

OpenAI • Hackathon • a month to go

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OpenAI to Z Challenge

Use OpenAI o3/o4 mini and GPT 4.1 models to discover previously unknown archaeological sites

[Overview](#)[Data](#)[Code](#)[Discussion](#)[Rules](#)

Overview

We challenge you to bring legends to life by finding previously unknown archaeological site(s), using available open-source data. The Amazon biome in Northern South America should reasonably bind findings. Focus on Brazil, with allowed extension into the outskirts of Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela, and French Guiana.

Start

18 hours ago

Close

A month to go

Description

Stretching over 6,000,000 sq km and spanning nine countries, the Amazon Rainforest holds the history of past civilizations and serves as an active home to numerous Indigenous groups. Resources such as satellite imagery and LIDAR are helping to fill in the gaps for a previously unknown part of the world, sparking interest in the region and driving global headlines. Rumors exist of a “lost city of Z” in the Amazon, as well as legends like Paititi and El Dorado. While some academics believe “Z” is likely to be Kuhikugu, a patchwork of 20 settlements at the headwaters of the Xingu River, all of these legends hint at dense ancient civilizations waiting to be discovered. There is a pressing need for more collaborative research to identify and preserve these archaeological sites, which are constantly threatened by deforestation and development.

Now, for the first time in history, anyone can conduct archaeological research. Weaving together open-source collections of satellite imagery, archaeological maps, and Indigenous stories, a patchwork trail appears, leading to the possibility of new discoveries that fill in missing pieces of the puzzle. AI empowers us to understand the history of millions of people who lived, struggled, and thrived long ago.

You are the digital explorer. Use our new OpenAI o3/o4 mini and GPT-4.1 models to [dig through open data](#)—high-resolution satellite imagery, published lidar tiles, colonial diaries, Indigenous oral maps, past documentaries, archaeological survey papers. Discover secrets hidden under the canopy as you [work through the checkpoints](#)—pinpoint new sites and settlements hidden under the canopy (predict and verify the longitude/longitude with two independent methods), suggest new historical insights through gathering irrefutable evidence (package your insights in a write-up), or create a new method for discovery entirely (evaluate a new method for large data processing). [Join the community](#) and showcase your efforts through the final submission deadline on the evening of June 29th, 2025.

We’ll shortlist the five most exciting teams, and live-stream their discoveries with our panel of subject matter experts, members of OpenAI, and a mystery AI leader, to select the top discovery. The winning team will receive funding to

partner with local archaeologists and remote sensing scientists to continue to advance their findings, as well as potential support for the acquisition of more advanced high-resolution imagery. The winning team will also have the chance to go into the field with local archaeologists to confirm their findings, pending permits and permissions from the relevant authorities.

Submissions will be scored first on archaeological impact—how convincingly the proposed discovery advances Amazonian history—then on investigative ingenuity, the depth and creativity of your insights, and finally on reproducibility, the ease with which experts can retrace and verify every step of your evidence. Your quest must be supported using OpenAI models to be eligible for participation.

Evaluation

Submissions will initially be screened for eligibility compliance per the following criteria:

- Lists at least two verifiable public sources (e.g., lidar tile ID, paper DOI, satellite scene ID)
- Links open without paywalls or credentials
- No disallowed or plagiarized content

Qualifying submissions will then will be screened and graded for plausibility on the following criteria:

- Evidence depth: Quality and range of data: lidar, multispectral, historical texts, oral maps, etc.
- Clarity of spatial overlays, measurements, and how convincingly they converge on the point
- Reproducibility: Is the explanation concise, logically ordered, and easy for others to rerun?
- Novelty: Did the entrant surface something genuinely new or clever?
- Presentation craft: Smooth visuals, pacing, and the ability to judge questions live

Submissions to all tracks will be evaluated by a panel of judges with expertise in machine learning competitions according to the rubric below.

Description	Evaluation
Rules Compliance [yes/no] Writeup follows all instructions and rules	- Lists at least two verifiable public sources- Links open without paywalls or credentials- No disallowed or plagiarized content- Writeup is compliant with hackathon rules, Kaggle Terms of Service, and Community Guidelines
Evidence depth [20pts] Quality and range of data	Lidar, multispectral, historical texts, oral maps, etc.
Clarity [20pts]	Clarity of spatial overlays, measurements, and how convincingly they converge on the point.
Reproducibility [20 points]	Is the explanation concise, logically ordered, and easy for others to rerun?
Novelty [20pts]	Did the entrant surface something genuinely new or clever?
Presentation Craft [20 points]	Smooth visuals, pacing, and the ability to judge questions live.

Final 5 judging livestream: Final judging via livestream selection will be at the full discretion of the judges panel.

Timeline

- May 15, 2025 - Start Date.
- June 29, 2025 - Final Submission Deadline.

Finalists are expected to be announced approximately 30 days after the Final Submission Deadline.

All deadlines are at 11:59 PM UTC on the corresponding day unless otherwise noted. The competition organizers reserve the right to update the contest timeline if they deem it necessary.

Prizes

- 1st Place - \$250,000
- 2nd Place - \$100,000
- 3rd Place - \$50,000

1st place will receive \$250,000 in a 50/50 split between cash and Open AI credits as well as funding to continue their work in collaboration with archaeologists, 2nd place will receive \$100,000 in a 50/50 cash/credits mix, 3rd place will receive \$50,000 in a 50/50 cash/credits mix.

In addition to the monetary prizes, we will also give away OpenAI API credits as early-sharing prizes:

- \$1,000 in OpenAI API credits per winner
- Recognizing 5 public notebooks that get published in the first 5 weeks
- Must be attached to the Kaggle Competition and must complete one or more of the 5 tasks described [here](#)
- Try to complete as many of the checkpoints as possible!

Judges

Philip Bogdanov, Chris Fisher
Archaeologist , Colorado State University, Earth Archive
Tracks and Awards
OpenAI to Z Challenge · \$400,000

Description

We challenge you to bring legends to life by finding previously unknown archaeological site(s), using available open-source data.

Track Awards

1st place

\$250,000 in a 50/50 cash/credits mix as well as funding to continue their work in collaboration with archaeologists
\$250,000

2nd place

\$100,000 in a 50/50 cash/credits mix
\$100,000