometimes reach a thickness of 4 meters, especially in the center.

There was a building composed of two rooms, each with an entrance to the east and west, which was later modified. The west room was converted into a Tomatzal or steam bath to purify the victims destined for sacrifice. And an irregular platform was also attached, almost on the edge of the well, from which perhaps they were thrown into the Great Cenote. There are carved stones on this platform similar to those of the Great Ball Court, this suggests that the practice of sacrifices in the Cenote was from later times, although other offerings were previously made to the water god.

The greenish color of its waters is due to the algae and microorganisms and also to the shade of the vegetation that grows around it.

The rocky edge of the well, especially its south side, was suitably conditioned, to the extent of showing some sort of two-level bleachers, perhaps for the better accommodation of the public that participated in the ceremonies.



## 360° VIEW OF THE SACRED CENOTE




360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE SACRED CENOTE IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Sacred Cenote in Chichen Itza is located 200 m away from the Venus Platform with the Kukulcan Pyramid on opposite side of the platform.



Chichén Itzá



## TEMPLE OF THE TABLES

Called Temple of the Tables because of the overlapping levels that give the appearance of plateaus, this temple built next to the one of the Warriors, is a small pyramid of four levels that previously culminated with a temple with two serpent columns.

The Temple of the Tables was recently restored during the 90's. During these excavations a major sub-temple was discovered buried inside the external structure, a large polychrome wall of feathered serpents was painted on the interior walls in vivid colors of blue, yellow, red and marked by charcoal lines.

Like the Castle, the Temple of the Warriors, the Jaguars, the Group of the Thousand Columns, the Tzompantli, the Venus Platform, and the Great Ball Court, this building was built during the Toltec influence in Chichén Itzá, that is, between the years 900 and 1200.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE TABLES

Although it's not preserved in its entirety, the first level of the frieze is still noticeable, which is carved in stone and placed on the ground in front of the staircase leading to the temple. It shows a procession of jaguars among trees and spears. On the second level, a plumed serpent is carved.

### FRIEZE IN FRONT OF THE TEMPLE OF THE TABLES

You can find a frieze that has been placed in front of the Temple of the Tables that show a feathered serpent on the top level, and the procession of jaguars, trees, and spear bundles on the lower one.



Chichén Itzá  
MAYAN  
TEMPLE OF  
THE TABLES



## 360° VIEW OF THE TEMPLE OF THE TABLES




360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE TABLES IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Temple of the Tables in Chichen Itza is located in the Grand Plaza right next to the Warriors Temple and in front of a long Frieze.



Chichén Itzá



TEMPLE OF THE  
WARRIORS

The Temple of the Warriors was built around the year 1200 and it's one of the most beautiful and well-preserved buildings of this site. Chichen Itza has tens of buildings, but when people think of this site, they always think of The Castle, The Sacred Cenote, The Great Ball Court, and of course, the Temple of the Warriors.

In general, its construction has characteristics similar to the temple Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, in Tula, capital of the Toltec state; mainly because it was built by the relatively new Mayan-Toltec culture that was born here in Chichen Itza.

The same general concept of the pyramid that supports a great superior sanctuary, the same presence of a Chac Mool in the entrance, the same repetitive ornamentation of Eagles and Jaguars in the steps, the same pillars in the form of a serpent with its head on the ground and mouth open, while his body forms the shaft and the tail rises to support the lintel of the entrance porch. Finally, at the foot of the pyramid, the same type of columns with engravings of warriors.

The Temple of the Warriors of Chichen Itza had been preceded, just like El Castillo, by an earlier construction that was found within the current Temple. The first temple had also a Chac Mool inside, and the vaulted styles used by the Mayans.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE WARRIORS

This building is composed of a square base that measures about 40 m per side. It has stepped bodies composed of slope and board cornice decorated with bas-reliefs in which warriors, eagles, and jaguars are seen devouring human hearts.

The stairway faces the west and has reliefs of feathered serpents whose heads protrude. There is a square-shaped temple on the base, 21 m per side, leaving a wide platform in front with pilasters decorated with figures of gods and warriors that used to support roof beams.

The facade of the Temple of the Warriors is composed of a slope and vertical wall, like a frieze interrupted by the main entrance, and decorated on each side by a board with three overlapping Chac masks, one with the effigy of the god Kukulkan emerging from the jaws of a feathered serpent with forked tongue and three other Chac masks in the center, one above the other and with their curved and protruding noses. Then another smooth frieze between two molded cornices, ending in battlements on the roof, of which nothing remains.

On the platform and in front of the main entrance there is a Chac Mool, that although it was considered a god for a long time, it was rather considered as an intermediary between the Supreme God and men, so he could take the offerings they made.



## 360° VIEW OF THE TEMPLE OF THE WARRIORS



360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE OF THE WARRIORS IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Temple of the Warriors in Chichen Itza is located in the Grand Plaza right next to the Temple of the Tables and to the right of the main side of the Kukulkan Pyramid.



Chichén Itzá

MAYAN  
PENINSULA  
GROUP OF THE  
THOUSAND  
COLUMNS

The Group of the Thousand Columns in Chichén Itzá is actually a temple, a very beautiful and impressive structure connected to the Temple of the Warriors that gets its name because it looks like it has lots of columns, but actually, there are only about 200 columns of them.

This is what remains of what probably supported a flat roof, according to Toltec custom. Also, in the Group of the Thousand Columns, as in El Castillo and other constructions of Chichén Itzá, the typically Mayan pyramidal structure adds new elements, formed by colonnades of surprising lightness and iconographic elements related to the military orders and the cult of the Plumed Serpent.

Some people think that the Group of the Thousand Columns symbolize that inside the human being along with the thousands of psychological defects that we carry, we also carry different aspects from warriors that help us fight the evil we carry inside.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUP OF THE THOUSAND COLUMNS

The Group of the Thousand Columns is a vast plaza that has the shape of an irregular quadrilateral, about 150 m long, with some structures on the east side and in the south, including the so-called Mercado, which closes the plaza on those sides.

