



Chan Chan

Trujillo, La Libertad, Peru

The ancient capital of the Chimú Kingdom, Chan Chan is the largest earthen architecture complex in the Americas. Spanning approximately 20 square kilometers in the desert landscape of the Valley of Moche in northern Peru, it is a masterpiece of urban design with rigorous zoning and differentiated use of living spaces, reflecting a clear hierarchical construction based on a social and political ideal. The city thrived for over six centuries and was abandoned after the Inca conquered the area in the late fifteenth century. The archaeological site has been the focus of research and conservation for several decades and is also a venue for education, recreation, and tourism.

Chan Chan was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986, and added to the List of World Heritage in Danger the same year. As a vast archaeological site near one of the most populated cities in Peru, urban encroachment and illegal farming have persistently threatened the fragile earthen remains. Historically, resources have been invested in the study and conservation of Chan Chan, but there is a need to manage more effectively the buffer zone and the surrounding huacas, which have been thus far neglected. Integrative planning and design around the site perimeter could better protect Chan Chan from the negative impacts of illegal development while allowing enhanced public use of the area.