

Seven Wonders of Ancient Egypt

Lasting Monuments of the Egyptians

Ancient Wonders

Over 3,000 years ago the ancient Egyptians created some of the finest monuments the world has ever seen. The Great Pyramid, the largest stone building on Earth. The Valley of the Kings, underground tombs holding the treasure of the pharaohs.

7. The Valley of the Kings

The kings of ancient Egypt were no mere mortals, they were Gods incarnate, and the ancient Egyptians cared more for the burial of their kings than any other nation that has existed. 3,500 years ago they began to build the most revered cemetery on Earth. The Valley of the Kings is the most magnificent burial ground in the world. Sixty two tombs, cut deep into the rock, overflowing with the treasures of ancient Egypt. Pharaohs like **Tutankhamun** and **Ramesses the Great** were laid to rest at the Valley of the Kings. The oldest tomb in the Valley of the Kings belonged to King Tutmos and dates back to the 16th century B.C. Most of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings are unfinished, the work being cut short by the king's death. At the Valley of the Kings however the tomb of Seti is virtually complete. The tomb of Seti was unearthed by Giovanni Battista Belzoni in 1817 who was fortunate enough to chance upon the longest and deepest of all the tombs.



Queen Hatshepsut's Temple

6. Queen Hatshepsut's Temple

Built over the hillside from the Valley of the Kings, the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut is the most impressive monument of western Thebes. Hatshepsut's futuristic temple is packed with revolutionary features, a fitting memory to one of Egypt's most innovative pharaohs. The eldest daughter of Tutmos I, her young stepson became pharaoh, Tutmos III. Worried that the boy might lose control, she appointed herself co-regent and later King. Unlike Cleopatra and Nefertiti, little is known about Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut set out to finish what her husband had started, under her control it would take fifteen years to complete the greatest architectural achievement of her dynasty.

5. The Karnak Temple Complex

When Thebes became the religious centre of Egypt, the Karnak temple became the seat of Amun, the state God. Karnak was soon home to over 600 priests. Its buildings spread south and west towards the Nile. At the centre, is a hyper-style hall with a forest of columns, some of which reach 70ft high. The Karnak temple also contains Hatshepsut's obelisk which at 96ft is the largest surviving obelisk standing in Egypt. Weighing 323 tons, Hatshepsut's obelisk is carved from a single piece of granite from 400 miles away at Aswan. Building on a massive scale never daunted the Kings of Ancient Egypt, each one set out to surpass the last.



Temple of Ramesses

4. The Temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel

Built to advertise Ramesses' ultimate power, the Temple at Abu Simbel would be the finest rock-cut temple in the world. Gangs of masons were set to work on the facade of the Temple of Ramesses to transform a cliff-face into two enormous statues of the pharaoh. Carved out of the living rock they would be 69ft high. It is thought that the location of the Temple of Ramesses was chosen partly for the suitability of the rock face and also because it was close to the Nile and would be seen, from miles away, by anyone entering Egypt from the south.



St. Catherine's Monastery

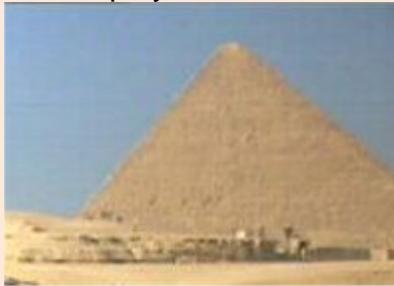
3. Mount Sinai

Some wonders are not man-made, such as Mount Sinai, they are natural shrines and spiritual landmarks. At 7,000ft Mount Sinai, or Gebel Moosa, is the highest mountain in southern Sinai and one of the most spiritual places on Earth. According to biblical accounts, it was at Mount Sinai that Moses, amidst a violent storm, scrambled to the top of the mountain where, it is said, the heavens opened and God gave Moses the 10 commandments written on 2 stone tablets. To mark the site (in Mount Sinai) where Moses received the commandments, a Greek Orthodox monastery was built over 1500

years later and dedicated to the Christian martyr St. Catherine. The monastery at Mount Sinai is the oldest on Earth, and has been the centre for pilgrimages for over 15 centuries. Saint Catherine's Monastery is also one of the finest examples of Byzantine architecture. Since Moses' time the monks have carved 4,000 steps of repentance up the mountainside allowing pilgrims a path to the top.

2. The Sphinx

The Sphinx is the largest free-standing stone sculpture in the world. An enigma and very mysterious as no-one is certain who the Sphinx depicts, or who made it. Half human, half animal, the Sphinx has long been considered the strangest icon on the planet. At 60m long and 20m high, the Sphinx guards the Giza plateau beside Egypt's two largest pyramids. For centuries, the Sphinx has been seen as the key to life. Pharaohs have worshipped at the Sphinx's feet, conquerors have knelt down before it. The Sphinx has been subjected to every test but remains an enigma. Why was the Sphinx built, why are there tunnels inside it, which king does the Sphinx represent, what power does the Sphinx hold? In ancient Egyptian art, the idea of fusing animal with human was nothing new, but designing of the Sphinx was the first time a human head was sculpted onto a lion's body. In Egypt there was only one person who could be portrayed in the way the Sphinx is displayed in the desert sands, the Pharaoh himself.



The Great Pyramid

1. The Great Pyramid of Giza

The Great Pyramid of Giza is the oldest wonder of the world and has been standing for 4,500 years. The Great Pyramid of Giza is the greatest tomb ever constructed and remains the largest stone building on Earth. The Great Pyramid of Giza was built for the Pharaoh Khufu in 2,560 B.C. and from that time to this, the great pyramid has remained an icon of world architecture. Khufu set out to create a pyramid that was perfect. The Great Pyramid of Giza is aligned with the compass and the base is level. The Great Pyramid of Giza covers an area of 13 acres and is level to within one inch. It is constructed from 2,300,000 stone blocks, some of which way 5 tons and took 22 years to complete.