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Seven Wonders You Can Visit



Written by David Dreier

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New Seven Wonders

- ① The Pyramid at Chichen Itza
- ② Christ the Redeemer Statue
- ③ The Taj Mahal
- ④ The Roman Colosseum
- ⑤ The Great Wall of China
- ⑥ Machu Picchu
- ⑦ Petra

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The three Great Pyramids of Giza were built alongside the Nile River over a period of eighty years. The largest one used 2.3 million blocks of stone.

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Introduction

Writers in ancient Greece loved to describe their world. They especially enjoyed making lists of the great “**wonders**” they saw or heard about. As more people traveled, the list kept changing, but eventually a final list of significant **sites** emerged. The sites became known as the Seven Great Wonders of the World. These remarkable structures were built from about 2500 BC to 290 BC. Today, we would call these unusual places “must-sees.”

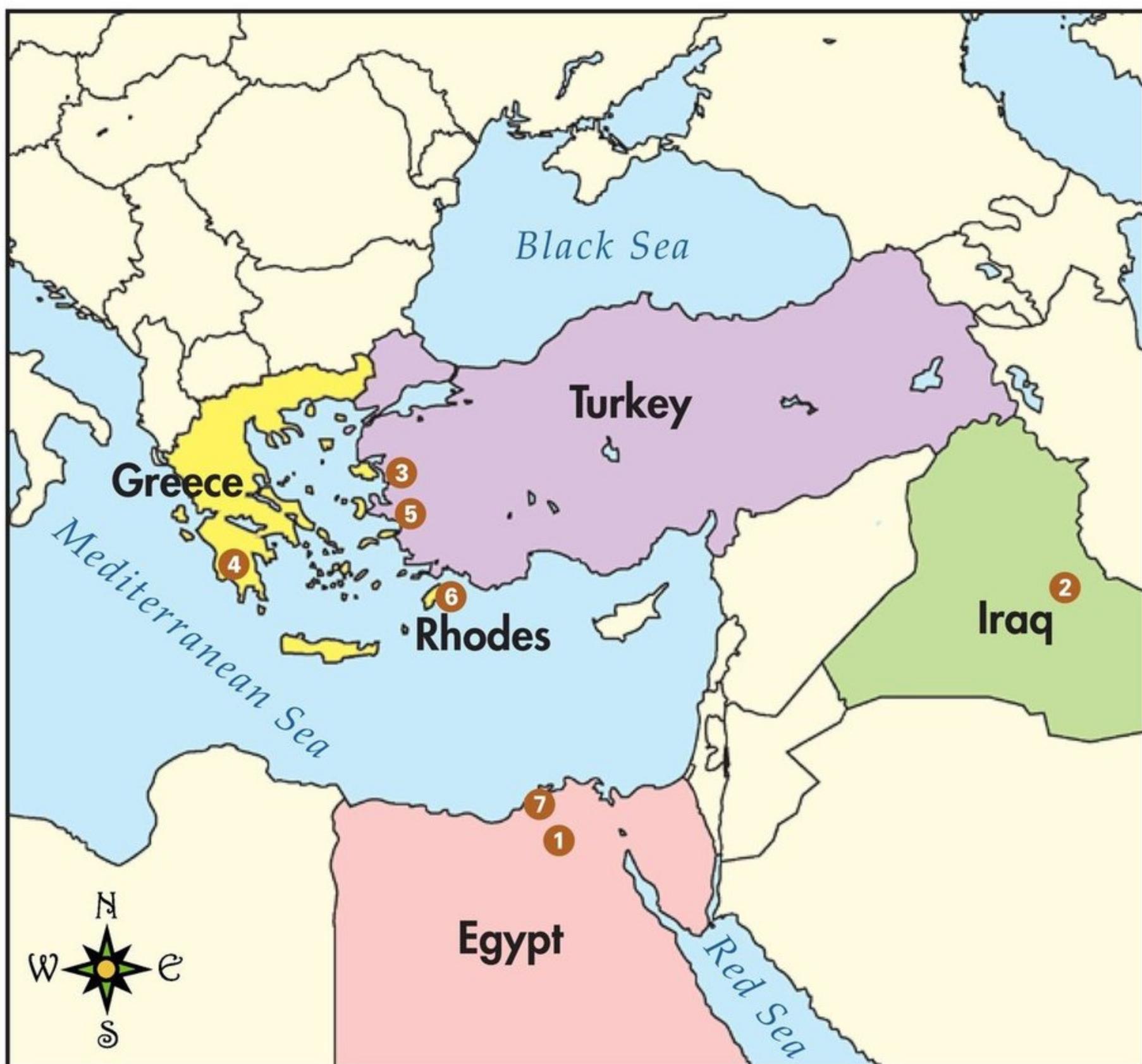
Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

