





# Teotihuacan

The ancient city of Teotihuacan flourished in central Mexico, just north of modern day Mexico City, in the first millennium CE. This multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan city was the largest urban center in the Americas in its day. The holy city of Teotihuacan ("the place where the gods were created") is noted for its huge pyramid-shaped monuments on a site laid out according to meticulous geometric and symbolic principles. The Nuhautl people of Teotihuacan disappeared before the arrival of the Aztec. The sculpture, architecture, and frescos are stunning. Fortunately, neither the Aztecs nor the Spanish destroyed the abandoned city.

























Mural in Teotihuacan with bird. Photo: DMC. INAH/H. Montano.







# Tenochtitlan (Mexico City)

In the early 1300s, The Mexica people believed that their god, **Huitzilopochtli**, gave them a sign to guide them to their new settlement: an eagle perched on a prickly pear cactus eating a snake (as depicted on the Mexican flag).

According to the legend the Mexica people did indeed see the sign - but it was on an unlikely spot. A small, swampy island in the middle of Lake Texcoco.

The Mexicas created small garden islands, which would eventually help to dry out the land. As it dried, they built. Causeways were built across the lake to allow access to the island. In 1325, the city of Tenochtitlan was born.



# Spanish Invasion

**Hernan Cortes** from Spain arrived with his army in 1519, and in two years after a **79-day siege** had captured Tenochtitlan. The Spaniards did their best to annihilate indigenous culture, architecture and people. The old Aztec city was mostly destroyed, and was rebuilt in the Spanish colonial style by 1525.

But they didn't succeed entirely. Just as the Aztecs incorporated aspects of religion and culture from the civilizations that preceded them, the Mexican people adopted the new Catholic religion and culture while leaving their own distinctive stamp on it. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the remains of Templo Mayor were excavated and preserved in the city center.

