Great Sphinx of Giza

The **Great Sphinx of Giza** is a [limestone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limestone) statue of a reclining [sphinx](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sphinx), a [mythical creature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legendary_creature) with the head of a human, and the body of a lion.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-The_Great_Sphinx_of_Giza-1) Facing directly from west to east, it stands on the [Giza Plateau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giza_Plateau) on the west bank of the [Nile](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile) in [Giza](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giza), [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt). The face of the Sphinx appears to represent the [pharaoh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharaoh) [Khafre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khafre).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-2)

Cut from the [bedrock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedrock), the original shape of the Sphinx has been restored with layers of [limestone blocks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limestone_block).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-3) It measures 73 m (240 ft) long from paw to tail, 20 m (66 ft) high from the base to the top of the head and 19 m (62 ft) wide at its rear haunches.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-4) Its nose was broken off for unknown reasons between the 3rd and 10th centuries AD.

The Sphinx is the oldest known [monumental sculpture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monumental_sculpture) in Egypt and one of the most recognisable statues in the world. The archaeological evidence suggests that it was created by ancient Egyptians of the [Old Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Kingdom) during the reign of Khafre (c. 2558–2532 BC).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-:3-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-6)[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner1991-7)

History[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: History)]

**Old Kingdom**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: Old Kingdom)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Weisse_W%C3%BCste.jpg)

Natural rock formation at [Farafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farafra" \o "Farafra) - Egypt

The Sphinx is a [monolith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monolith) carved from the bedrock of the plateau, which also served as the [quarry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quarry) for the [pyramids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Pyramids_of_Giza) and other monuments in the area.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-:0-15) Egyptian geologist Farouk El-Baz has suggested that the head of the Sphinx may have been carved first, out of a natural [yardang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yardang" \o "Yardang), i.e. a ridge of bedrock that had been sculpted by the wind. These can sometimes achieve shapes which resemble animals. El-Baz suggests that the "moat" or "ditch" around the Sphinx may have been quarried out later to allow for the creation of the full body of the sculpture.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-16)

The archaeological evidence suggests that the Great Sphinx was created around 2500 BC for the pharaoh [Khafre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khafre), the builder of the [Second Pyramid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid_of_Khafre) at Giza.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-17) The stones cut from around the Sphinx' body were used to construct a temple in front of it, however neither the enclosure nor the temple were ever completed, and the relative scarcity of Old Kingdom cultural material suggests that a Sphinx cult was not established at the time.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-18)

[Selim Hassan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selim_Hassan), writing in 1949 on recent excavations of the Sphinx enclosure, made note of this circumstance:

Taking all things into consideration, it seems that we must give the credit of erecting this, the world's most wonderful statue, to Khafre, but always with this reservation: that there is not one single contemporary inscription which connects the Sphinx with Khafre, so sound as it may appear, we must treat the evidence as circumstantial, until such time as a lucky turn of the spade of the excavator will reveal to the world a definite reference to the erection of the Sphinx.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHassan1953164-19)

In order to construct the temple, the northern perimeter-wall of the Khafre Valley Temple had to be deconstructed, hence it follows that the Khafre funerary complex preceded the creation of the Sphinx and its temple. Furthermore, the angle and location of the south wall of the enclosure suggests the causeway connecting Khafre's Pyramid and Valley Temple already existed before the Sphinx was planned. The lower base level of the Sphinx temple also indicates that it doesn't pre-date the Valley Temple.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-:3-5)

**New Kingdom**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: New Kingdom)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Sphinx_with_Stelae.jpg)

The New Kingdom [Dream Stele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_Stele) between the paws of the Sphinx.

