

The Maya built amazing buildings as good as any in the ancient world, but would you believe they did them without any metal tools, the wheel or using animals to carry anything?!

TIKAL

Tikal is an important site near El Mirador in Guatemala that became a large city of over 60,000 people by the Late Classic Period (AD 600–900). Maya pyramids were built in stages and were often added to during important times in a ruler's life or when a new ruler came to power. The pyramids usually had a staircase in the middle for public performances and a single room on top.

Scan the Tikal Pyramid to see another great Maya pyramid, Chichen Itza



Temple of the Great Jaguar

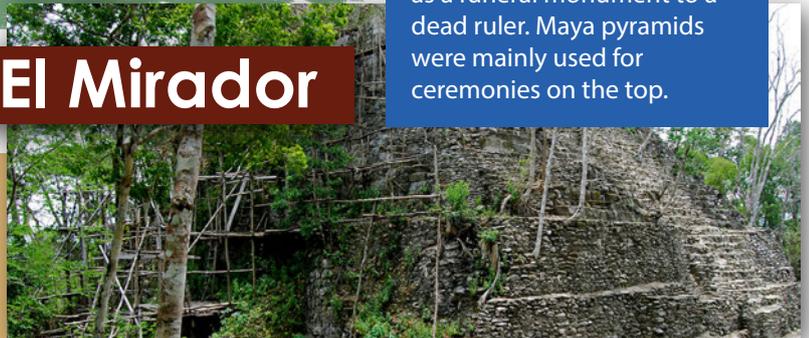
Tikal had several large pyramids and this one is over 45 metres high! Tikal is in Guatemala and is a very popular destination for tourists. It was designated a World Heritage site in 1979.

Maya Mythbuster

The Egyptian pyramids are very similar. Did they help the Maya build their pyramids?

No! The Egyptians built their pyramids 2,000 years earlier. As well as this they have a very different style and function. Egyptian pyramids were built as a funeral monument to a dead ruler. Maya pyramids were mainly used for ceremonies on the top.

El Mirador



Pyramid at El Mirador Photo by Geoff Galice

El Mirador, in the Petén, Guatemala is one of the oldest Maya cities. In 300 BC huge pyramids were discovered rising out of the jungle. El Tigre (Tiger) pyramid was over 50 m high and Danta was over 70 m high! The site includes several hundred buildings over 6 square miles.



Downtown Maya

Maya cities could be quite different in layout, but they usually contained a ceremonial centre where great pyramids, temples, palaces and ball courts were built. Many had a 'main road' (called 'sacbe' – meaning white road in Yucatec Mayan) and also stelae which were standing stones that contained portraits of Maya rulers and information about them. The information carved on stelae recorded events in the lives of rulers, such as birth, marriage, death and conquests.