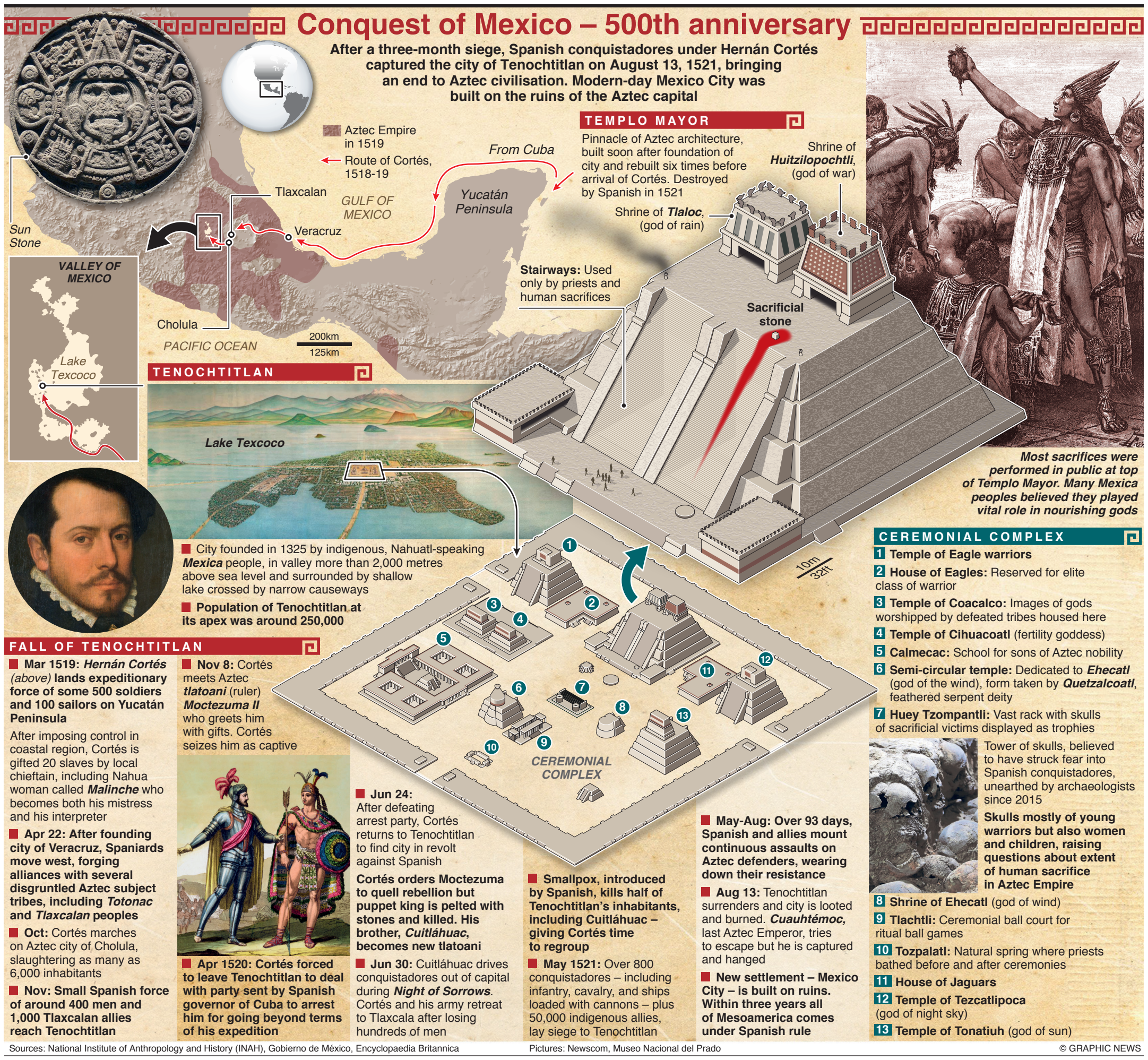


Conquest of Mexico – 500th anniversary

After a three-month siege, Spanish conquistadores under Hernán Cortés captured the city of Tenochtitlan on August 13, 1521, bringing an end to Aztec civilisation. Modern-day Mexico City was built on the ruins of the Aztec capital