Some time around the [First Intermediate Period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Intermediate_Period_of_Egypt), the Giza Necropolis was abandoned, and drifting sand eventually buried the Sphinx up to its shoulders. The first documented attempt at an excavation dates to c. 1400 BC, when the young [Thutmose IV](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thutmose_IV) (1401–1391 or 1397–1388 BC) gathered a team and, after much effort, managed to dig out the front paws, between which he erected a shrine that housed the [Dream Stele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_Stele), an inscribed [granite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Granite) slab (possibly a repurposed door lintel from one of Khafre's temples). When the stele was discovered, its lines of text were already damaged and incomplete. An excerpt reads:

... the royal son, Thothmos, being arrived, while walking at midday and seating himself under the shadow of this mighty god, was overcome by slumber and slept at the very moment when Ra is at the summit [of heaven]. He found that the Majesty of this august god spoke to him with his own mouth, as a father speaks to his son, saying: Look upon me, contemplate me, O my son Thothmos; I am thy father, Harmakhis-[Khopri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khepri" \o "Khepri)-[Ra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ra)-[Tum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atum); I bestow upon thee the sovereignty over my domain, the supremacy over the living ... Behold my actual condition that thou mayest protect all my perfect limbs. The sand of the desert whereon I am laid has covered me. Save me, causing all that is in my heart to be executed.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-20)

The [Dream Stele](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_Stele) associates the Sphinx with Khafre, however this part of the text is not entirely intact:

which we bring for him: oxen ... and all the young vegetables; and we shall give praise to *Wenofer* ... *Khaf* ... the statue made for *[Atum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atum" \o "Atum)-Hor-em-*[*Akhet*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhet_(hieroglyph_and_season)).[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-21)

Egyptologist [Thomas Young](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Young_(scientist)), finding the *Khaf* [hieroglyphs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hieroglyph) in a damaged [cartouche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cartouche) used to surround a royal name, inserted the glyph *ra* to complete Khafre's name. When the Stele was re-excavated in 1925, the lines of text referring to *Khaf* flaked off and were destroyed.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

Later, [Ramesses II the Great](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramesses_II) (1279–1213 BC) may have undertaken a second excavation.

In the [New Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Kingdom), the Sphinx became more specifically associated with the sun god *Hor-em-akhet* ([Hellenized](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenization): *Harmachis*) or "Horus-at-the-Horizon". Pharaoh [Amenhotep II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amenhotep_II) (1427–1401 or 1397 BC) built a temple to the northeast of the Sphinx nearly 1000 years after its construction and dedicated it to the cult of *Hor-em-akhet*.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-22)

**Graeco-Roman Period**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: Graeco-Roman Period)]

In Graeco-Roman times, Giza had become a tourist destination—the monuments were regarded as antiquities—and some Roman Emperors visited the Sphinx out of curiosity, and for political reasons.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHassan1953119-23)

The Sphinx was cleared of sand again in the first century AD in honor of Emperor [Nero](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero) and the Governor of Egypt [Tiberius Claudius Balbilus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius_Claudius_Balbilus).[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner199134-24) A monumental stairway—more than 12 metres (39 ft) wide—was erected, leading to a pavement in front of the paws of the Sphinx. At the top of the stairs, a podium was positioned that allowed view into the Sphinx sanctuary. Further back, another podium neighbored several more steps.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner199135-25) The stairway was dismantled during the 1931–32 excavations by [Émile Baraize](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89mile_Baraize" \o "Émile Baraize).[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner199162-26)

[Pliny the Elder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder) describes the face of the Sphinx being colored red and gives measurements for the statue:[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza" \l "cite_note-27)

In front of these pyramids is the Sphinx, a still more wondrous object of art, but one upon which silence has been observed, as it is looked upon as a divinity by the people of the neighbourhood. It is their belief that King Harmaïs was buried in it, and they will have it that it was brought there from a distance. The truth is, however, that it was hewn from the solid rock; and, from a feeling of veneration, the face of the monster is coloured red. The circumference of the head, measured round the forehead, is one hundred and two feet, the length of the feet being one hundred and forty-three, and the height, from the belly to the summit of the asp on the head, sixty-two.