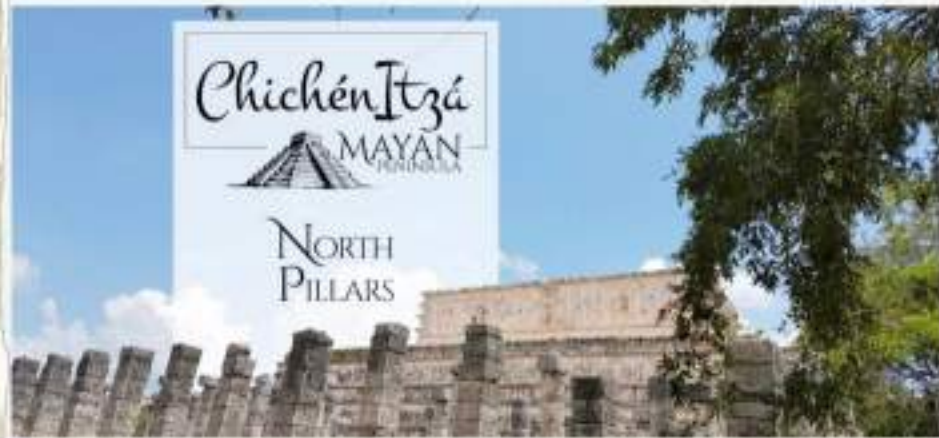
On the west side there is a colonnade formed by four rows of columns, made of stone drums, on which the beams that supported the vaults rested, and which ran northward through the portico of the Temple of the Warriors; while on the north side ran another porch with five rows of columns, seated on a platform 2.20 m high.

GROUP OF THE THOUSAND COLUMNS



The Temple of Sculpted Columns is a small building that consists of a gallery with an interior corridor that leads to an altar with a Chac Mool. It also has numerous columns of rich reliefs with representations of some of the most important personalities of the time. A part of the top panel is covered with a pattern of X and O and is shown in front of the structure.

GROUP OF THE THOUSAND COLUMNS



The North Pillars are part of the main set of columns that are on the side of the Temple of the Warriors. They are decorated in their four faces with reliefs of warriors, priests, and sometimes prisoners, as well as squares bearing the effigy of the man-bird-serpent or Kukulcan.

It is composed of numerous pillars that once supported the roof of spacious galleries, roofed with perishable materials. It's a large complex that is located around a wide square and is formed by a series of pillars aligned in parallel. Each section of the colonnade was built in different stages.



## 360° VIEW OF THE GROUP OF THE THOUSAND COLUMNS



360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE GROUP OF THE THOUSAND COLUMNS IN CHICHEN ITZA



### LOCATION OF THE GROUP OF THE THOUSAND COLUMNS

The Group of the Thousand Columns in Chichen Itza is formed from different platforms located on the left side of the Temple of the Warriors and behind it.

### LOCATION OF THE NORTH PILLARS

The Group of the Chichen Itza North Pillars is a long set of pillars located behind the Temple of the Warriors and ends with the Temple of the Sculpted Columns.

### LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE OF SCULPTED COLUMNS

The Temple of Sculpted Columns in Chichen Itza is located at the end of the North Pillars.



It's difficult to specify that this building was intended precisely to be a market in Chichen Itza, however, its appearance suggests it.

The columns supported a roof of perishable material. As in the Thousand Columns, it is considered that the friezes restored in the Market allow having a perception less threatening than the jaguars and serpents of the Temple of the Warriors. This is the reason why it has been thought that in this area the use of buildings was converted from ceremonial to utilitarian.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MARKET

This structure consists of a platform 80 m long and 15 m wide, with a central stairway bordered by tiles, which allows access to an open porch at the front, but closed behind and to the sides, with a row of alternating columns and pilasters that supported the vaulted ceiling. A central door leads to a square patio, 17 m per side, surrounded by 24 columns built with stone drums and capitals, the highest in the area.

The facade of the portico had a slope and vertical wall cut by a horizontal strip at the height of the beams; and next came a frieze between two molded cornices, whose central strip was decorated with groups of columns.

The facade ended in battlements of cut snails. Near the central door of the portico there is a terraced platform, with a molding decorated with feathered serpents and a slope with a procession of warriors; also attached to the walls is a bench with an inclined backrest.

## LOCATION OF THE MARKET IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Market in Chichen Itza is located in front of the North Pillars and to the left of the Temple of Sculpted Columns.