- ① The Great Pyramids of **Giza**, Egypt (2500 BC)
- ② The Hanging Gardens of **Babylon**, Iraq (580 BC)
- ③ The Temple of the Greek goddess Artemis at **Ephesus**, in what is now Turkey (550 BC)
- ④ The Statue of the Greek god Zeus at **Olympia**, Greece (432 BC)
- ⑤ The Mausoleum at **Halicarnassus**, an elaborate tomb in what is now Turkey (354 BC)
- ⑥ The Colossus of Rhodes, a huge statue of the sun god Helios on the Greek island of **Rhodes** (290 BC)
- ⑦ The Lighthouse of **Alexandria**, Egypt (300 BC)



Of the original seven wonders, only the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt still stand today. However, modern **archaeologists** continue to **excavate** and restore the site of the city of Babylon—and may someday verify the location of the ancient Hanging Gardens.

Seven Wonders of the Ancient World



New Wonders to Explore

Following the idea of those ancient list makers, this book will take a look at the Seven New Wonders of the World. These new wonders were built in more recent times, and all of them can be visited today.

The New Wonders list was created from votes cast by more than 100 million people. You may think of other sites you would add to the list, but these seven received the most votes.



El Castillo is the main pyramid structure at Chichen Itza. The jaguar head on the left is a recurring theme of Mayan art and architecture.

The Pyramid at Chichen Itza

Chichen Itza (chee-CHEN-eet-SAH) was once a great religious center in Mexico. It was founded by a group of Maya called the Itza in about AD 600. The Itza lived there until about 1200. The name Chichen Itza means “mouth of the well of the Itza.” Chichen Itza was about four square miles in size and had several temples, an **observatory**, a large public market, a sacred ball court, and large areas for public events and worship.



The goal hoop at the 545-foot-long sacred ball court



El Caracol, the observatory at Chichen Itza, helped the Maya with their intense interest in tracking the position of the Sun in the sky.

The most famous structure at the site is a large pyramid, which the Spanish **invaders** named El Castillo (the castle). The four-sided pyramid is about 24 meters (79 ft) high and 58 meters (190 ft) wide at its base. It was built on top of a smaller, older temple that contained a statue of the god Chac Mool and a red jaguar figure decorated with jade. Archaeologists say the Maya designed the pyramid as a type of calendar. The pyramid has a total of 365 steps—one for each day of the year.



From its mountaintop location the statue of Christ the Redeemer looks down on the sprawling Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro.

Christ the Redeemer Statue

High on a mountain above Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, stands a tall, robed figure with its arms outstretched—the statue of Christ the Redeemer. Finished in 1931, it is the largest art deco-style statue in the world. It is the newest of the Seven New Wonders of the World.

The statue stands atop the 710-meter (2,330 ft) tall Corcovado Mountain overlooking the city of Rio de Janeiro. It can be seen from almost anywhere in the city. The statue, including its base, towers 38 meters (125 ft) above the mountaintop. Over time, wind and rain damaged its surface. In 2010, a \$4 million project returned the statue to perfect condition.