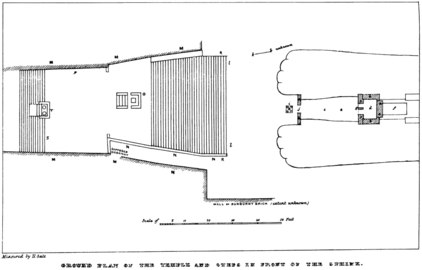
A stela dated to 166 AD commemorates the restoration of the retaining walls surrounding the Sphinx.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHassan1953123-28) The last Emperor connected with the monument is [Septimius Severus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septimius_Severus" \o "Septimius Severus), around 200 AD.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHassan1953125-29) With the downfall of Roman power, the Sphinx was once more engulfed by the sands.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHassan1953124-30)

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Retaining_walls_and_Roman_Period_stairways_east_of_the_Sphinx.tif)

Side view of the Sphinx with the Roman stairway on the right.

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Excavation_East_of_Sphinx.tif)

Top of the Roman stairway before dismantling in 1931-32.

* [](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sphinx_Map_by_Henry_Salt.tif)

Map of the area east of the Sphinx by [Henry Salt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Salt_(Egyptologist)).

**Middle Ages**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=6" \o "Edit section: Middle Ages)]

Some ancient non-Egyptians saw it as a likeliness of the god [Horon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Canaanite_religion" \o "Ancient Canaanite religion). The cult of the Sphinx continued into medieval times. The [Sabians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabians" \o "Sabians) of [Harran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harran) saw it as the burial place of [Hermes Trismegistus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermes_Trismegistus). Arab authors described the Sphinx as a [talisman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talisman) which guarded the area from the desert.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-31) [Al-Maqrizi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Maqrizi) describes it as the "talisman of the Nile" of which the locals believed the [flood cycle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Season_of_the_Inundation) depended upon.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-32) [Muhammad al-Idrisi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_al-Idrisi) stated that those wishing to obtain bureaucratic positions in the Egyptian government gave [incense offering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incense_offering) to the monument.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-Egyptology-33)

**Facts:**

**Missing nose**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=13" \o "Edit section: Missing nose)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sphinx_of_Giza_9059.jpg)

The Sphinx in profile in 2010

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Norden,_1755_(2).png)

The Sphinx as seen by [Frederic Louis Norden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederic_Louis_Norden) before Napoleon's time (sketches made 1737, published 1755)

Examination of the Sphinx's face shows that long rods or [chisels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chisels) were hammered into the nose area, one down from the bridge and another beneath the nostril, then used to pry the nose off towards the south, resulting in the one-metre wide nose still being lost to date.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-57) [Mark Lehner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Lehner), who performed an archaeological study, concluded that it was intentionally broken with instruments at an unknown time between the 3rd and 10th centuries AD.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-Lehner-58)

Drawings of the Sphinx by [Frederic Louis Norden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederic_Louis_Norden) in 1737 show the nose missing.[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-59) Many folk tales exist regarding the destruction of its nose, aiming to provide an answer as to where it went or what happened to it. One tale erroneously attributes it to cannonballs fired by the army of [Napoleon Bonaparte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_Bonaparte). Other tales ascribe it to being the work of [Mamluks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamluk_Sultanate_(Cairo)" \o "Mamluk Sultanate (Cairo)). Since the 10th century, some Arab authors have claimed it to be a result of iconoclastic attacks.[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-Lehner-58)

