

Mexico: Tulum World Schooling Lesson Guide

Q 1) Where is Tulum located?

- A) In the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, in the state of Quintana Roo along the Caribbean Sea.

Q 2) What was the ancient Mayan name of Tulum and what does it mean?

- A) Zamá, place of the rising sun. This is significant because the main temple faces the East and was the first building to receive the morning light of the sun. It was painted in red, blue and yellow with a flaming fire painted to look as if it scorches the temple. Tulum means wall or trench, as it is one of the ruins that still has the majority of the wall intact.

Q 3) How large was the city of Tulum?

- A) Tulum was one of the smaller Mayan cities. Though it was a huge trading port and one of the most important during the end of Mayan civilization, no more than approximately 1600 people lived here at one time. Of these 1600 people they were all of the ruling class, or those involved in the ceremonies performed here. The residents of the city all lived outside the walls.

Q 4) When was Tulum originally constructed and how long was it believed to be inhabited?

- A) Construction first began in the year 500 AD and continued for 1000 years until 1521. The city did not thrive until well into the 1200's at which time it became the main trading port for the city of Coba and received goods as far as Guatemala. It is one of the last thriving cities of the Mayan reign prior to Spanish invaders.

Q 5) What kinds of goods were traded and sourced through Tulum?

- A) Tulum ruled as the epicenter of trade in the Yucatán Peninsula sourcing cacao, copper, salt, food, materials, cotton, and more plus jewels such as turquoise and jade. It is the only Mayan city (discovered so far) that resided on the coast making it an important factor in growth and power.

Q 6) Why was the location for Tulum selected and what made it such a great fortification?

- A) Perched on the edge of the steep Caribbean cliff, the city protected all incoming trade ships from the ragged rocks on the shore and served as watchhouse for invaders. Like

most cities, a wall was also built around Tulum that was 16 feet tall and 26 feet thick making it virtually impenetrable.

Q 7) Did the sun temple serve any other purpose?

A) In 1987 it was discovered the the windows in the sun temple also acted as light beacons to incoming and departing canoes that brought goods through the port.

Q 8) Based off the location and city size, what can we presume the people of Tulum ate?

A) There is a small aquarium located nearby in Tulum, which indicates that a variety of fish are abundant in this region. Naturally corn, tomatoes, beans, rice were all staples of the ancient and current Mexican diet based off of topography and climate.