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16 Most Famous Cathedrals in the World

Last updated on February 20, 2023 · By **Alex Schultz**

Rising dramatically above the cities around them, cathedrals and their lofty spires make for some of the most visible and recognisable landmarks around. Sometimes built not only centuries but millennia ago, these monumental buildings symbolised God's power and might. Their belltowers also served a practical purpose as they called people to worship from the surrounding countryside.

Captivating to visit, cathedrals boast lots of beautiful architecture, with breathtaking sculptures, exquisite artworks, and stained glass windows decorating their interior. Popular among both worshippers and tourists alike, these astounding edifices now count among the world's most impressive artistic, architectural, and historical monuments.

16. Saint Sophia's Cathedral



With its sparkling white walls and green and gold cupolas, Saint Sophia's Cathedral is one of Kiev's most famous and fetching sights. Named after Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the beautiful Byzantine-style cathedral was originally built in the 11th century to house the tombs of Kievan rulers.

As such, its walls were decked with fabulous frescoes and mosaics. Almost demolished by the Soviets, the cathedral thankfully still lies in the centre of Kiev for everyone to enjoy.

15. St. Vitus Cathedral



Rising from amid the sprawling Prague Castle complex, the enormous St. Vitus Cathedral, with its 102-metre-high spire, towers dramatically over its surroundings. Built in 1344 atop of earlier churches and basilicas, the colossal edifice houses the ornate tombs of a number of kings of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperors.

As it was here too that they were coronated, its interior is fittingly decorated with lovely stained glass windows, elegant arcades, and fine mosaics. The Chapel of St. Wenceslas is its undoubted highlight. St. Vitus Cathedral, with its gorgeous Gothic architecture and fantastic façade, is the largest and most important church in the whole of Czechia.

14. St. Stephen's Cathedral



One of the city's most recognizable symbols, St. Stephen's Cathedral lies in Stephansplatz in the heart of Vienna. Exhibiting some gorgeous Romanesque and Gothic architecture, the cathedral boasts a lofty tower and glimmering limestone walls, with its wonderful roof mosaics being one of its defining features.

Inside are atmospheric crypts and catacombs for visitors to explore, which house the remains of important members of the Hapsburg dynasty. Since it was built in 1137, the cathedral has been one of Vienna's most arresting architectural and historical landmarks.

13. Cologne Cathedral



With its huge twin spires that stretch 157 metres into the air, Cologne Cathedral boasts the largest facade of any church in the world. Coated in sculptures and fine carvings, this certainly makes for a magnificent sight, as does the revered Shrine of the Three Kings that lies within.

While work first began on the cathedral in 1248, it was only finally completed in 1880, with its design largely based on that of Amiens Cathedral. Overlooking the banks of the Rhine river, Cologne Cathedral and its impressive Gothic architecture is the most visited landmark in the whole of Germany.

12. Catedral Basílica Del Pilar



Built in a beautiful Baroque style, the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar, as it is known in English, is one of Zaragoza's most popular tourist attractions. While it was only erected in 1681, numerous chapels and churches have been built on the same spot, ever since the Mother of God was miraculously sighted on the banks of the Ebro in 40 AD.

Sometimes referred to as the 'Mother of the Hispanic Peoples,' the cathedral's fetching facade is topped by lots of attractive cupolas that lie around its central dome. It looks particularly stunning at night when its fine features are fabulously illuminated and reflected in the waters of the river.

11. Zipaquirá Salt Cathedral

An absolutely incredible place to visit, Zipaquira Salt Cathedral lies some 200 metres below the ground, deep within the confines of a salt mine. Hewn out of the solid rock with finely carved icons and sculptures on show, the cathedral is set over three levels.

These represent both the birth and life of Jesus as well as his death. An astonishing architectural achievement, the salt cathedral is now a popular tourist and pilgrimage site and can be found outside the city of Zipaquira in [Colombia](#).

