

Modern Maya

There are nearly 6 million descendants of the ancient Maya living today! Around 4.5 million modern Maya live in Guatemala and represent half of the country's population.



Did the Maya really collapse?

There is a popular myth that the Maya civilisation collapsed very quickly and the Maya disappeared. The Maya did not disappear, but they did abandon cities in the central Petén area of Guatemala over a period of at least 150 years (roughly between AD 760-910). The people who abandoned these sites moved north into the Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico, where we see cities such as Mayapan, which was occupied up until the 15th century.

Did you know?

There are around 30 different Maya languages!



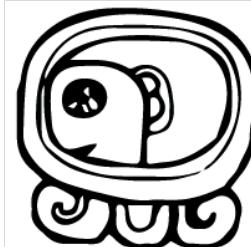
Rigoberta Menchú

The Maya have been discriminated against by the Guatemalan government and have struggled to gain their rights. One such Maya woman, Rigoberta Menchú, wrote about their troubles in her book '*I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*'. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her work in bringing the struggle of the Maya people to international attention.

Huipil

Maya women traditionally wear a blouse called a huipil made of cotton with beautiful designs that are distinct to the community they are from and which act as a form of identity. Huipiles were also worn by ancient Maya women. Women also wear a cotton skirt (corte) and often a coloured cotton ribbon in their hair (cinta). The tradition with men is white trousers with white or blue shirts and sandals, but these generally are worn now only by the elders. Spinning and weaving are important parts of daily life for Maya women and each community has its own customs.

Both the ancient and modern Maya ate lots of maize, beans and squash. Maize (corn) is the most common crop grown in the Maya area. The ancient and modern Maya made several dishes from maize (corn) such as tortillas (flat pancakes used similar to how we use bread) and tamales (vegetables and meat wrapped up in a corn husk) and also beverages, such as a nutritious gruel.



To hear how to say **huipil** point your device here!