TEMPLO MAYOR

Pinnacle of Aztec architecture, built soon after foundation of city and rebuilt six times before arrival of Cortés. Destroyed by Spanish in 1521

Shrine of **Huitzilopochtli**, (god of war)

Shrine of **Tlaloc**, (god of rain)

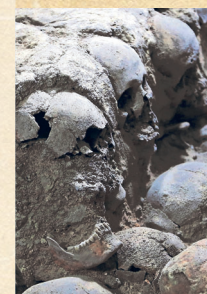
Stairways: Used only by priests and human sacrifices

Sacrificial stone

Most sacrifices were performed in public at top of Templo Mayor. Many Mexica peoples believed they played vital role in nourishing gods

CEREMONIAL COMPLEX

- 1 Temple of Eagle warriors**
- 2 House of Eagles:** Reserved for elite class of warrior
- 3 Temple of Coacalco:** Images of gods worshipped by defeated tribes housed here
- 4 Temple of Cihuacoatl** (fertility goddess)
- 5 Calmecac:** School for sons of Aztec nobility
- 6 Semi-circular temple:** Dedicated to **Ehecatl** (god of the wind), form taken by **Quetzalcoatl**, feathered serpent deity
- 7 Huey Tzompantli:** Vast rack with skulls of sacrificial victims displayed as trophies



Tower of skulls, believed to have struck fear into Spanish conquistadores, unearthed by archaeologists since 2015

Skulls mostly of young warriors but also women and children, raising questions about extent of human sacrifice in Aztec Empire

- 8 Shrine of Ehecatl** (god of wind)
- 9 Tlachtli:** Ceremonial ball court for ritual ball games
- 10 Tozpalatl:** Natural spring where priests bathed before and after ceremonies
- 11 House of Jaguars**
- 12 Temple of Tezcatlipoca** (god of night sky)
- 13 Temple of Tonatiuh** (god of sun)

TENOCHTITLAN

City founded in 1325 by indigenous, Nahuatl-speaking **Mexica** people, in valley more than 2,000 metres above sea level and surrounded by shallow lake crossed by narrow causeways

Population of Tenochtitlan at its apex was around 250,000

FALL OF TENOCHTITLAN

Mar 1519: **Hernán Cortés** (above) lands expeditionary force of some 500 soldiers and 100 sailors on Yucatán Peninsula

After imposing control in coastal region, Cortés is gifted 20 slaves by local chieftain, including Nahuatl woman called **Malinche** who becomes both his mistress and his interpreter

Apr 22: After founding city of Veracruz, Spaniards move west, forging alliances with several disgruntled Aztec subject tribes, including **Totonac** and **Tlaxcalan** peoples

Oct: Cortés marches on Aztec city of Cholula, slaughtering as many as 6,000 inhabitants

Nov: Small Spanish force of around 400 men and 1,000 Tlaxcalan allies reach Tenochtitlan

Nov 8: Cortés meets Aztec **tlatoani** (ruler) **Moctezuma II** who greets him with gifts. Cortés seizes him as captive



Apr 1520: Cortés forced to leave Tenochtitlan to deal with party sent by Spanish governor of Cuba to arrest him for going beyond terms of his expedition

Jun 24: After defeating arrest party, Cortés returns to Tenochtitlan to find city in revolt against Spanish

Cortés orders Moctezuma to quell rebellion but puppet king is pelted with stones and killed. His brother, **Cuicláhuac**, becomes new **tlatoani**

Jun 30: Cuicláhuac drives conquistadores out of capital during **Night of Sorrows**. Cortés and his army retreat to Tlaxcala after losing hundreds of men

Smallpox, introduced by Spanish, kills half of Tenochtitlan's inhabitants, including Cuicláhuac – giving Cortés time to regroup

May 1521: Over 800 conquistadores – including infantry, cavalry, and ships loaded with cannons – plus 50,000 indigenous allies, lay siege to Tenochtitlan

May-Aug: Over 93 days, Spanish and allies mount continuous assaults on Aztec defenders, wearing down their resistance

Aug 13: Tenochtitlan surrenders and city is looted and burned. **Cuahtémoc**, last Aztec Emperor, tries to escape but he is captured and hanged

New settlement – Mexico City – is built on ruins. Within three years all of Mesoamerica comes under Spanish rule