10. Saint John's Co-Cathedral

While its Mannerist exterior is quite plain and indistinct, the interior of Saint John's Co-Cathedral is thought to be one of the best examples of Baroque architecture around. Very elaborately and intricately decorated, its ceilings and walls are coated in glittering gold, with grand marble tombstones on show next to stupendous paintings and statues.

Its nine chapels are just as rich in their ornamentation, and even more treasures and artworks can be found in the adjoining museum. Lying in the heart of Valletta, Saint John's Co-Cathedral is not to be missed out on.

9. St. Patrick's Cathedral

With the soaring skyscrapers of Manhattan rising all around it, St. Patrick's Cathedral is certainly set in a spectacular spot. Completed in 1878, it boasts some exquisite Neo-Gothic architecture, with two elegant spires lying either side of a stunning stained glass rose window.

Inside are some fine altars and artworks, with the huge Pieta statue being the undoubtedly highlight of what's on show. The largest cathedral of its type in the States, St. Patrick's can be found on Fifth Avenue, right in front of the renowned Rockefeller Center.

8. St Paul's Cathedral

One of the most famous and recognizable landmarks in London, St Paul's Cathedral and its vast dome have dominated the city's skyline ever since it was built back in 1697. Modeled on St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, St Paul's colossal dome is its defining feature, reaching 111 meters in height.

Besides this, there is a brilliant Baroque facade for visitors to gaze upon, as well as gleaming marble floors and an amazing apse and altar inside. With grand tombs and sarcophagi of influential Brits to be spied alongside arresting paintings and sculptures, it's no wonder at all that St Paul's Cathedral is such a popular tourist attraction.

7. Cathedral of Brasilia

Noted for its unique and unusual design, the Cathedral of Brasilia is the brainchild of Brazil's most famous architect, Oscar Niemeyer. Completed in 1970, the cathedral's structure is made up of 16 sturdy columns, which gently curve together. These are meant to mimic two hands reaching towards the heavens.

As most of the walls consist of superb stained glass windows, it is very light and colorful within the cathedral, and sculptures of angels swirl above the pulpits. Welcoming worshipers to the distinctive cathedral are four statues of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

6. Santa Maria del Fiore

One of the most famous cathedrals in the world, Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence has awed and astounded onlookers ever since it was completed in 1436. Built using green, pink, and white marble, its gorgeous Gothic Revival facade features lots of fabulous statues and fine carvings, with three rose windows and three solid bronze doors set into it.

Atop of the beautiful building is its colossal red-tiled dome, which is visible from all around the city. While the interior of the cathedral is quite barren in comparison with its extravagant exterior, there are still some beautiful artworks and tombs for visitors to enjoy.

In addition to this, the cathedral complex also includes Giotto's Campanile and the Baptistry of Saint John, both of which are well worth checking out.

5. Chartres Cathedral

Remarkably well-preserved, Chartres Cathedral still retains most of its original features. This means that its three fantastic facades, large and light stained glass windows, and huge flying buttresses all date back to around 1220.

A masterpiece of French Gothic architecture, its facades are adorned with innumerable sculptures and carvings depicting biblical scenes. While its elaborate portals and two towering spires are its standout features, the cathedral has long been popular with pilgrims and tourists alike as it houses a number of important tombs and relics.

Well worth visiting if you have the chance, Chartres Cathedral is a site of significant architectural and historical interest and can be found just to the southwest of Paris.

