

The Aztecs

Fascinating facts

- The Aztecs lived in what is now Central America in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.
- The Aztec city, Tenochtitlan, was built on a series of islets in Lake Texcoco. The word Tenochtitlan means 'Place of the Fruit of the Prickly Pear Cactus'. Tenochtitlan was a very grand city with many temples. It was built in a grid pattern and separated by canals; the Aztecs travelled around by canoe. Today, the capital city of Mexico, Mexico City, is built on the site of Tenochtitlan.
- The Aztecs had many gods. One of the best-known facts about the Aztec civilisation was their belief in making human sacrifices to their gods. Some of their gods included Coatlicue, goddess of the Earth; Xipe Totec, god of spring and new vegetation, and Tlaloc, god of rain.
- Coloured birds' feathers were valued by the Aztecs as highly as gold. The most valued of all were the long, green feathers of the spectacular quetzal bird (see picture, below).
- In 1521, the Spaniard, Hernán Cortés, conquered Tenochtitlan and defeated Moctezuma II, leader of the Aztecs. When he first arrived, some Aztecs believed Hernán to be one of their gods, Quetzalcoatl, and so allowed his access to the city.

