

Taj Mahal, white marble mausoleum complex in Agra, western Uttar Pradesh state, northern India. The Taj Mahal was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (reigned 1628–58) to immortalize his empress consort Mumtaz Mahal (“Beloved Ornament of the Palace”), who died in childbirth in 1631, having been the emperor’s inseparable companion since their marriage in 1612. One of India’s most iconic mausoleums, it is situated in the eastern part of the city on the southern (right) bank of the Yamuna (Jumna) River. Agra Fort (Red Fort), also on the right bank of the Yamuna, is about 1 mile (1.6 km) west of the Taj Mahal.

Did You Know?

The Taj Mahal is one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. What are the other six?

In its harmonious proportions and its fluid incorporation of decorative elements, the Taj Mahal is distinguished as the finest example of Mughal architecture, a blend of Indian, Persian, and Islamic styles. Other attractions include twin mosque buildings (placed symmetrically on either side of the mausoleum), gardens, and a museum. One of the most beautiful structural compositions in the world, the Taj Mahal is also one of the world’s most iconic monuments, visited by millions of tourists each year. The complex was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983.

History of construction

Shah Jahan

1 of 3

Shah JahanContemporary portrait of the fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan (reigned 1628–58).

Taj Mahal mausoleum and mosque

2 of 3

Taj Mahal mausoleum and mosqueRed sandstone mosque (left, west) and white marble mausoleum, in the Taj Mahal complex, Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Why the Taj Mahal was built3 of 3

Why the Taj Mahal was builtLearn why Mughal emperor Shah Jahan decided to build the Taj Mahal.

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The inspiration for the Taj Mahal was a verse by Bibadal Khan, the imperial goldsmith and poet. The vision behind the construction was to make an earthly replica of Mumtaz Mahal’s celestial abode in paradise. The plans for the complex have been attributed to various architects of the period, though the chief architect was probably Ustad Aḥmad Lahawṛī, an Indian of Persian descent. The five principal elements of the complex—main gateway, garden, mosque, jawāb (literally “answer”; a building mirroring the mosque), and mausoleum (including its four minarets)—were conceived and designed as a unified entity according to the tenets of Mughal building practice, which allowed no subsequent addition or alteration. Building commenced about 1632. More than 20,000 workers were employed from India, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and Europe to complete the mausoleum itself by about 1638–39; the adjunct buildings were finished by 1643, and decoration work continued until at least 1647. In total, construction of the 42-acre (17-hectare) complex spanned 22 years.