# Tulum



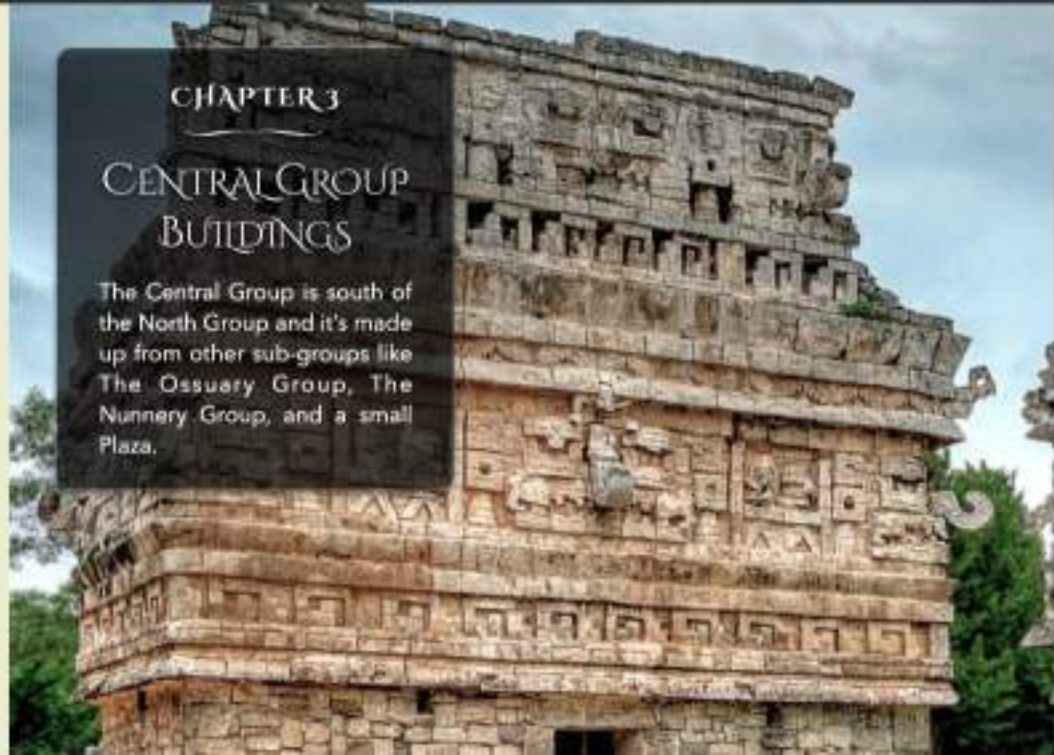
MAYAN  
PENINSULA

Visit [mayanpeninsula.com](http://mayanpeninsula.com) to learn about Tulum.

## CHAPTER 3

### CENTRAL GROUP BUILDINGS

The Central Group is south of the North Group and it's made up from other sub-groups like The Ossuary Group, The Nunnery Group, and a small Plaza.





Chichén Itzá



THE  
OSSUARY

The Ossuary in Chichén Itzá is also known as the Great Priest's Tomb. This structure measures more than 10 meters high and it's made up of nine staggered bodies very similar to the Kukulcán Pyramid, to such degree of resembling a replica, with the difference of having less height and a frieze covered with mythological reliefs decorated in its corners with the effigy of the god Chaac similar to the ones found in the Warriors and Venus Temple. This structure is part of the group of buildings that with the Venus Platform, together with the Sacbe Number 15 and the Xtoloc Cenote, repeat the architectural pattern found in the Kukulcán Pyramid, the Temple of Venus, the Sacbe Number 1 and the Sacred Cenote.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OSSUARY

In the upper part of the Ossuary, between the first two carved serpents, there is an entrance lined with stone, which descends vertically to the base of the pyramid, beyond a set of stone stairs and entering 12 meters deep into a cave where seven tombs were discovered along with jade objects, copper bells, rock crystals and shells.

An interesting aspect of this structure is that when going down to the tombs, there's an entry through a natural tunnel that the natives participating in the first explorations assured measured more than 20 kilometers and that it goes into another nearby Mayan city, probably Yaxuna. According to tradition, this tunnel or cavern represents the gate between the world of the dead and paradise.



## 360° VIEW OF THE OSSUARY




360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE OSSUARY IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Ossuary in Chichen Itza is part of the Central Group, and it's the first big structure you'll see when coming from the Kukulcan Pyramid. Right in front of it is a round platform, the Venus Platform, and then The Tomb Platform.



Chichén Itzá



TOMB PLATFORM

This platform, also known as 3C4, has three chambers that contained human remains, which is the reason why it was later called Tomb Platform. In the first of the chambers, there were two skeletons in very poor condition belonging to male individuals, and some fragmented vessels. In the second chamber, another two damaged male skeletons were found, in addition to two broken vessels, two jade objects, a copper rattle, a rock crystal, and many shell ornaments which make archeologists think that they had been part of a mask.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TOMB AND VENUS PLATFORM

The Tomb Platform is 7.8 m from north to south by 5.6 m from east to west, and 1.60 m high, topped by a cornice-frieze arrangement of intertwined snakes in relief. Another feature that gives particularity to the Tomb Platform is the existence of six columns that measure 1.90 meters from the upper level of the structure.

The Venus Platform is very similar to the Venus Temple in the Grand Plaza where the Eukulkan Pyramid is found. The Round Platform contained a box of offerings and a small flagstone pavement. The function of both was to serve as platforms for ceremonies, rites or dances.



Chichén Itzá  
MAYAN  
TOMB AND VENUS  
PLATFORM

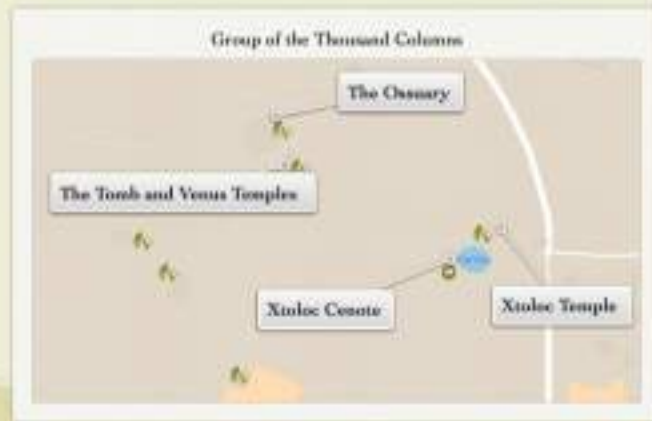


## 360° VIEW OF THE TOMB AND VENUS TEMPLE



360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE TOMB AND VENUS PLATFORM IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Tomb Platform in Chichen Itza is in the Central Group, and it's the last 4 structures aligned in the following order: The Tomb Platform, the Venus Platform, a round Platform, and the Ossuary. These 2 Platforms are in the Central Group, and they're between the Tomb Platform and the Ossuary.



Chichén Itzá  
MAYAN  
CIVILIZATION

CHICHANCHOB

This building is the largest and best preserved of the four buildings that surround the plaza or main plain. Chichanchob translates as "small holes" from the Mayan *ch'ich'ichan*, meaning "small", and *ch'ob*, "hole", perhaps because of the small holes in its raised crest. It's also commonly known as Red House "Casa Colorada", because of a strip painted in red inside the vestibule or first bay.

