

Chichén Itzá

Chichén Itzá is an archaeological site in Yucatan, Mexico. The central structure of the site is the Temple of Kukulcan, a steep-sided pyramid. The pyramid stands 24m high and has steps leading up each of its four sides to the altar on the top. It was built around the 12th century by the Mayan people. It has a total of 365 steps – the same number of days in the Mayan calendar year.

Twice a year, at the summer and winter equinox, the pyramid casts unusual and mythical shadows that look like feathered serpents crawling down the sides. This is a popular tourist attraction today and has always been considered to be a special and mythical quality of the religious structure.

There are various other ruins at the site of Chichén Itzá, one of which is a ball court where teams (sometimes including prisoners) would compete to get a small rubber ball through stone circles on the walls, positioned eight metres off the ground. The winning team were highly celebrated and given trophies ranging from skulls to feather belts and headdresses.

