

Secrets of the Past

Scientists dig up ancient paintings in Mexico.

Deep in the jungle of southeastern Mexico, researchers stumbled upon a surprise. They found an **ancient**, or very old, pyramid. The pyramid was buried underground. It is covered in colorful **murals**. A mural is a painting on a wall. Those murals are helping scientists unlock a mystery about people from long ago.

The murals are about 1,350 years old. That's more than five times older than the United States. Experts say the paintings belonged to the **Mayas**. That is a group of Native American people. They lived many years ago in what is now Mexico and Central America.



Leigh Haeger

The paintings show scenes from everyday Mayan life. One mural shows a man drinking from a bowl. Another is of a woman selling food to a crowd of people.

Scientists are excited about the discovery because they don't know much about the Mayas' daily lives, explains Michael Coe. He is an expert on the Mayas. The paintings show how the Mayas worked, shopped, and dined.

"Mostly you get the murals ... that show gods and kings, never anything about daily life," Coe told *WR News*. "This is like walking into a Maya supermarket."

So far, scientists have found more than 30 murals on the pyramid. They are not sure why the Mayas created them. The experts hope to learn more as they continue their search.

"We never had anything like this before," says Coe. "These are really [special] murals."

Oh, Maya!

The Mayas were known for more than just painting. Keep reading to learn some fun facts about the Mayan way of life.



Getty Images

Home Sweet Home

The Mayas lived in what is now Central and North America. Today the area includes parts of Mexico, Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.



Calakmul Archaeological Project/R. Carrasco, V. Vázquez, S. Martin

Smart Starts

The Mayas invented a type of math. They also created a type of writing that uses **symbols**, or pictures (above). Mayas made books using tree bark.



iStockphoto

What's Cooking?

The Mayas often chowed on corn and used it to make other foods, such as tortillas. They grew many crops, including avocados, beans, chili peppers, and sweet potatoes.

Independent Practice

Complete the topic, main idea, and supporting details chart. For extra points use the information to write a brief summary.

Name _____

Main Idea/Details/ Summary Chart

Topic: _____

Main Idea: _____

Supporting Detail: _____

Supporting Detail: _____

Supporting Detail: _____

Summary: _____

©Synergetics 1996 47