

Kuelap

On land | Peru | 6th-16th century CE | Grades 6-8

Name _____ Date _____

Kuelap's stone walls are taller than a five-story building, and its homes were decorated with diamond and zigzag patterns.

Read the story

The Chachapoya people, sometimes called the Warriors of the Clouds, lived in the cloud forests of northern Peru. Around 500 CE they began building Kuelap, and it was used for about a thousand years.

Kuelap sits along a ridge about 600 meters long. Its outer walls reach up to about 19 meters tall. Entrances narrow so that only one person at a time can pass, which made it easy to defend.

Inside were more than 400 round stone houses with cone-shaped thatched roofs. Many were decorated with zigzag and diamond patterns. In the late 1400s, the Inca conquered the Chachapoya. When the Spanish arrived, disease and war emptied Kuelap.

How it ended

After the Inca conquered them, and the Spanish arrived, diseases and warfare reduced the Chachapoya population. Kuelap was abandoned and covered by cloud forest until it was reported in 1843.

Key words

- fortress: a strong building or place built to defend against attack
- cloud forest: a mountain forest often covered in clouds and mist
- sarcophagus: a stone or clay coffin

Wow facts

- Kuelap may contain more stone than the Great Pyramid of Giza.
- People kept guinea pigs inside their round houses.
- The Chachapoya placed mummies in cliff tombs that are very hard to reach.

Talk about it

1. Why might a group build a city on a high, misty ridge?

2. How do narrow entrances help defenders?

Try this

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

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. Who built Kuelap?

- A. The Chachapoya
- B. The Aztecs
- C. The Romans
- D. The Vikings

2. How do most visitors reach Kuelap today?

- A. A cable car
- B. A submarine
- C. A train through a tunnel
- D. A camel

3. What animal did people keep in their homes?

- A. Guinea pigs
- B. Elephants
- C. Penguins
- D. Horses

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/kuelap/ 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 Chachapoya, or Cloud People, built Kuelap.
2. A. A cable car carries visitors up the mountain.
3. A. Guinea pigs were raised inside homes for food.