The Arab historian [al-Maqrīzī](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Maqrizi), writing in the 15th century, attributes the loss of the nose to Muhammad Sa'im al-Dahr, a [Sufi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufi) Muslim from the [khanqah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khanqah" \o "Khanqah) of Sa'id al-Su'ada in 1378, who found the local peasants making offerings to the Sphinx in the hope of increasing their harvest and therefore defaced the Sphinx in an act of [iconoclasm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iconoclasm). According to al-Maqrīzī, many people living in the area believed that the increased sand covering the Giza Plateau was retribution for al-Dahr's act of defacement.[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-60)[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-61) Ibn Qadi Shuhba mentions his name as Muhammad ibn Sadiq ibn al-Muhammad al-Tibrizi al-Masri, who died in 1384. He attributed the desecration of the sphinxes of Qanatir al-Siba built by the sultan [Baybars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baybars" \o "Baybars) to him, and also said he might have desecrated the Great Sphinx. [Al-Minufi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CA%BFAbd_al-Sal%C4%81m_al-Man%C5%ABf%C4%AB) stated that the [Alexandrian Crusade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandrian_Crusade) in 1365 was divine punishment for a Sufi sheikh of the khanqah of Sa'id breaking off the nose.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-Egyptology-33)

**Beard**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=14" \o "Edit section: Beard)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Beard_of_the_sphinx.jpg)

[Limestone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limestone) fragments of the Sphinx's beard in the [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum), 14th century BC.[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-62)

In addition to the lost nose, a [ceremonial pharaonic beard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharaoh#Regalia) is thought to have been attached, although this may have been added in later periods after the original construction. Egyptologist Vassil Dobrev has suggested that had the beard been an original part of the Sphinx, it would have damaged the chin of the statue upon falling.[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-Fleming_(2004)-50) The lack of visible damage supports his theory that the beard was a later addition.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

Residues of red pigment are visible on areas of the Sphinx's face and traces of yellow and blue pigment have also been found elsewhere on the Sphinx, leading Mark Lehner to suggest that the monument "was once decked out in gaudy comic book colours".[[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-Smithsonian-63) However, as with the case of many ancient monuments, the pigments and colours have since deteriorated, resulting in the yellow/beige appearance it has today.

**Holes and tunnels**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=15" \o "Edit section: Holes and tunnels)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Top_of_Sphinx_head_with_hole.tif)

Man standing in the hole on top of the head of the Sphinx (1925).

**Hole in the Sphinx's head**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=16" \o "Edit section: Hole in the Sphinx's head)]

Johann Helffrich visited the Sphinx during his travels in 1565-66. He describes that a priest went into (sic) the head of the Sphinx, and when he spoke it was as if the Sphinx itself was speaking.[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-64)

Many New Kingdom stelae depict the Sphinx wearing a crown. If it in fact existed, the hole could have been the anchoring point for it.[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner1991363-65)[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-66)

[Émile Baraize](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89mile_Baraize) closed the hole with a metal hatch in 1926.[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-67)[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner1991187-68)

**Perring's Hole**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=17" \o "Edit section: Perring's Hole)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sphinx,_Perring's_hole.tif)

*Perring's Hole* behind neck of the Sphinx. Part of headdress on the right.

[Howard Vyse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Vyse) directed [Perring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Shae_Perring) in 1837 to drill a tunnel in the back of the Sphinx, just behind the head. The boring rods became stuck at a depth of 27 feet (8.2 m), Attempts to blast the rods free caused further damage. The hole was cleared in 1978. Among the rubble was a fragment of the Sphinx's [nemes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemes" \o "Nemes) headdress.[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner1991204%E2%80%93205-69)

**Major fissure**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=18" \o "Edit section: Major fissure)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Top_of_Sphinx_back_before_modern_restorations.tif)

Major fissure running through the waist of the Sphinx, before modern restorations in 1926.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Iron_trap-door_over_fissure_at_top_of_Sphinx_back.tif)

Trap-door access to major fissure, after restorations.

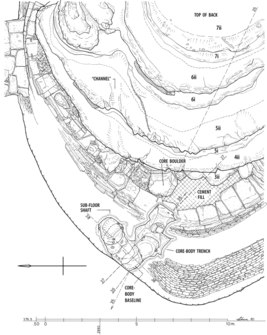
A major natural fissure in the bedrock cuts through the waist of the Sphinx, first excavated by [Auguste Mariette](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguste_Mariette" \o "Auguste Mariette) in 1853.