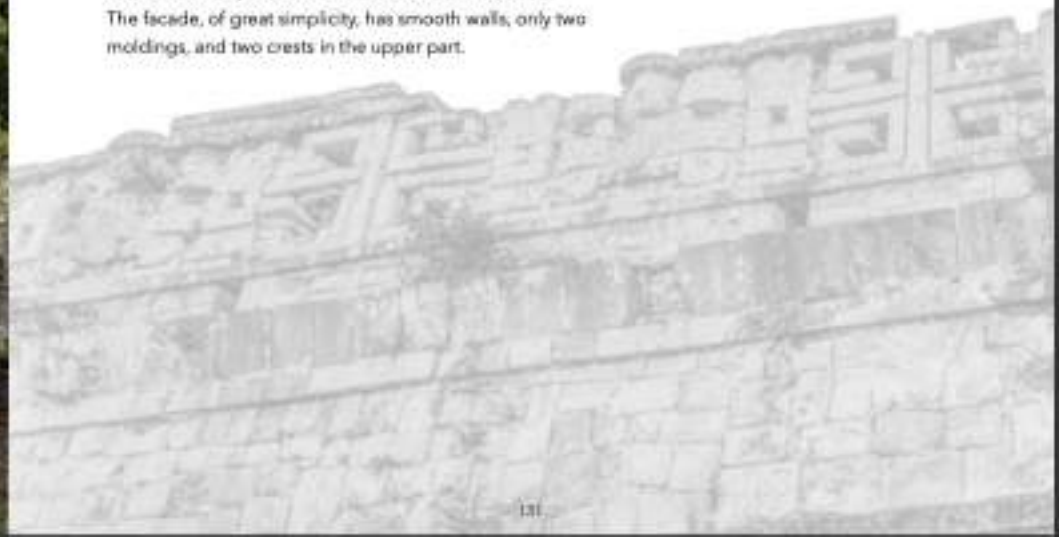


Esta estructura corresponde al estilo Puuc, aunque más tarde los itz'ates construyeron un pequeño juego de pelota unido a la pared trasera o al lado. Esta es la estructura.

The inscription "final of the one tun" was found inside the Chichanchob building which refers to the year 850, this allows to establish the antiquity of the building.

This monument is formed by a vestibule which is accessed by three entrances, and three rooms located at the back.

The facade, of great simplicity, has smooth walls, only two moldings, and two crests in the upper part.



## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF CHICHANCHOB

The Red House is composed of a rectangular platform with rounded corners that reaches a height of 7 meters in the form of a slope ending with a protruding molding. The base measures 22.50 m in length by 18 m in width, and in the central part of its west side, there is a simple staircase 9.60 m wide, which allows access to a temple located at the top.

The Chichanchob Temple is set on a podium composed of two moldings and a central strip decorated with stone lattice, interrupted by three staircases that give access to the vestibule or first room.

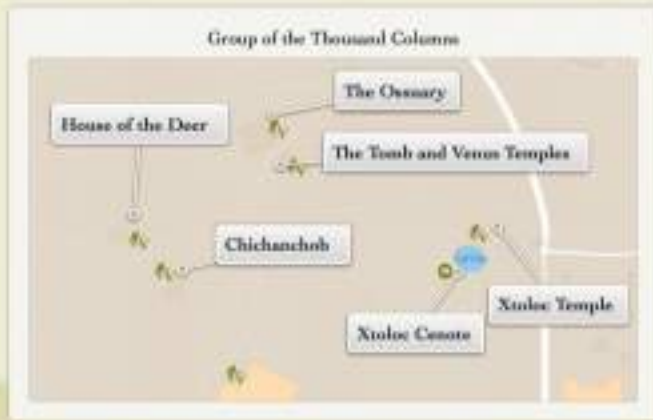
It consists of two bays, one that serves as a vestibule and the other as a sanctuary with three rooms, roofed with a Mayan vault.

The facade of the Chichanchob temple is smooth and with well-cut stones; it has a frieze between two molded cornices, all of which reaches the height of 3.70 m.

It has two cresting: One of them is old and original, placed in the central part of the ceiling with opening in the base and decoration of frets between cornices; and the other which was later built, placed in front of the facade with masks of the god Chac on the axis of the doors and with interspersed frets.



## LOCATION OF CHICHANCHOB IN CHICHEN ITZA



Chichanchob or the Red House, is part of other buildings in a small plaza located on the way from the Ossuary group, to the Observatory.



## HOUSE OF THE DEER



The House of the Deer is nearly gone, but it has very similar architectural guidelines to those of Chichanchob. It's on a platform or basement with rounded corners and a smooth facade; frieze between moldings and cresting on the front without any decoration. It's part of a plaza that contains Chichanchob, and probably a residential complex associated with the Ossuary.

There is very little left of the House of the Deer from what was the original structure: more than half is now collapsed and only one full room is conserved. The entrance to another that no longer exists. Above the ceiling, you can hardly see the remains of what should have been the cresting.

The name is due to the fact that, according to tradition, inside the House of the Deer, a painting of a deer was found on stucco work, unfortunately, it already disappeared. It's thought that the building suffered the passage of a waterway that washed away the stucco on the walls where the paint could have been.

In addition, in front of the House of the Deer, near Chichanchob and some trees, you can see the remains of some elongated buildings that were perhaps temples similar to the two that still remain standing.

## LOCATION OF THE HOUSE OF THE DEER IN CHICHEN TTZA



The House of the Deer is in a square plaza to the south of the Ossuary and before arriving to the Observatory.



The Xtoloc Temple receives its name because it's located next to the Cenote with the same name, the second largest cenote in the center of Chichén Itzá. It probably was used in religious ceremonies, perhaps related to the Cenote. Its construction dates from 900 to 1200. There are sculptured representations of warriors and priests on the pillars of the temple.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE XTOLOC TEMPLE

The Xtoloc Temple has an altar in the interior of the third chamber, originally decorated with bas-reliefs of plants, birds and mythological scenes. A container of offerings with human remains was found beneath the floor.

The facade faces west and due to an alignment, which includes a simple altar, a path of stone slabs and a natural rock outcropping, marked by rows of cut stone.

## LOCATION OF THE XTOLOC TEMPLE IN CHICHEN TTZA



The central entrance of the Xtoloc Temple is in front of a Cenote with the same name on the Sacbe 15, that goes from the Group of the Thousand Columns plaza to the Ossuary group of buildings.