During the six-month repair of its soft stone surface, the entire statue was covered in scaffolding. The citizens of Rio watched the process closely.

The extended arms and gentle expression of the statue's face are meant to stand as a symbol of peace and welcome. The statue is lit at night and glows brightly above the city.

Visitors can ride to the top of Corcovado Mountain in a small electric train. The train was originally built to carry the building supplies for the statue. From the mountaintop, there is a sweeping, 360-degree view of Rio de Janeiro, the mountains and forests, the city's famous beaches, and the bay.

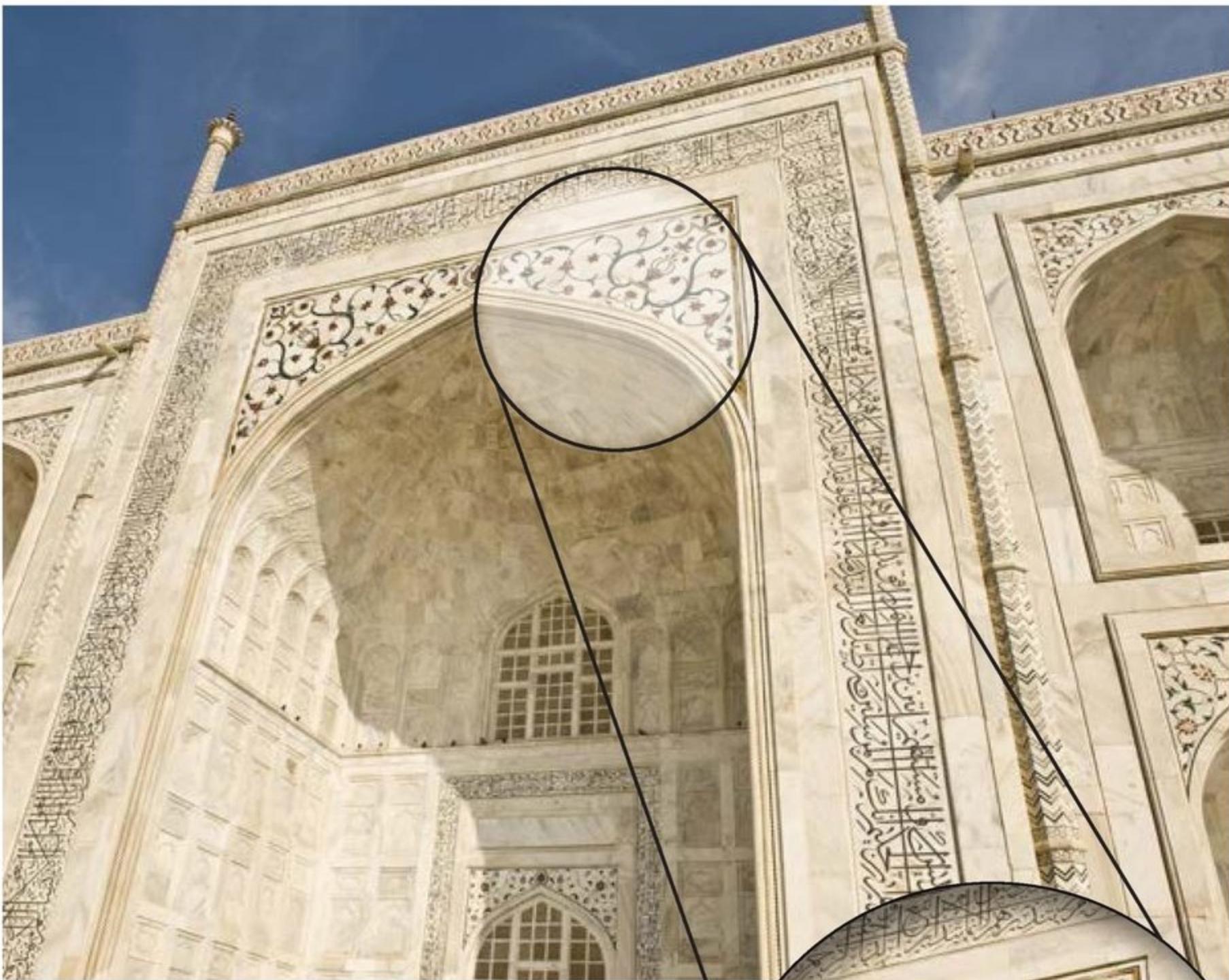


The serene setting of the gleaming Taj Mahal combines gardens, pools, and fountains. Throughout the day, its white marble surface changes from pale gold to white to pink.

The Taj Mahal

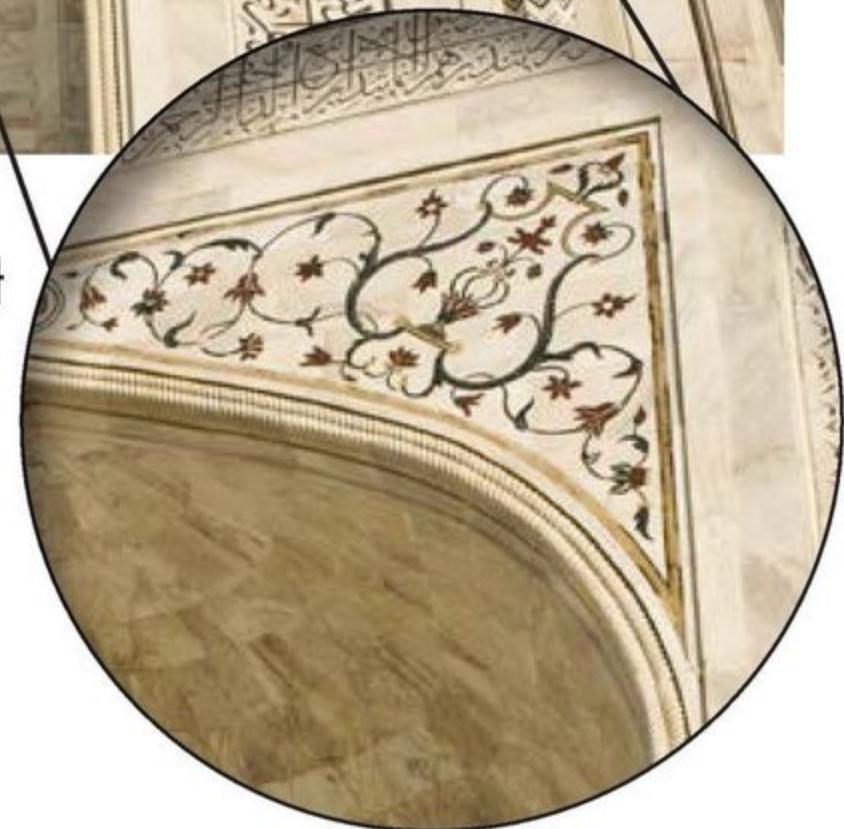
The Taj Mahal in Agra, India, ranks among the world's most beautiful and famous buildings. It's often called a "**monument** to love." The gleaming white Taj Mahal is, in fact, a **mausoleum** for tombs. It was built in the 1600s by the Mogul emperor Shah Jahan. The Moguls (or Mughals) were Muslim invaders who ruled most of India in the 1500s and 1600s.

Shah Jahan ordered the design of the Taj Mahal in 1631 to hold the tomb of a beloved wife. She had died that year in childbirth. It took until 1648 to finish the building. Her name, Mumtaz Mahal, means "Chosen One of the Palace" and Taj Mahal means "Crown Palace."



Delicate cut marble, inlaid mosaic tiles, and graceful arches complement the design of the Taj Mahal.

The Taj Mahal is made of white marble that glows pale pink in the sunset. The building's design combines Persian, Central Asian, and Islamic styles.



