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## Lost!

For thousands of years, humans have built cities. Some of our oldest cities have managed to maintain pieces of their original characteristics. Other cities have disappeared completely. Devastation from war, famine, disease, and natural disasters has caused many cities that were once bustling centers of civilization to vanish completely.

One of these lost cities belonged to the Anasazi (pronounced "an-uh-SAH-zee") people. The Anasazi lived in Chaco Canyon in New Mexico. They built dwellings along the river that ran through the canyon. For close to 300 years, the Chaco Canyon was the population center of many desert cities. Now, nothing is left of this busy city but ruins. Scientists speculate that drought may have made the Anasazi's food scarce or that some kind of disease killed off many of the people. However, no one knows for sure what happened to the people of the Chaco Canyon.



Another lost city sits high atop the Andes Mountains in Peru: the city of Machu Picchu (pronounced "MA-choo PEE-choo"). It was once among the most powerful cities in South America, because it was home to the Incan emperor. In 1527, its citizens packed up their belongings and moved for unknown reasons. Scientists guess that smallpox, a disease brought by European explorers, was the cause of Machu Picchu's downfall. Today, tourists from all over the world climb thousands of steep stone steps to view the ruins of this formerly majestic city.

Yet another city that is no more was called Pompeii (pronounced "pom-PAY"). This was one of the wealthiest cities of ancient Italy. This beautiful seaside city was a lively center of commerce and trade. However, Mt. Vesuvius was lurking in the distance. Eventually, a storm of lava, smoke, and ash buried the city of Pompeii, putting an end to its prosperity. Scientists have excavated and studied the ruins of Pompeii, which led to new discoveries about ancient civilizations of Europe.

Humans have always built cities as hubs for trade, business, and family life. Cities that have been lost provide information about the past, helping to inform our future. By studying lost cities, we can learn how to preserve our current cities.