Chichén Itzá



## XTOLOC CENOTE

The name Xtoloc comes from the Mayan word for "iguana" and it was given this name because they inhabit the region. We can still admire them in many buildings throughout other Mayan Archeological Sites like Tulum and Uxmal.

On the way to the Ossuary group, you'll find this beautiful Cenote that although of smaller diameter than the Sacred Cenote was very important for the population of Chichen Itza as a source of water.

Around the Xtoloc Cenote there are small temples like the one that bears its name (Xtoloc Temple); there are also columns with reliefs found lying around.

## LOCATION OF THE XTOLOC CENOTE IN CHICHEN ITZA



The Xtoloc Cenote is in front of a Temple with the same name on the Sacbe 15, that goes from the Group of the Thousand Columns plaza to the Ossuary group of buildings.



Chichén Itzá



MAYAN  
PENINSULA

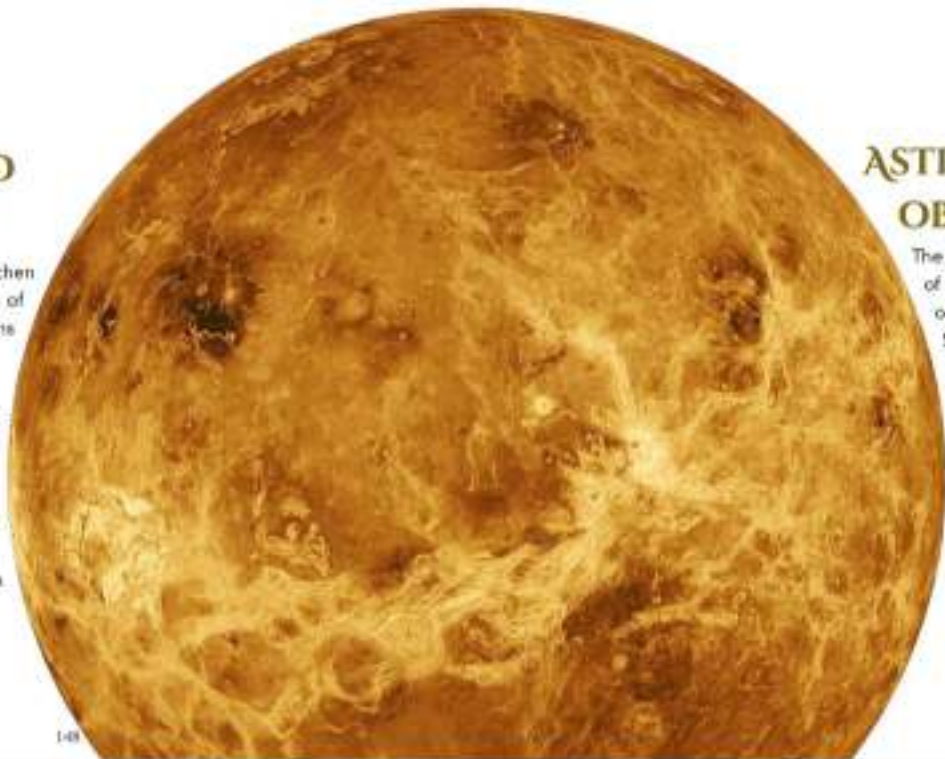
THE  
OBSERVATORY

The Observatory of Chichen Itza, also known as el Caracol, is a round structure very similar to those that exist in other parts of Mesoamerica. It has some windows on the top from which you can see the equinoxes, sunsets, solstices, the positions of Venus and other stars, and the observation guided many of the decisions and actions taken by the ruling class.

## PLANET VENUS AND THE OBSERVATORY

The main purpose for the Observatory in Chichen Itza was to watch and study the trajectory of Venus, and based only on visual observations the Mayans came to know that:

- Venus appears in the west and disappears in the east at different times throughout the year.
- Its synodic cycle was 584 days.
- 5 cycles of Venus were equivalent to 8 solar years.
- Venus appeared at the north and south extremes at 8-year intervals.



## ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATIONS

The principle of astronomical observations is based between two angles of walls in the interior of an opening, this method allows to make observations of a great precision.

Studying the results provided by the upper chamber of the Chichen Itza Observatory, we get the following results:

- The first observation span gives us the exact direction of the south.
- The second one, the setting of the moon on March 21.
- The third one, the direction of the west, as well as the setting of the sun at the equinoxes of March 21 and September 21.
- And finally, a fourth observation through the same place corresponds to the sunset on the summer solstice, on June 21.

## THE OBSERVATORY TO GUIDE OTHER ACTIVITIES

It was also used to define dates of sacred rituals and defining the cycles of cultivation and agricultural activities in general because the sunsets on the horizon marked to the ancients the stages of the cycle and hence the importance that the observatories had for the Mayans.



## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OBSERVATORY

This building is composed of a rectangular platform that measures 67 m from north to south and 52 from east to west; it has a single body slightly sloped with a cornice board, whose total height is 6 m. There is a set of 3 staircases on its front which points to the west decorated with interlaced serpents.

A circular building 16 m diameter and 5 m high was built on top of the main platform with a single body composed of sidewalks with a slight protruding molding and a vertical wall finished off with another molding. The Chichen Itza Observatory is surrounded by a rectangular platform. On top of this, a construction 11 m in diameter and 3.70 m high was built, consisting of a single vertical body between two molded cornices.

The third and upper body is very destroyed, but it shows a series of small openings or windows used for observations.

Towards the southwest corner of the great platform of The Observatory, a rectangular attached platform was built with a stairway limbed by rafters decorated with feathered

A temple or residential building of 14 m long by 9 m wide was built on top of this platform, composed of two parallel bays, the first one has two rows of columns, and the second one narrower and with an entry door, in which there is a stool that occupies almost all the space. The facade of the building has a slope, a vertical wall and a cornice with moldings, all free of decoration.

