



# Tikal

The ruins of Tikal, the largest and most significant urban center of the Mayas, are located in the jungles of Petén in modern-day Guatemala. The Mayan civilization began to flourish somewhere around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, which is when the oldest of the buildings we see today were built. It's believed that at the peak of its power, Tikal was home to around 100,000 people which would make it not only one of the largest cities of the Mayans, but of the world at that time.

Between 300 BC and 100 AD, Tikal slowly grew and established itself as a ceremonial and trading center of the region. The year 378 AD marked a major turning point for the city. A ruler from Teotihuacan called Siyah K'ak' or "Fire is Born" killed Tikal's king, Jaguar Paw, and established a new dynasty. Under the new rulers, the city continued to thrive and spread its influence until it expanded to a territory of over 60km<sup>2</sup>. The central area was filled with magnificent temples, palaces, hospitals, baths, schools, and even a sports stadium.

In 562 AD two powerful city-states, Calakmul and Caracol united to defeat Tikal. For over 100 years the city was occupied by foreign rulers until a member of the previous ruling dynasty, Jasaw Chan K'awiil came to take it back. Jasaw Chan K'awiil, also known as Ah Cacau, or Lord Chocolate, defeated the usurpers in 695 AD and is today hailed as Tikal's greatest ruler.

Lord Chocolate was buried in Jaguar Temple which is the largest and most famous temple on the site today. Across from Jaguar Temple in the Grand Plaza is the Temple of the Masks, which is believed to have been his wife's tomb. To the north of these two temples is the North Acropolis which served as the burial ground for the city's elite, and to the south, the Central Acropolis was where the city's rulers resided. The Lost World Complex nearby contains the oldest structures on the site, but its exact purpose is still unknown. These temples also served as an observatory for the Mayan astronomers, who used their calculations to create the famously accurate Mayan calendar.

Around 950 AD Tikal was completely abandoned and forgotten. Archaeologists still struggle to determine why, but famine, overpopulation, and disease are considered to have been possible factors. It was only in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century that the ruins were re-discovered.

Today the ancient city is part of the Tikal National Park which covers 575km<sup>2</sup> and was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979. It is also a popular tourist destination and a great source of pride for the Guatemalan people. Tourists who wish to visit the site often stay in the nearby island-town of Flores. The town's proximity to the ruins enables tourists to arrive at the site in the early hours of the morning when the ruins is mostly empty and they can enjoy a solitary hike to the top of Temple Four, the tallest of all Tikal's temples, which offers a breathtaking view of the surrounding jungle.

## Vocab Match

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Word	Answer	Definition
1. establish	1. ____	a. noun- a line of rulers belonging to the same family
2. dynasty	2. ____	b. verb- to grow and develop fast
3. thrive	3. ____	c. verb- to become longer, wider, larger
4. influence	4. ____	d. noun- a high place used for studying stars
5. expand	5. ____	e. noun- ability to affect the behavior of someone or something
6. usurper	6. ____	f. adjective- exact, precise
7. observatory	7. ____	g. verb- to make, set up on a permanent basis
8. accurate	8. ____	h. noun- a person who takes over a position of power from someone else by force
9. famine	9. ____	i. adjective- extremely beautiful and exciting
10. breathtaking	10. ____	j. noun- extreme shortage of food

## Discussion Topics

1. Which large city would you like to visit and why?
2. Do you prefer spending time in nature or in a city?
3. Have you ever gotten lost?
4. Do you think studying the stars is an important science? Explain your answer.
5. Is there anything about you, your country or something you did that you are really proud of?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Search the text for words that have the same meaning as these:**

- a. Thrive (paragraph 1)
- b. Expand (paragraph 2)
- c. Accurate (paragraph 4)
- d. Breathtaking (paragraph 1)

**Circle the word that cannot replace the word in italics:**

1. The company was *established* in 1970.  
a) founded b) created c) found
2. The city *thrived* under the new government.  
a) prospered b) constructed c) flourished
3. The book is full of detailed and *accurate* information about the topic.  
a) precise b) true c) exact
4. The view from the mountaintop is *breathtaking*.  
a) Impossible b) magnificent c) amazing
5. Over time the city slowly *expanded* its territory.  
a) enlarged b) spread c) lost
6. The stories had a strong *influence* on the younger generation.  
a) Interest b) impact c) effect
7. The *observatory* was high up on the mountain.  
a) lookout b) viewpoint c) watchtower

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Quiz**

**1) Which civilization founded Tikal?**

- a. Teotihuacan b. Maya c. Aztec d. Inca

**2) Where is Tikal located?**

- a. Guatemala b. Colombia c. Venezuela d. Peru

**3) Fire is Born was the name of a ruler from \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a. Tikal b. Caracol c. Calakmul d. Teotihuacan

**4) Tikal's greatest ruler was named after which food?**

- a. coffee b. crackers c. chocolate d. cookies

**5) What is the name of the largest temple in Tikal?**

- a. Temple of the Masks b. Jaguar Temple c. Jaguar Paw d. Central Temple

**6) According to the article, what type of science was famously used during the time of Tikal?**

- a. astronomy b. biology c. chemistry d. archaeology

**7) What happened to Tikal?**

- a. it was defeated b. the Spanish took over c. a disease killed everyone d. it was abandoned

**8) When was Tikal rediscovered?**

- a. 18<sup>th</sup> century b. 19<sup>th</sup> century c. 20<sup>th</sup> century d. 19 years ago

**9) What is the name of the city where tourists usually start their journey?**

- a. Flores b. Flourish c. Lima d. Caracol

**10) Which of the following temples offers the best view?**

- a. Temple 4 b. Jaguar Temple c. 15 Temple of the Gods d. Temple of the Masks

# Key

Matching	Quiz
1. g	1. b
2. a	2. a
3. b	3. d
4. e	4. c
5. c	5. b
6. h	6. a
7. d	7. d
8. f	8. b
9. j	9. a
10. i	10. a

**PROJECT:** Make a presentation about something you are proud of. It can be from your own life or from your community or country or even a global project. Be sure to include details and why this was important for you.

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Source: <http://www.tikalnationalpark.org>,

<https://uncoveredhistory.com/guatemala/tikal/tikal-a-brief-history/>

<https://www.history.com/topics/tikal>

<https://www.ancient.eu/Tikal/>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/secrets-of-the-maya-deciphering-tikal-2289808/>