Craftsmen used cut pieces of colorful stones such as lapis lazuli, garnet, carnelian, and agate.

The Taj Mahal is topped by a large dome and has four slender towers called *minarets*. It sits within a vast garden and has a long narrow pool that leads to the entrance. Everything fits together in perfect **harmony**, and the beauty of the total effect always amazes visitors.

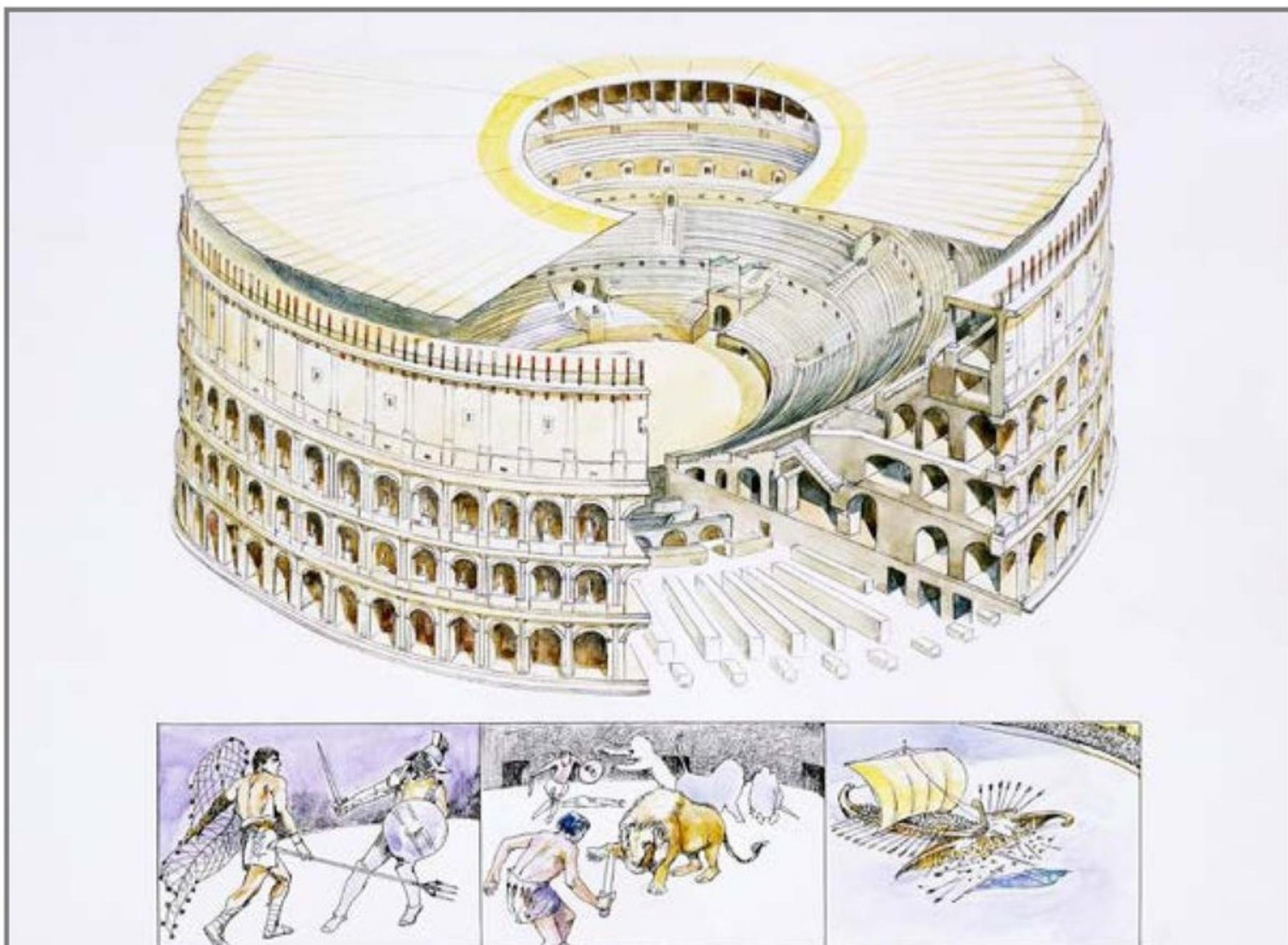


Repairing the fragile walls and grounds of the Roman Colosseum is expected to take 2.5 years and cost approximately 34 million dollars (25m euros).