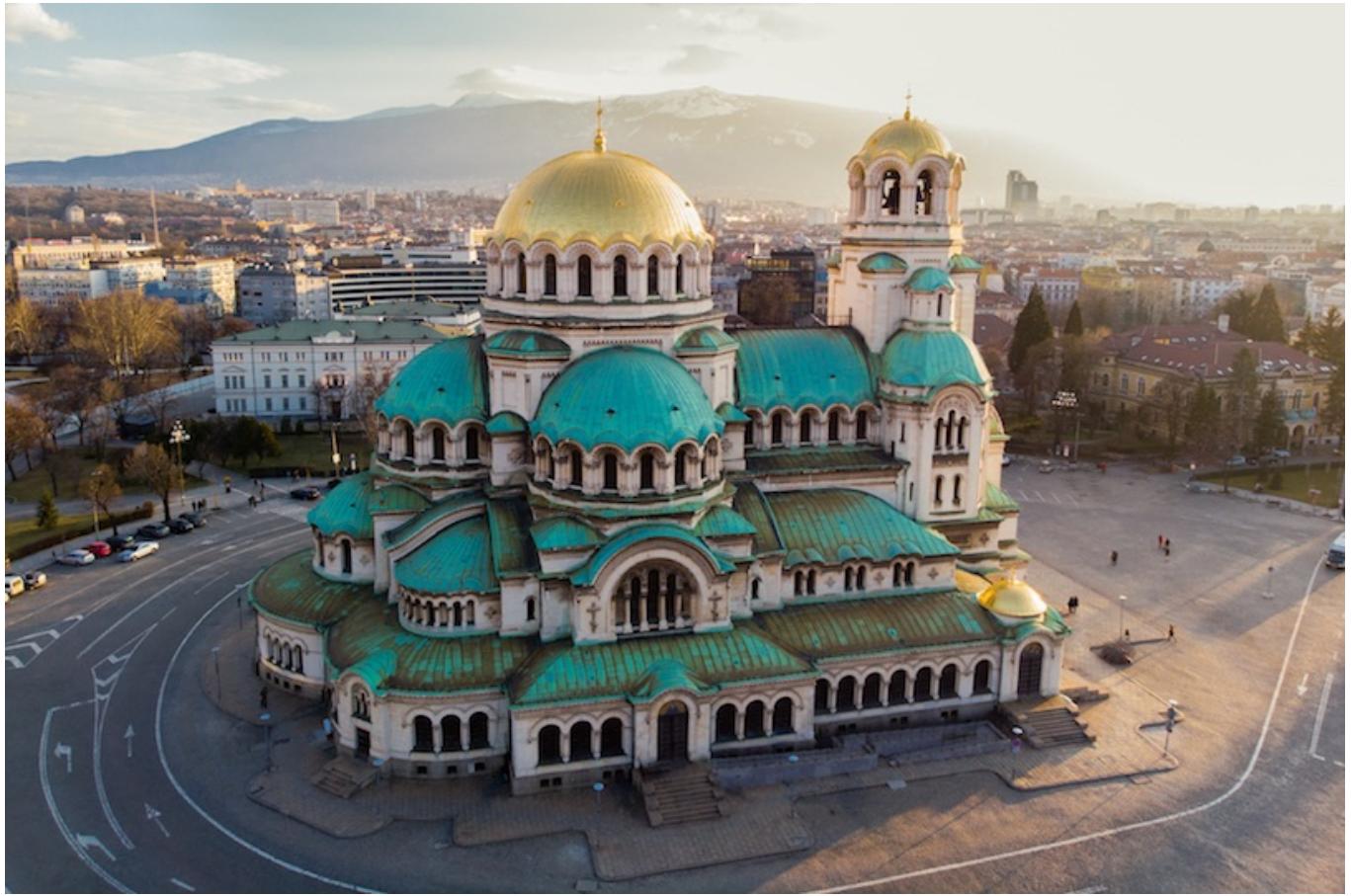
4. San Marco Basilica



Lying at one end of Piazza San Marco, the basilica of the same name is one of the most delightfully designed and decorated cathedrals around. Built all the way back in the 11th century in an Italo-Byzantine style, the basilica showcases an exquisite facade that is topped by an ornately ornamented Gothic roofline.

