

Mexico: Ek Balam World Schooling Lesson Guide

Q 1) Where is Ek Balam located?

A) In the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, in the state of Quintana Roo southwest of Cancun.

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

A) Black Jaguar, and it means the afterlife. Mayan culture was centered around the belief that the heavens, earth and afterlife were integrally connected throughout the universe. Birds represented heaven, snakes represented the earth and jaguars represented the afterlife. The architecture, the jungle, the temples of Mayan civilization all reflect an integral belief system that what is above is connected to what is below.

Q 3) How large was the city of Ek Balam?

A) 45 structures have been discovered so far at Ek Balam, but this is a relatively new site to be discovered and it is not known how large it truly is. Thus we do not know how many people lived here, but we do know it was a very prestigious and wealthy city.

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

A) Construction first began in the year 600 BC and thrived until the year 1600 AD. It is believed the civilization at Ek Balam lasted longer than Chichen Itza by nearly 400 years.

Q 5) What is the main temple at Ek Balam?

A) The main temple at Ek Balam is known as the Acropolis. It is both a temple, a palace, and a burial tomb and is comprised of six distinct levels with 72 different rooms. The ascending stairs are situated at the center of the structure and lead to the uppermost room with rooms that branch off horizontally at the base and halfway up. In addition to the Acropolis there are three other temples located around the city center. One is called the twin temples, and the other called the oval temple. The oval temple and the Acropolis face each other and can be seen standing atop the height of either one.

Q 6) What are the most notable features at Ek Balam?

A) Ek Balam houses many notable features including the Acropolis that is nearly 100 feet tall, and offers a view of the temple at Coba 30 miles away.

Also notable is the Royal Tomb of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' found behind the entrance to the sacrificial pit at Ek Balam. It is framed by a giant jaguars open mouth with protruding teeth that guards the entrance to the underworld.

There is also an intact baptismal font in front of the Acropolis that was used for various rituals.