The Roman Colosseum

The Colosseum in Rome, Italy, is one of the most famous landmarks of the ancient world. It was built almost 2,000 years ago at the height of the Roman Empire's power.

At least 50,000 people could be seated inside the arena to watch athletic events, circus acts, races, and many bloody contests. The Colosseum is best known for fights to the death between trained fighters called **gladiators**. Gladiators also fought wild animals such as tigers, bears, and elephants, and the animals also fought each other.



This illustration shows what the sections of the original Colosseum looked like. Broad canvas awnings could shade the audience on hot Rome days. Statues filled the exterior arches.

Below the wooden Colosseum floor were rooms where gladiators could wait for their turn to fight. Rows of cages kept the animals apart. Hand-turned elevators and ramps raised and lowered gladiators and animals to or from the arena.

After the Romans lost power in the late AD 400s, the Colosseum slowly fell apart. Its outer walls were damaged by a strong earthquake, and people took away many of its stones. A major project was begun in 2011 to rebuild and save its walls. The Colosseum is often the first landmark visitors want to see in Rome, and it's visited by almost four million people each year.



The Great Wall of China stretches for 5,500 miles across mountains, valleys, forests, and country farmland. It is over twice as long as the width of the United States from east to west.

The Great Wall of China

For much of its early history, China suffered attacks by invaders from the north. To protect against those attacks, Chinese rulers built a series of walls along the nation's northern border. The earliest walls were built from the 700s to the 300s BC. In the 200s BC, the first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huangdi, joined many of the separate walls into one. It became known as the Great Wall of China.

The original wall had been made of packed earth and rocks. The later Ming emperors changed it into a sturdy stone barrier. They also added many guard towers, so that soldiers could see for long distances. The new wall stretched for about 8,850 kilometers (5,500 mi).



Walking on the Great Wall of China has become one of the goals of many world travelers. Over two million people visit the Wall each year.

A longer, stronger wall didn't save the Ming from all attacks. In 1644, the **dynasty** fell to northern invaders called the Manchu. After the Manchu wars, weaker sections of the wall began to fall apart. Local farmers took away some of the stones to build their homes. In recent years, several sections of the wall have been rebuilt, so that visitors can see how it once looked.



Machu Picchu sits at an elevation of 2,500 meters (8,200 ft) and is often shrouded in misty clouds. Long narrow terraces allowed space for growing crops, far above the Urubamba River Canyon, below.

Machu Picchu

The Native American Incas created the greatest empire that ever existed in the Americas. When the Spanish invaders arrived in Peru in the 1500s, they destroyed many of the Inca cities. But they didn't find the remote mountaintop site of Machu Picchu (MAH-choo PEE-choo). It remained untouched, high in the Andes Mountains, for centuries after the Inca had left it. Machu Picchu almost disappeared under jungle growth, but local farmers knew it was there. In 1911, they showed the site to an explorer named Hiram Bingham. Bingham uncovered buildings, mapped the site, took photographs, and wrote about what he had seen.

Machu Picchu's temples, storage structures, observatory, and houses were built of finely cut stones fitted closely together without mortar. The steep hillsides below the city had long **terraces** for farming. About 1,000 people lived there, but archaeologists aren't sure of Machu Picchu's purpose. The city may have been used for worship and ritual—or as a winter palace for Inca rulers.