To highlight Venice's great power and prestige, its interior is decked in gold, with magnificent mosaics and astonishing artworks wherever you look. With so many beautiful features and details on show, San Marco Basilica is certainly an artistic and architectural treasure.

3. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



One of the largest Orthodox cathedrals in the world, Alexander Nevsky boasts some breathtaking Neo-Byzantine architecture and is one of the main sights and symbols of Sofia. Built between 1882 and 1912, the colossal cathedral was erected to commemorate the Russian soldiers who died liberating Bulgaria from the Ottomans.

While its gleaming facade and gold-plated dome certainly make for some fine photos, its cavernous and softly lit interior is just as appealing for the colourful icons that coat its walls.

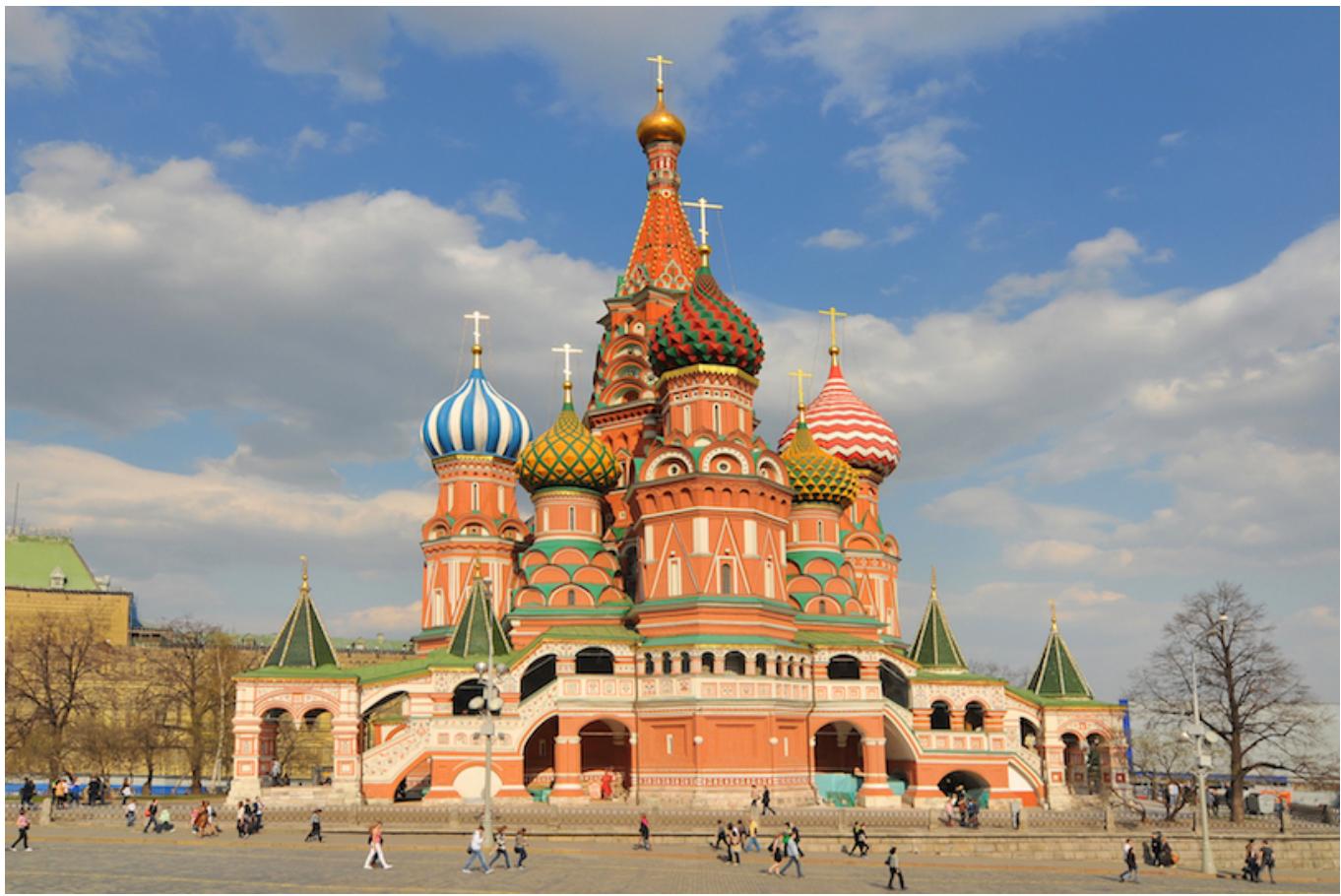
2. Mezquita of Cordoba



Widely considered to be one of the finest examples of Moorish architecture, the Mezquita of Cordoba really is a treat to visit. As it was a mosque for much of its history, elegant arches and pretty pillars dot its large prayer hall, with lots of wonderful geometric and floral designs also on display.

Built in 784, it was converted into a church during the Reconquista; a Renaissance cathedral nave was erected in the middle of the sprawling complex in the 16th century. With gorgeous mosaics, ornate marble carvings, and lots of lovely calligraphy on show, the Mezquita of Cordoba is one of Andalusia's most alluring attractions.

1. Saint Basil's Cathedral



Standing proudly above Red Square in the center of Moscow, Saint Basil's Cathedral is one of the most important and impressive landmarks in the whole of Russia. Made up of ten churches all connected, the captivating cathedral was built over the course of just six years, with work starting in 1555.

Featuring a wide range of architectural styles, it almost appears as if out of a fairytale; its radiant red walls are topped by colorful towers and onion domes. While its astonishing appearance makes for some marvelous photos, exploring its awe-inspiring interior is just as rewarding.

Beautiful artworks and icons lie alongside magnificent murals and floral ornaments. Unlike any other building on Earth, Saint Basil's Cathedral makes for a spectacular sight and is one of the highlights of any visit to Moscow.



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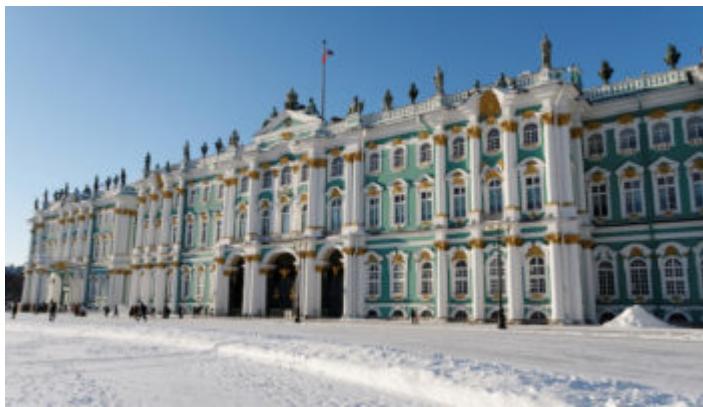
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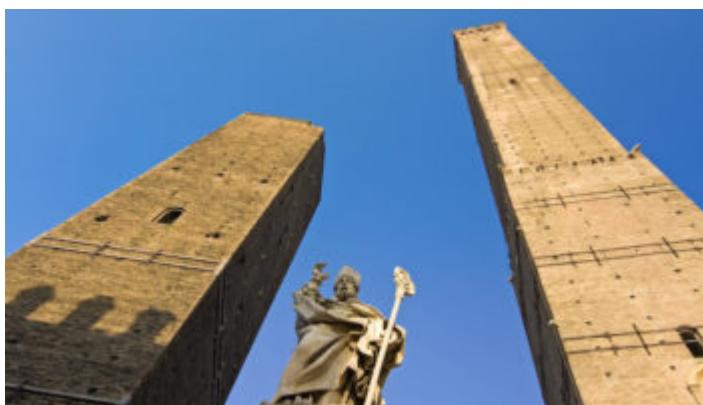
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