Chichén Itzá



OBSERVATORY  
ANNEX



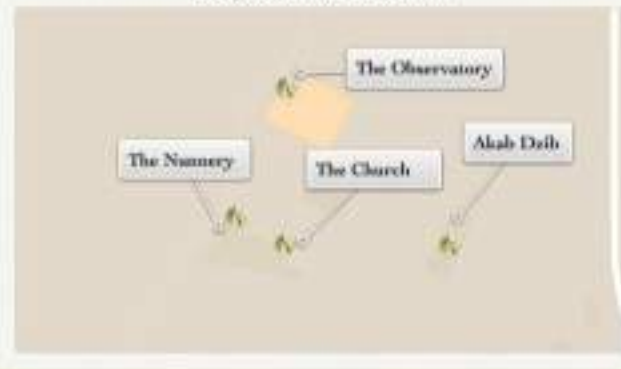
## 360° VIEW OF THE OBSERVATORY




360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE OBSERVATORY IN CHICHEN ITZA

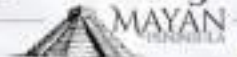
Group of the Thousand Columns



The Chichen Itza Observatory is on the Central Group between Chichanchob and the Nuns Building.



Chichén Itzá



THE  
NUNNERY

The Nunnery in Chichén Itzá has its front to the north and consists of three buildings: Las Monjas (The Nuns), the East and Southeast wings, which correspond to several building periods overlapping.

It's possible that its name is due to the fact that the buildings, with numerous rooms, reminded the Spaniards of their convents. The great set of the Nunnery in Chichén Itzá has palace type structures, a ball game, and a low wall. The main building has at least six construction stages, with modifications in the building, decoration, and style; indications of a long period of occupation.

It has three floors in which the Mayan-Toltec style and the Puuc are combined. On the second floor, there are long inscriptions on the lintels and it is richly decorated with mural painting and stone mosaics of late Puuc style. The constructions are known as the Annex and the Church are part of this complex.

## THE ORIGINAL TEMPLE OF THE NUNNERY

This original temple was an independent construction, but later enlarged, reaching 50 m long by 23 wide, for which part of the eastern wing was covered, giving the impression that this building is placed inside the bigger one.

It consists of a single body with a molded base, vertical frieze and a wide molding decorated with Chac masks and lattice panels, also with rounded corners.



### THE EASTERN CHAMBER

The Eastern Chamber is the most luxurious and elegant facade of the Nunnery Complex. It consists of a pithli formed by two projecting moldings and a central strip decorated with squat columns and friets. There's also a central door framed by curved noses of the god Chac. On each side you can find four masks of the same god, two of them superimposed on the corners, and in the upper molding formed by zigzag bars that give the impression of a snake. The building possibly had a cresting at the front of the facade.

Chichén Itzá  
MAYAN  
THE NUNNERY

There is a hieroglyphic inscription on the lintel of the door that has been calculated around the year 880, according to the Katun count; and as already mentioned, part of its west wing was covered by the extension of the second basement of the Nunnery in Chichen Itza, shortening its rooms and giving the impression that the building penetrates the basement. It is also very probable that this building was modified in part during the occupation of the Itza, when the cult of Kukulcan was introduced.

## SOUTHEAST BUILDING

The Southeast building corresponds to the times of the Itzaes, who brought the cult of Kukulcan and other architectural forms, such as the use of columns to support wooden lintels and jambs with bas-reliefs. You can actually see how both the Nunnery and the East buildings were attached in order to frame a small patio surrounded by other structures of that time.

## THE MOST RECENT BUILDING

The Nunnery is composed of a high body that reaches 10 m high, formed by a base between simple moldings, a vertical frieze and another wide molding, all smooth and with rounded corners. On the north side, there was a central stairway which allowed access to the upper temple.

The temple consists of two long parallel bays, with six squares aligned and with doors that look north and south, as well as two independent rooms, one at each end and with east and west doors, all of them roofed with a Mayan vault.

The facade-facing north is decorated with lattice panels and columns, while the south facade has frets, tied columns, and sculpted rosettes. The building has a Chenes style because the facade is completely decorated; the frieze between moldings is smooth and inclined, which gives it a Mayan hut appearance.

## 360° VIEW OF THE NUNNERY



360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE NUNNERY IN CHICHEN ITZA

Group of the Thousand Columns



The Nuns Building is the next major building on the left of the Observatory and almost the end of the road before you have to return.



Chichen Itzá

MAYAN  
PENINSULA

## THE CHURCH

When the Church in Chichen Itza was first discovered, this building was notable for the good state of preservation it was in, and for the richness and beauty of its ornaments. La Iglesia (the Church) is a small building next to Las Monjas with a single chamber and one access door, similar to a rectangular chapel, hence its name.

This building has a rectangular floor plan and consists of a single vaulted room. The main facade faces the west, with an entrance made of stone lintel in the central part of the building.

#### DECORATED FRINGES

Two fringes decorated with frets runs along the whole building, the first one is a simple pattern above the door limited by two moldings. The second fringe comes above the decorated frieze, and it's made of a band of serrated and zig-zag bars forming inverted triangles that give the impression of a serpent, all within two simple molds.



#### THE CHURCH FRONTAL CRESTING

A cresting rises on the facade wall that gives more height to the Church in Chichen Itza, profusely decorated with stone mosaic, in the Puuc style. This is composed of a fringe decorated with frets, between two simple moldings, then the frieze decorated with masks of Chac. And finally comes the cornice that tops the building.

#### DECORATED FRIEZE

In the decorated frieze you can see three masks made in the stone mosaic technique, one in the central part and one in each corner, with their noses hooked or rolled representing Chac, the god of rain.

On each side of the central mask, there is a kind of niche with two figures, sitting on a shelf or throne, which have been identified with the Four Bacabes that held the sky in its four directions.

In the niche from the north you can see a figure with wings and an oval pectoral hanging on a rope or string, as well as another figure with a snail on its back; while in the south niche one of the figures carries a kind of shell around the body, and the other has a turtle shell. Some consider the Bacabes disguised as crab, snail, armadillo, and tortoise.