Today, Machu Picchu is among the hundred most endangered sites in the world. To protect the site, no more than 2,500 visitors are allowed per day.



Stone buildings in Macchu Picchu were built of perfectly-aligned blocks. The Inca builders didn't use mortar to seal the stones together as modern builders do. The stone walls are so tight that you can't fit a thin knife blade between them.



The Treasury (left) faces the narrow entrance to the hidden rock city of Petra, Jordan. Much of Petra was restored during the 1960s.

Petra

Imagine a city carved from solid rock. Petra, an ancient city in the Middle Eastern nation of Jordan, was carved out of pink and gray sandstone cliffs about 2,000 years ago. The word *petra* means rock. An ancient Arab tribe shaped solid cliffs and narrow canyons into over 500 temples, houses, stores, a theater, and tombs.

Ancient Petra stood at a place where two main trade routes met. Tired traders and their camel caravans would stop at the city to rest and get food and water. Over many years, trade routes moved to other areas. The rock city hidden in the canyons was forgotten. It was finally rediscovered by a Swiss explorer, Johann Burckhardt, in 1812.

To enter Petra, visitors must walk, ride a horse, or ride in a horse-drawn cart through a long, narrow canyon entrance called the Siq. At the end of the Siq entrance stands the most famous building in Petra, the Treasury. It is just the first of many fantastic sights of Petra, a city carved from stone.



The population of Petra varied between 20,000 and 30,000 people. Petra's carved buildings included apartments, hotels, restaurants, stores, banks, and even mausoleums.

Conclusion

The Seven New Wonders of the World are amazing structures. But our modern world is a much bigger place than the world of the ancient Greeks. It is difficult to limit a list of today's wonders to just seven.

On the next three pages are examples of other famous or unusual buildings, structures, and statues that exist today. Which would you vote to include on a list of New Wonders of the World?



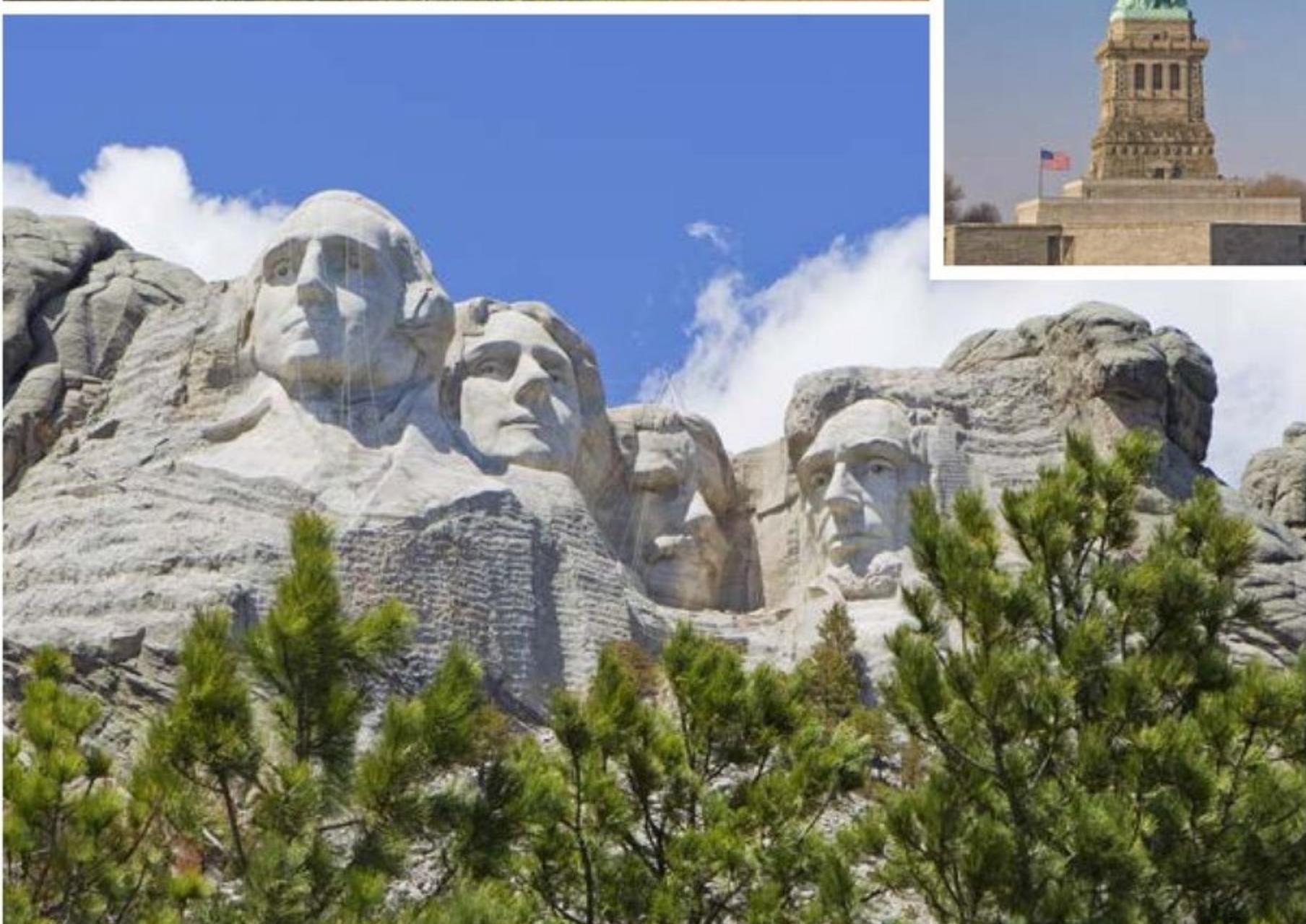
The beautiful Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey held the title of the world's largest cathedral for over 1,000 years. Underneath its dome, light streams through arched windows, bathing the white marble floor in golden light.



