

Mystery of ATLANTIS

Did this legendary island get swallowed by the sea?

Can a whole island disappear in a day? That's what one ancient legend says happened to the empire of Atlantis. Many people don't believe that Atlantis ever existed. Others disagree — and they claim to have found its buried ruins. Join scientists as they try to uncover the truth behind this paradise city...

THE MYSTERY

The story of Atlantis appeared around 360 B.C. in the writings of Plato, an Ancient Greek philosopher (someone who studies the meaning of life). According to him, Atlantis was a wealthy empire. Three rings of land divided by sparkling waterways circled the city centre, which held palaces and a silver-and-gold temple. Animals such as elephants roamed the land, and trees provided enough fruit for daily feasts.

But the good times didn't last. Plato wrote that sudden earthquakes jolted Atlantis and whipped up waves that flooded the island. Within a day, it vanished.

For thousands of years people have wondered if Plato's story was true. Today's scientists, using hi-tech tools, are trying to locate the lost island.

THE DETECTIVES

In 2009, archaeologist Richard Freund came to the mudflats of southern Spain in search of Atlantis, after infrared satellite imagery revealed what looked like buried buildings.

Richard's theory is that the city was a port leading to the Atlantic Ocean. He thinks it was flooded by a tsunami (a ginormous wave), then covered by mud from tides.

To find proof, his team hammered rods into the dirt and linked them to an electric cable. Then they shot currents underground. By studying how the currents moved, they could tell if objects were buried up to 12m below. Results showed that something lay in the soil, maybe a crumbled wall. Richard would like to excavate (remove the earth covering it) to know for sure, but water lies beneath the mudflats, making a dig very hard.

Explorer Robert Sarmast believes Atlantis is 3,200km away from these Spanish mudflats — near Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea. He studied images that supposedly show the remains of submerged canals and walls matching Plato's description, and he's dived in the area in search of clues. Although Robert has yet to find concrete evidence, he's not giving up his quest yet.

THE CONCLUSION

Most people think Atlantis was about as real as mermaids! They don't believe such an advanced city could have been built in the Stone Age when Plato's story was set.

It's possible that Plato based his tale on Akrotiri — a Greek city wiped out 3,600 years ago by a volcanic eruption. Unlike with Atlantis, experts such as National Geographic researcher Immo Trinks are making real

discoveries about Akrotiri, and are using radar to reveal what lies under the ashes where it once stood. So was Atlantis real, fake or something in between? Only one thing's certain — the story is inspiring people to investigate history and explore the world. And that's cool!



REAL LOST-AND-FOUND LANDS

Granite boulders recently dredged from the Atlantic Ocean floor may have belonged to a long-vanished landmass. The land probably lay between what is now South America and Africa, but sank millions of years ago.

A 5,000-year-old city called Pavlopetri was found off the coast of Greece. Destroyed by a series of earthquakes, the submerged metropolis contained the ruins of homes, roads and tombs.

Scientists located 5m-high statues and a temple on the Mediterranean seabed near Egypt. These belonged to Heracleion, a coastal city that flooded 1,200 years ago.



Illustrations: Mondalithic