At the top of the back it measures up to 2 metres (6.6 ft) in width. Baraize, in 1926, sealed the sides and roofed it with iron bars, limestone and cement, and installed an iron trap door at the top. The sides of the fissure might have been artificially squared, however the bottom is irregular bedrock, about 1 metre (3.3 ft) above the outside floor. A very narrow crack continues deeper.[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner1991202%E2%80%93203-70)

**Rump passage**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&action=edit&section=19" \o "Edit section: Rump passage)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Profile_and_elevation_of_rump_passage_of_the_Sphinx.tif)

Profile of the rump passage with upper part (1+2) and lower part (3+4).

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Top-down_plan_of_the_rump_of_the_Great_Sphinx_of_Giza.tif)

Top-down plan of the rump passage. Lower part labeled "Sub-Floor Shaft", upper part "Core-Body Trench".

In 1926 the Sphinx was cleared of sand under direction of Baraize, which revealed an opening to a tunnel at floor-level at the north side of the rump. It was subsequently closed by masonry veneer and nearly forgotten.

More than fifty years later, the existence of the passage was recalled by three elderly men who had worked during the clearing as basket carriers. This led to the rediscovery and excavation of the rump passage, in 1980.

The passage consists of an upper and a lower section, which are angled roughly 90 degrees to each other:

* The upper part ascends to a height of 4 metres (13 ft) above the ground-floor at a northwest direction. It runs between masonry veneer and the core body of the Sphinx and ends in a niche 1 metre (3.3 ft) wide and 1.8 metres (5.9 ft) high. The ceiling of the niche consists of modern cement, which likely spilled down from the filling of the gap between masonry and core bedrock, some 3 metres (9.8 ft) above.
* The lower part descends steeply into the bedrock toward northeast, for a distance of approximately 4 metres (13 ft) and a depth of 5 metres (16 ft). It terminated in a cul-de-sac pit at groundwater level. At the entrance it is 1.3 metres (4.3 ft) wide, narrowing to about 1.07 metres (3.5 ft) towards the end. Among the sand and stone fragments, a piece of tin foil and the base of a modern ceramic water jar was found. The clogged bottom contained modern fill. Among it, more tin foil, modern cement and a pair of shoes.

It is possible that the entire passage was cut top down, beginning high up on the rump,and that the current access point at floor-level was made at a later date.

Vyse noted in his diary (February 27 and 28, 1837) that he was "boring" near the tail, which indicates him as the creator of the passage, as no other tunnel has been identified at this location.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-71) Another interpretation is that the shaft is of ancient origin, perhaps an exploratory tunnel or an unfinished tomb shaft.[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Sphinx_of_Giza#cite_note-FOOTNOTELehner1994-72)

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| **Great Sphinx of Giza** | |
| [Great Sphinx of Giza May 2015.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Great_Sphinx_of_Giza_May_2015.JPG) | |
| [Great Sphinx of Giza is located in Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_relief_location_map.jpg)  Great Sphinx of Giza  Shown within Egypt | |
| **Location** | [Giza, Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giza,_Egypt) |
| **Region** | [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) |
| **Coordinates** | https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[29°58′31″N 31°08′16″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&params=29_58_31_N_31_08_16_E_region:EG_type:landmark_scale:2000)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[29°58′31″N 31°08′16″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Great_Sphinx_of_Giza&params=29_58_31_N_31_08_16_E_region:EG_type:landmark_scale:2000) |
| **Length** | 73 metres (240 ft) |
| **Width** | 19 metres (62 ft) |
| **Height** | 20 metres (66 ft) |
| **History** | |
| **Material** | [Limestone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limestone) |
| **Site notes** | |
| **Condition** | Partially restored |