

GHOST TOWNS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Natural disasters, human conflict, climate change and economic shift are destroying lives and livelihoods. For the first time, the new edition of *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World*, published on 3 September, pinpoints modern-day ‘ghost towns’ as they materialise quietly and insidiously across the globe. This is the first and only world atlas showing these crucial changes.

As sea ice shrinks, permafrost thaws and sea storms become more frequent, experts at *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World* are keeping a watching brief on the Inupiat village of Shishmaref, Alaska. Temperatures here have risen by as much as 4.4°C over the last 30 years, and the sea is creeping inland by up to three metres a year. Lying as it does on a narrow island along the Bering Strait, many scientists agree that this 4000-year-old settlement is likely to become the first US community to have to move due to a warming climate.

Modern-day ghost towns...

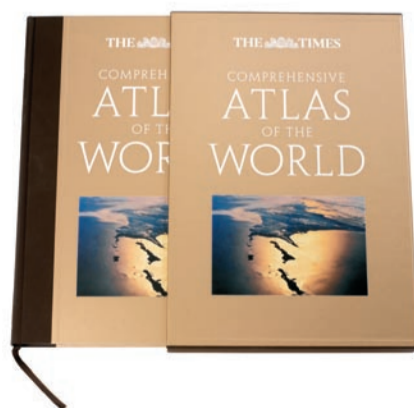
- Plymouth, Montserrat – Abandoned due to volcanic activity. This former capital was buried in volcanic ash when the Soufrière Hills volcano erupted between 1995 and 1997. 5000 people were evacuated and the city abandoned.
- Sewell, Chile – At an altitude of more than 2000m, it grew as a copper-mining town to meet growing demand during the First World War. Population peaked at 15,000 inhabitants in 1960 though decline set in when the mine was nationalized in 1967, and workers were resettled. Today the former town is a tourist attraction and World Heritage Site.
- Kolmanskop, Namibia – Founded in the Namib Desert in 1908 after the discovery of a large number of diamonds. Became one of the world’s largest diamond suppliers but as more profitable deposits were discovered to the south, Kolmanskop declined and was eventually abandoned. Today it exists as a tourist attraction and film set.

- Bodie, California, USA – Gold was discovered here in 1856. At the turn of the century, the mine began to reduce and by the late 1940s it was officially abandoned. Now it is a Californian state park, preserved in a state of ‘arrested deterioration’.

And places on the verge of extinction being closely watched by our experts...

- Male, the capital of the Maldives – Approximately 2m above sea level. After storms in 1987 and 1988 flooded areas of lower reclaimed land, a series of breakwaters were built to protect the town from storm waves. They won’t, however, prevent flooding from a sustained sea level rise.
- Sundarbans in southeast India and south Bangladesh – villages on the low-lying islands are at immediate risk. A 10-year study reveals that the sea level is rising by over 3mm a year. Some islands have disappeared and mangrove forests have been swallowed up by the sea.

Four years in the making, *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World* is the world’s most prestigious and authoritative atlas – painstakingly researched by a dedicated team of over 50 cartographers, with changes to the database made every 3.5 minutes using a 24-hour-a-day news feed.



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