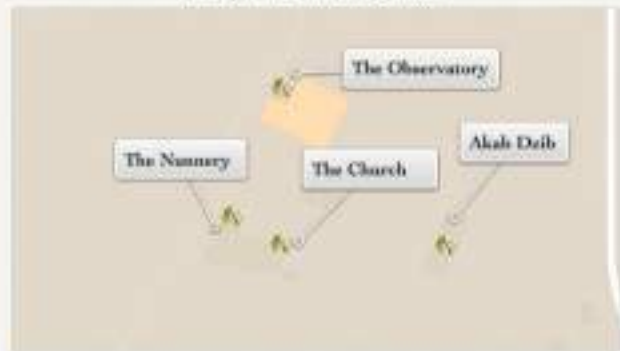
### 360° VIEW OF THE CHURCH



360° Photo opens in your browser and requires internet connection.

## LOCATION OF THE CHURCH IN CHICHEN ITZA

Group of the Thousand Columns



The Church in Chichen Itza is a stand-alone building next to the Nunnery Building.

# Chichén Itzá



## AKAB DZIB



The name Akab Dzib comes from non-deciphered hieroglyphs that means "dark writing", not because of "dark spell-like enchantments", but because they haven't been deciphered, yet...

The hieroglyphs were found on the lintel of one of the inner doors of the south section of the building, the undeciphered hieroglyphs are found in front of a sculpted priest sitting on a throne.

There's a lintel with the date 10.2.1.0.0. from the Mayan Calendar that has been calculated in the year 869.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AKAB DZIB

Akab Dzib is composed of a central building 54 m long, 16 m wide, and 6 m tall with two rooms joined at the north and south ends. The two other identical buildings were built centuries after the main one, and each of them has eight chambers or rooms, roofed with a Mayan vault or false arch. The entire construction consists of three sections with 18 chambers or rooms; and well-cut ashlars in their facades that look to the east.

It also has 7 doorways on its western facing facade, and 4 on the eastern side with a staircase that leads to the roof. Inside there are hands painted in red on the vaults of some rooms, perhaps related to Kabul, god of the "celestial hand".

## LOCATION OF THE AKAB DZIB IN CHICHEN ITZA

Group of the Thousand Columns



Akab Dzib is near the Nuns Building, and almost behind the Observatory. It's also the last building at the end of the road.

# Dzibilchaltún



Visit [mayanpeninsula.com](http://mayanpeninsula.com) to learn more about Dzibilchaltún.

## CHAPTER 4

### TOURISM

This Chapter is dedicated for the traveler that's planning a trip to this Amazing Archaeological Site with information that will help get the most out of his visit.



## BEST TIME TO VISIT CHICHEN ITZA

The Best time to visit Chichen Itza depends on your schedule and likes because you might like large crowds or be the only one there. For large crowds go on the Chichen Itza Equinox or a Mexican Holiday, if you can't schedule these days, just visit between 11 am and 2 pm to get the largest crowds.

On the other hand, if you like to be practically the only one there, visit Chichen Itza on a rainy day, or be there at 8 am.



## ADMISSION FEE

When visiting most of the Mayan archeological sites you need to pay 2 fees, one for the Yucatán Tax Administration Agency, and a second one for the National Institute of Arts and History.

## FREE ADMISSION

- Free admission for Mexican Citizens on Sundays.
- Free admission every day for Mexican Citizens with the following valid IDs: Older than 60 years, retired, pensioned, teachers, students, children under 13 and handicapped.

### GENERAL ADMISSION

State fee: \$451 MXN

Federal fee: \$70 MXN

Total: \$481 MXN

### MEXICAN CITIZENS

State fee: \$132 MXN

Federal fee: \$70 MXN

Total: \$202 MXN

### YUCATÁN STATE CITIZENS

State fee: \$0 MXN

Federal fee: \$70 MXN

Total: \$70 MXN

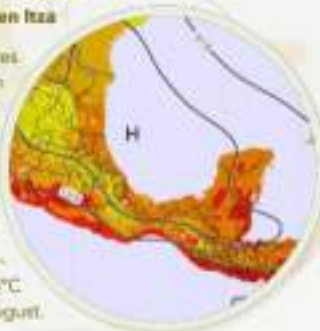


### General Weather in the State of Yucatan

Chichen Itza is located in the Yucatan Peninsula south of the Tropic of Cancer and surrounded by warm tropic waters from the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean which means it has a warm and humid tropical weather.

### Temperature in Chichen Itza

The temperatures in the Mayan Peninsula are very high and constant throughout the year between 28°C in December-January and 35°C in May-August.



### Rain and hurricanes

The Mayan Peninsula has two rainy seasons between May and October, and between November and April, of course, this season may come before and after these months.

Since there are no mountains in the Mayan Peninsula, hurricanes have no obstacles to slow them down, which makes the land vulnerable to tropical storms and hurricanes coming from the East. The tropical hurricane season starts on May and ends in December.

### Best hours to visit Chichen Itza

The best time during the day is between 8 and 11 am, and if you're not an early bird, you can get there between 2 and 3 pm.



### Worst time and day to visit Chichen Itza

The worst hours to visit Chichen Itza is between 11 am and 3 pm when most of the tour buses arrive.

The worst day to visit Chichen Itza is on Sundays when every person with a valid ID from Mexico can get in for free.





### The best months to visit Chichen Itza

The best time to visit Chichen Itza according to months is between March and May because there's not a lot of rain and there's also not that much tourism.

After these months, the second-best time to visit Chichen Itza is between December and February because of the weather, but the downside is that there's a lot of tourists, so try to get there early.

## RECOMMENDATIONS WHEN VISITING CHICHEN ITZA

Some of the Chichen Itza recommendations you find here may be common sense like drink lots of water and protect yourself from UV rays, but I recommend you read all of them to learn a couple of things you may not have thought about.

### Keep yourself hydrated

The first of our Chichen Itza recommendations is take a few liters of water on your backpack because you're going to sweat, plus the weather is very hot and humid.

### Wear comfortable shoes

You may wear sandals, but it's best to take your hiking or tennis shoes. The pathways are a bit uneven unpaved, also you'll have to keep an eye out for errant rocks and sticks.

#### **Plan your route**

If you're just looking to take a couple of amazing pictures in front of the main pyramid, and other nearby constructions, there's no need to plan the route, but if you want to see everything, it's best to plan ahead so you know what you want to see, and where it is.

