

A high-angle photograph of the ancient Inca city of Machu Picchu. The ruins, constructed from grey stone, are nestled on a steep, lush green mountain slope. Several large, rectangular stone buildings with gabled roofs are visible, interspersed with terraced agricultural fields and smaller structures. In the background, a massive, jagged mountain peak rises sharply, its upper reaches partially shrouded in mist or low-hanging clouds. The sky is overcast, with soft light filtering through the clouds. The overall scene conveys a sense of mystery and historical grandeur.

LEVELED BOOK • Q

# Lost Cities

Written by Torran Anderson

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Many artists have shown the legendary Atlantis that Plato described.

## Atlantis

The legend of Atlantis dates back to 360 BC, when the Greek philosopher Plato first described it. He said it was an advanced nation whose people lived on beautiful islands. According to Plato, Atlantis sank into the ocean “in a single day and night of misfortune.” People have searched for the city for thousands of years, but it remains lost.

Lost cities are human **settlements** that became nearly or completely **uninhabited**. The locations of many of these places have been forgotten. However, these cities have interested people since before Plato wrote about Atlantis, and they continue to spark people's imaginations today. They offer a look into our own **ancient** past and the promise of new secrets to discover. Atlantis may still hide beneath the ocean waves, but other cities have been found and explored.



Archeologists carefully examine the ruins of Pompeii in Italy.

## What Is Archaeology?

The word *archaeology* comes from the Greek, meaning "study of old things." "Archaeologists study how humans have lived in the past," explains Dr. Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh. "We do this by studying the things that people have left behind—often their trash! So we study stuff like old houses, broken bowls, and the bones of animals that have been eaten. As scientists, we piece all of these bits of the past together like a giant puzzle, which gives us a picture of what life was like a long time ago."



Thousands of people visit Machu Picchu each year.

## **The Lost City in the Mountains** *Machu Picchu, Peru*

High in the Andes Mountains sits Machu Picchu. Only around one thousand people inhabited the “Lost City of the Incas” from roughly AD 1450 to 1572. The Incas had no system of writing, so no one is sure what the city was used for or why the people left.

**Archaeologists** still debate whether it was a regular village, a home for the ruler’s family, or a religious **sanctuary**.

The Incas constructed the large buildings, walls, ramps, and more than seven hundred **terraces** without using iron, steel, or wheels! Many local people knew about Machu Picchu, but the city only came to the attention of the world in 1911. A local guide led Hiram Bingham, an American explorer, to the site.



Mount Vesuvius looms over the ruins of Pompeii. Today, the volcano is still active, and more than 3 million people live near it.

## **The City Lost Under Ash** *Pompeii, Italy*

In AD 79, Mount Vesuvius erupted for two days, burying the city of Pompeii under 20 feet (6 m) of ash. The city remained covered for almost 1,700 years before its discovery in 1748. The archaeologists' discoveries amazed people around the world. The layers of ash **preserved** the city, providing a window into how people lived during the Roman Empire.



Paintings, shops, and all the bits and pieces of people's daily lives remained untouched. The ash even formed casts around the bodies of those who once lived in Pompeii. Since its discovery, only about two-thirds of the city has been uncovered, so archaeologists have many more years of work ahead.



The hardened ash became hollow as the bodies decayed. Archaeologists filled the hollows with plaster to make the forms.





The Great Enclosure is one of the largest buildings in the Great Zimbabwe. It contained a common area and a series of homes.

## **The City of Traders**

### *The Great Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe*

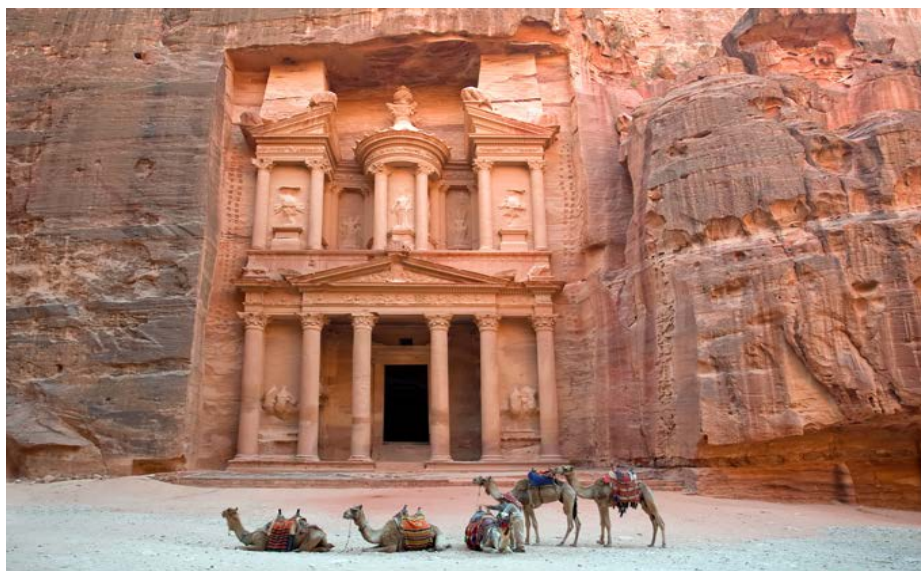
The Great Zimbabwe was the center of a trading empire in southern Africa from around AD 1100 to 1500. Evidence suggests that twelve thousand or more people lived there at its peak. **Artifacts** found at the site include gold beads, bronze spearheads, iron utensils, and carved sandstone statues. Skilled builders carefully carved stones and set them on top of each other. The walls rose 32 feet (9.8 m) over the land. Archaeologists think the people left the city slowly as they used up all the natural resources.



Angkor Wat is so important in Cambodia, the nation put it on their flag!

## **The Giant Ancient City** *Angkor, Cambodia*

At around 400 square miles (1,000 sq km), Angkor in Cambodia was once the capital of a large empire. Around a million people lived there from AD 800 to 1400, making it the largest city in the world at the time. Angkor had an advanced system for holding and carrying water through the city. Evidence suggests that people left when this water system became too large and fell into disrepair. Some archaeologists think invaders attacked the city, but no one knows for sure. However, the city was never completely empty. People live in Angkor today. The city has over one thousand temples, including Angkor Wat, which is the largest religious monument in the world.



The Treasury has been featured in numerous movies, including *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

## **The Stone City** *Petra, Jordan*

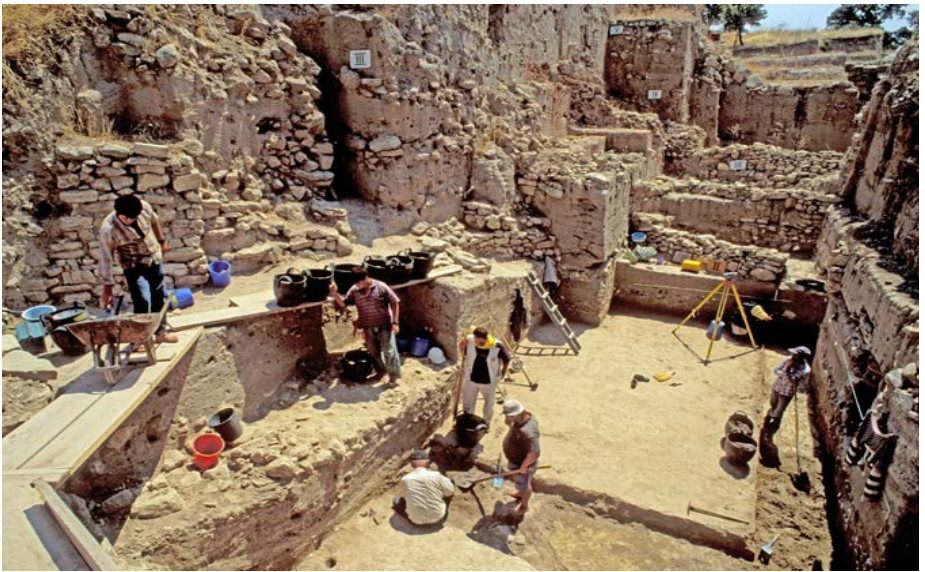
The word *petra* means “rock” in Greek. It’s a good name for a city beautifully carved out of sandstone cliffs. The Nabataean (na-buh-TEE-uhn) people built the city, but experts aren’t sure when. It was already a booming city in 312 BC, when records show that the king of a neighboring country unsuccessfully attacked it. At the time, Petra was a trade center. Because it was built in a desert, it had a complex system for moving water that used pipes, reservoirs, and waterways.



Archaeologists think an earthquake destroyed the water system, forcing people to leave. The discovery of new trade routes away from Petra may also have contributed to people leaving the city. Petra was known to the local people but wasn't visited by people from outside until 1812. Only a small part of the city has been uncovered. Most of Petra is still hidden underground.



Kings and other important people in Petra were laid to rest in amazing tombs. Some tombs were later used as churches.



Archaeologists excavate the different layers of Troy. Scientists think people built the first city around 3000 BC.

## The City in the Poem

### *Troy, Turkey*

The *Iliad*, an ancient Greek poem written by Homer, tells the story of the Trojan War. In the poem, the great city of Troy was under **siege** by the Greeks for ten years. People had searched for the city for hundreds of years but never found it. Scholars thought Troy only existed in stories. Then, in 1871, an excavation in Turkey found the remains of a city matching the description of Troy. As archaeologists dug deeper, they found nine cities built one on top of another.

The first city of Troy was built around 3000 BC. Modern excavations have found huge walls like those described in the *Iliad*. Most archaeologists agree that this is ancient Troy. However, they still debate which layer is the city described in the ancient poem.



## A Recent Discovery

In 2000, archaeologist Franck Goddio discovered the ruins of Thonis-Heracleion. This important Greek port was once believed to be only a legend. Goddio also solved another riddle by revealing that Thonis and Heracleion were actually two different names for the same city. *Thonis* was the Egyptian name of the city, and *Heracleion* was the Greek name.



## Lost Cities Found



## The Search Continues

Archaeologists and others have found many lost cities over the years, but others may remain hidden. Many countries around the world have their own stories about cities that have disappeared for one reason or another. The most famous of all, however, is still Atlantis. The search for the legendary city continues. It very well could be a story invented by a poet, but who knows? That's what they said about Troy. . .

## Glossary

<b>ancient</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	from a very long time ago (p. 5)
<b>archaeologists</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	scientists who study the remains of ancient cultures (p. 6)
<b>artifacts</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	objects made or used by humans long ago (p. 9)
<b>preserved</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	kept in the same condition; protected from harm (p. 7)
<b>sanctuary</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a safe place; the protection given by such a place (p. 6)
<b>settlements</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a new place where people live (p. 5)
<b>siege</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the act of surrounding and often attacking an enemy for a long time while preventing them from getting food and other supplies (p. 13)
<b>terraces</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	flat areas made in a hillside that are used for farming (p. 6)
<b>uninhabited</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	not lived in by people (p. 5)

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Back cover: Angkor, Cambodia

Tite page: Tikal, Guatemala

Author’s Note: Thank you to Dr. Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, curator of anthropology at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

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Level Q Leveled Book  
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*A Reading A-Z Level Q Leveled Book*

*Word Count: 914*



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