Top Lost Cities to Visit

There is something alluring about visiting historical sites – standing on top of a spot where a famous religious leader or emperor mark their mark on history can be a thrilling once-in-a-lifetime experience. Lost cities such as Xanadu, Petra and Carthage have stirred the imagination, causing millions of tourists from all around the world to experience the magic and adventure for themselves.

*Xanadu, Mongolia*

Also known as Shangdu, Xanadu has long stimulated the imagination. It was the summer home to Kublai Khan, the grandson of Ghenghis Khan and the man who conquered China) who erected a gigantic marble palace decorated with gold gilt and magnificent statues according to Marco Polo. The glorious city of Xanadu has crumbled to the winds of time, but the might and gloriousness of it still has to power to stir the imagination.

*Tikal, Guatemala*

Tikal has long been held to be the crown jewel of all the ancient South American civilizations. The gigantic six temples were the heart and soul of the Mayan cultures, influencing all who came to visit. A millennia later, they still hold power, influencing millions of tourists to travel to Guatemala to experience the beauty and prestige of this ancient lost jungle city.

*Ctesiphon, Iraq*

Not far from modern day Bagdad in Iraq, Ctseiphon gained prestige as the capital of the Parthian Empire. It is home to the world’s largest brick built arch and the magnificent vaulted hall and throne room cause all who see it to be reminded of the power this lost city still holds.

*Great Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe*

Great Zimbabwe, located roughly 150 kilometres from modern day Harare, has drawn thousands of tourists to its doors in the last year alone. At the centre of the ancient locale was a fabulous palace which was then encircled by a five metre high wall made from granite. The city was founded by the Gokomere people during the 11th century and became the major trading centre in the area for gold, ivory and cattle.

*Palenque, Mexico*

Another famous lost Mayan city, Palenque in Mexico gained a bloody and fearsome reputation during the reign of Pacal the Great during the 7th century. It is one of the greatest lost cities in South America as nearly 90% of it lies buried beneath the canopy of the jungle, just waiting to be rediscovered.

*Mohenjo-daro, Pakistan*

For archaeologists, Mohenjo-daro is one of the greatest Asian civilizations ever to be founded. The city was established around 2600 BCE in the Indus Valley and although it rivalled Athens and Egyptian cities in terms of artistry and architecture, we still do not know much of the actual people who called it home.

*Mosque City of Bagerhat, Bangladesh*

Where the Ganges and Brahmaputra come together lies the 15th century mosque city of Bagerhat. It was established on the orders of a Turkish general, creating a city unlike the Islamic world had never seen before. 360 mosques were founded, along with numerous palaces and tombs. When the general died, the mosque city crumbled away into the mists of time and vegetation. Luckily, it has now been partly refurbished to its original beauty.

*Mesa Verde, USA*

The Mesa Verde National Park was once home to the Anasazi tribe during the 7th to 14th centuries. They dwelled in a number of homes carved into the ridge outcroppings, with the Cliff Palace, housing nearly 100 people, being the most eminent.

*Pompeii and Herculaneum, Italy*

Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy are considered the most famous out of all the world’s lost cities. The entire population of both cities were buried alive under a cloud of ash when Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 CE, but the ash kept them preserved throughout the centuries. Food, animals, furniture, jewellery – all are a mirror into the past.

*Vijayanagar, India*

During the 15th century BCE, Vijayanagar was the centre of the greatest Indian empire the world has ever seen. The home to more than double the population of Paris, Vijayanagar’s heart and soul was the Virupaksha Temple – even today, the temples still draw the attention of both Hindus and non-Hindus.

*Ani, Turkey*

It is hard to imagine but the lush green fields of Ani in modern Turkey were once home to a 10th century Armenian city-state that held the same power that Constantinople once had. Ani was called the City of 1001 Churches, gaining a religious reputation both fearsome and revered, but ultimately the city was abandoned and succumbed to the ravages of time.

*Carthage, Tunisia*

Carthage was the dominant sea-fearing power of the Mediterranean during the Classical period before it fell to the might of the Roman Empire. It was famous for being the kingdom of Queen Dido and then sacked and salted by the Romans. The Vandals and the Arabs also made their mark on Carthage before it was abandoned completely before millions of tourists found its past too tempting to pass up on.