#### **Be patient**

Lots of people visit Chichen Itza, and most of them get there between 11 am and 1 pm, so if you're expecting to take a picture by yourself in front of the Kukulcan Pyramid, that may be a bit difficult. So, you can wait, or just take the picture and then edit your photo later.

#### **Protect yourself from harmful UV rays**

This is one of the most important Chichen Itza recommendations because you may find some shades under the trees, but most of the time, you will be under direct sunlight, so make sure to use sunscreen, a hat, and it may also be a good idea to take an umbrella with you.

#### **Hire a guide (or not)**

Other than taking amazing pictures, a must when you visit Chichen Itza is to know what you're looking at and a little bit of history. So, you have 2 options, read before you go, or hire a tour guide.

#### **Avoid large crowds**

Chichen Itza can get very crowded depending on the season, schedule and day of the week. There's not much we can do about the season because we usually plan our trip depending on other factors, but try to avoid Sundays because any citizen with a valid Mexican ID gets in for free.

Another thing to look out for if you want to avoid large crowds in Chichen Itza is that most of the tour buses get there at around 11 am, so if it's in your hands, try to get there at 8 am, or after 2 pm.

#### **No drones or tripods allowed**

You may freely take pictures and video with your handheld camera or smartphone, but you have to pay a small fee for shooting video with a pro camera. Also, keep in mind you can't use drones.

If you really need to use a tripod, there's a special permission to use one, but it might take some valuable time out of your visit to get it.

#### **Get a bus tour**

While driving yourself may give you the freedom to stay the time you need and stopping to eat wherever you want, it might be tiring for the driver. So, it might be a good idea to get a bus tour to Chichen Itza because most of them include the access ticket, a tour guide, food, and drinks, so you don't have to worry about anything else other than enjoying your trip.

#### **Something about salespeople**

There are souvenir stands everywhere, selling figurines, t-shirts, wood carvings, and the list goes on. It's important to buy from them and not big chain stores because some of the articles you can find there are works of art that were built with their own hands, plus you help their economy. But in my opinion, I don't think there should be so many of them, this amazing Archeological Site ends up looking like a market. Also, a few of them lie to get your attention, they may say something like: 5 T-shirts for \$5 dollars, and when you ask, they say: 5 T-shirts for \$25 dollars, making it seem like you may have heard wrong. Or they have a big figurine and offer it to you at \$1 dollar, and when you approach them to buy it, they have a small one "hidden" in the other hand; then they tell you that's the one that costs \$1 dollar, and the big one costs \$30.

#### **Bring cash**

While traveling in México, it's always best to carry cash because you never know when you can pay with a credit or debit card. Even when they accept them, they may not work properly, try to carry cash with you.

#### **Bring mosquito repellent**

It depends on the season, but most of the year there are lots of mosquitos, so I would recommend taking with you some mosquito repellent in the form of liquid, bracelet, sticker, or whatever works for you.

## CHICHEN ITZA RECOMMENDATIONS IF YOU'RE DRIVING

### **Get there early (or late)**

Try to get there between 8 and 10 am because most tour buses arrive between 11 am and 1 pm, plus it's not that hot when you arrive that early.

If you're not an early bird, try to get there between 2 and 3 pm, when the tour buses start to leave.

### **Lookout for expensive toll booths**

There are also a couple of expensive tolls along the way, depending on where you're staying, so bring some extra cash with you.

### **Time your trip**

Depending on where you are staying (from Mérida: 1:30 hours, and from Cancún: 2:30), you should time your trip. For example, if you want to get there at 8 am from Cancún, you should leave at around 5:30 am.

### **Leave on a full tank**

You may find some gas stations along the way, but it's better to just fill up your tank before you leave so you don't have to stop.

### **Car A/C is a must**

If you rent a car, make sure it has a working A/C, even while driving at high speed on the highway, you may need to cool off.

## RENTAL CARS

If you're looking to **rent** a car in the **Mayan Peninsula**, consider [rentalcars.com](http://rentalcars.com) where you can find Big Brands, Huge Choice, and Massive Savings.



Rentalcars.com

A screenshot of the Rentalcars.com search interface. The main heading is "Let's find your ideal car". Below this is a search bar with a location input field containing "Cancun, Mexico". To the right of the search bar is a scenic image of a coastline with green hills and blue water. Below the search bar are two date pickers for "Pick-up date" and "Drop-off date", both set to "Wed 28 Oct 11". Below the date pickers are two dropdown menus for "Pick-up location" and "Drop-off location", both set to "Cancun". A green "Search" button is at the bottom right of the search form. To the right of the search form, there is a text box that says "Rentalcars.com connects you to the biggest brands in car hire." Below this text are logos for several car rental brands: Hertz, Avis, Budget, Alamo, Dollar, and Thrifty.

## HOW TO GET TO CHICHEN ITZA

Chichen Itza is located in Mexico, east of the state of Yucatan, between the cities of Merida (120 km east) and Cancun (200 km west).

So, if you're visiting any of the popular cities in the Yucatan or Quintana Roo states, you can arrive in a comfortable and safe way, using any means of transportation like:

### TOUR BUSES CAR RENTAL OR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



## TOURS TO CHICHEN ITZA

You can get a complete experience to Chichen Itza with the hiring of a Tour Agency like Xichen by Xcaret that can offer you different packages with everything to turn your trip to Chichen Itza into a unique experience.

The Classic Chichen Itza Tour will provide full transportation either by bus or van from the hotel where you're staying or from any other pick up point.

The tour includes the price of the tickets with a guide included, which will give you a tour through the site with breaks for free time.

The guides are certified and speak English, some of them even speak multiple languages.



## TOP 5 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING THE BEST CHICHEN ITZA TOUR

Taking a Tour to Chichen Itza is a must whenever you visit the Mayan Peninsula, whether you're staying in Merida, Cancun, Playa del Carmen or anywhere in the Riviera Maya.

Since this is a highly touristic region, there are lots of options to take to choose from, now the question is, who should you go with?

There are several things to consider when choosing the best Chichen Itza Tour between the hundreds out there, but these are the top 5: