

Ciudad Perdida

On land | Colombia | about 800 CE | Grades 3-5

Name _____

Date _____

Ciudad Perdida is older than Machu Picchu, and it was found again by treasure hunters in 1972.

Read the story

Ciudad Perdida, which means Lost City in Spanish, was built by the Tairona people around 800 CE. Its local name is Teyuna. It is about 650 years older than Machu Picchu.

The city has more than 160 stone terraces, linked by stone paths and stairways. Round wooden houses with tall thatched roofs once stood on the terraces. Between 2,000 and 8,000 people may have lived here.

The Tairona were skilled goldsmiths. They made beautiful gold figures and jewelry. After the Spanish arrived in the 1500s, war and disease forced the Tairona to leave, and the jungle swallowed the city.

How it ended

During the Spanish conquest, the Tairona fled deep into the mountains. The city was abandoned and covered by forest. It was not lost to the local Indigenous peoples, but the outside world did not learn of it until the 1970s.

Key words

- Tairona: an Indigenous culture of northern Colombia
- goldsmith: a craftsperson who makes things from gold
- descendant: a person related to someone who lived long ago

Wow facts

- Visitors must hike about 4 days, round trip, through the jungle to see it.
- Indigenous peoples of the area say they always knew about the city.
- The Tairona made gold figures of frogs, bats and bird-men.

Talk about it

1. What does it mean for a city to be lost if some people always knew where it was?

2. Why should Indigenous peoples help decide how their sacred places are protected?

Try this

Draw a map of Ciudad Perdida as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. Who built Ciudad Perdida?

- A. The Tairona
- B. The Inca
- C. The Aztecs
- D. The Romans

2. How do visitors reach it today?

- A. A multi-day jungle hike
- B. A highway
- C. A subway
- D. An elevator

3. Which is older?

- A. Ciudad Perdida
- B. Machu Picchu
- C. They are the same age
- D. Neither

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/ciudad-perdida/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. The Tairona people built it around 800 CE.
2. A. It takes a hike of several days through the jungle.
3. A. Ciudad Perdida is about 650 years older.