

Chichen Itza



Chichen Itza means 'at the mouth of the well of Itza'

This is one of the most famous Mayan pyramids.
It is called "El Castillo" which means the castle.
It is in Chichen-Itza in Mexico.



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El Castillo is almost 23 metres tall.

It was built very precisely for astronomy and at a certain time and date, twice a year (March and September), the sun causes shadows to fall in a very specific way. A 33 metre long snake appears, and as the shadows move it creeps down the steps until it reaches the huge serpents head carved in stone at the bottom.



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Chichen Itza is full of beautiful stone carvings that can be seen on all sorts of buildings, structures and statues.



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The Great Ball Court



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- The ball court at Chichen Itza was similar in size to the football pitch at Wembley. The heavy rubber ball would be passed with hips and elbows, the aim being to get it through the ring (not easy).
- The acoustics are amazing. A whisper from one end of the ball court can be heard at the other.
- According to some sources, the losing captain would be decapitated. According to other sources the *winning* captain would offer his head! Apparently it was the ultimate honour as it would get them a direct route to the Upperworld.
- There is a small temple at each end where the rulers would watch the game.



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Cenote Sagrado

This is a natural sink hole, 60 metres across and surrounded by cliffs 27 metres above the water.

Thousands of objects such as shell, jade, wood, obsidian (black glass), cloth and gold as well as human skeletons have been found at the bottom.

It was a place of pilgrimage as well as somewhere to sacrifice victims on occasion!



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Tzompantli or The Wall of Skulls

- The heads of sacrificial victims were placed on this platform.
- As well as the wall of skulls, there are also carvings showing a human sacrifice, eagles eating human hearts and skeleton warriors with shields and arrows.



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