OpenAI to Z Challenge

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*Push the limits of our newest models with an open-ended problem we’ve designed with archaeologists and subject matter experts.*

Amazonian civilizations

Stretching over 6,000,000 sq km and spanning nine countries, the Amazon Rainforest holds the history of past civilizations and serves as an active home to numerous Indigenous groups. Resources such as satellite imagery and LIDAR are helping to fill in the gaps for a previously unknown part of the world, sparking interest in the region and driving global headlines. Rumors exist of a “lost city of Z” in the Amazon, as well as legends like Paititi and El Dorado. While some academics believe “Z” is likely to be Kuhikugu, a patchwork of 20 settlements at the headwaters of the Xingu River, all of these legends hint at dense ancient civilizations waiting to be discovered. There is a pressing need for more collaborative research to identify and preserve these archaeological sites, which are constantly threatened by deforestation and development.

Now, for the first time in history, anyone can conduct archaeological research. Weaving together open-source collections of satellite imagery, archaeological maps, and Indigenous stories, a patchwork trail appears, leading to the possibility of new discoveries that fill in missing pieces of the puzzle. AI empowers us to understand the history of millions of people who lived, struggled, and thrived long ago.

Your mission

**We challenge you to bring legends to life by finding previously unknown archaeological site(s), using available open-source data.**Findings should be reasonably bound by the Amazon biome in Northern South America. Focus on Brazil, with allowed extension into the outskirts of Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela, and French Guiana.

You are the digital explorer. Use our new OpenAI o3/o4 mini and GPT‑4.1 models to [**dig through open data**⁠(opens in a new window)](https://cdn.openai.com/pdf/a9455c3b-c6e1-49cf-a5cc-c40ed07c0b9f/starter-pack-openai-to-z-challenge.pdf)—high-resolution satellite imagery, published lidar tiles, colonial diaries, indigenous oral maps, past documentaries, archaeological survey papers. **Discover secrets hidden under the canopy**as you [**work through the checkpoints**⁠(opens in a new window)](https://cdn.openai.com/pdf/a9455c3b-c6e1-49cf-a5cc-c40ed07c0b9f/checkpoints-openai-to-z-challenge.pdf)—pinpoint new sites and settlements hidden under the canopy (predict and verify the longitude/longitude with two independent methods), suggest new historical insights through gathering irrefutable evidence (package your insights in a write-up), or create a new method for discovery entirely (evaluate a new method for large data processing). [**Join the community**⁠(opens in a new window)](https://discord.gg/TEfk6NbgxF) and showcase your efforts through the final submission deadline on the evening of June 29th, 2025.

The challenge

We’ll shortlist the **five most innovative teams**, and livestream their discoveries with our**panel of subject matter experts**, members of OpenAI**,**and a mystery AI leader, then put the top discovery to a vote. The winning team will receive funding to partner with local archaeologists and remote sensing scientists to continue to advance their findings, as well as potential support for the acquisition of more advanced high-resolution imagery. The winning team will also have the chance to go into the field with local archaeologists to confirm their findings, pending permits and permissions from the relevant authorities.

Submissions will be scored first on **archaeological impact**—how convincingly the proposed discovery advances Amazonian history—then on **investigative ingenuity**, the depth and creativity of your insights, and finally on **reproducibility**, the ease with which experts can retrace and verify every step of your evidence. Your quest must be supported using OpenAI models to be eligible for participation.

The challenge will run through the coming weeks, with final submissions due at 9PM PST on June 29th, 2025. Our team will work with a panel to select five finalists to be voted on by the judges selected. 1st place will receive $250,000 in a cash/API credits mix as well as funding to continue their work in collaboration with archaeologists, 2nd place will receive $100,000 in a cash/credits mix, 3rd place will receive $50,000 in a cash/API credits mix.

Starter pack

We’d love to send you off with a small bundle of sources, tips, and tricks to begin your quest.

[Starter Pack: OpenAI to Z Challenge⁠(opens in a new window)](https://cdn.openai.com/pdf/a9455c3b-c6e1-49cf-a5cc-c40ed07c0b9f/starter-pack-openai-to-z-challenge.pdf)

How to submit

Fill out the official submission form below once per final entry. The form collects:

* Git repo URL for your source code
* A document containing your findings (maps, screenshots, citations, and/or a small write-up)
* A 200-word abstract summarizing your research

The form auto-timestamps your entry; the latest timestamp before the deadline is the version we grade. Email submissions will not be accepted.

Judging

Initially, submissions will be screened for validity:

* Lists at least two verifiable public sources (e.g., lidar tile ID, paper DOI, satellite scene ID)
* Your links open without paywalls or credentials
* No disallowed or plagiarized content

Following, submissions will be screened for plausibility:

* Evidence depth: Quality and range of data: lidar, multispectral, historical texts, oral maps, etc.
* Clarity of spatial overlays, measurements, and how convincingly they converge on the point
* Reproducibility: Is the explanation concise, logically ordered, and easy for others to rerun?
* Novelty: Did the entrant surface something genuinely new or clever?
* Presentation craft: Smooth visuals, pacing, and the ability to judge questions live

Final livestream:

* Judging on the livestream will be at the full discretion of the panel.