The immense Leshan Buddha is carved from the side of a river canyon wall outside Leshan City, China, in the Sichuan Province. It is over 233 ft high and 92 ft wide. Visitors love to sit on its feet.



(Top) Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, California; (middle) Three Gorges Dam—the world's largest dam, China; (bottom) the temples of Angkor Wat, Cambodia; (inset) the Eiffel Tower, Paris, France



(Top) Millau Bridge over the River Tarn, France; (bottom) Mount Rushmore, South Dakota, USA; (inset) the Statue of Liberty, New York Harbor, USA

Glossary

archaeologists (<i>n.</i>)	scientists who study the remains of ancient cultures (p. 4)
dynasty (<i>n.</i>)	a series of rulers in a country from the same family; a series of prominent people or teams in a field (p. 15)
excavate (<i>v.</i>)	to uncover or dig out (p. 4)
gladiators (<i>n.</i>)	fighters in ancient Rome who fought in public to entertain other people (p. 12)
harmony (<i>n.</i>)	a combination of elements that come together in a pleasing way (p. 11)
invaders (<i>n.</i>)	people who aggressively enter a country to conquer, weaken, or injure its people (p. 7)
mausoleum (<i>n.</i>)	a large tomb, or a structure that contains several tombs (p. 10)
monument (<i>n.</i>)	a building, statue, or other structure built as a memorial to a person or event (p. 10)
observatory (<i>n.</i>)	a place used for scientific observation of things in nature, such as astronomical objects, weather, or earthquakes (p. 6)
sites (<i>n.</i>)	the pieces of land where something is located; the locations where something is found or took place (p. 4)
terraces (<i>n.</i>)	flat areas made in a hillside that are used for farming (p. 17)
wonders (<i>n.</i>)	unusual or amazing people, objects, or events (p. 4)

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Front cover: The Inca city of Machu Picchu sits high on a mountaintop in the Andes Mountains of Peru. Only 2,500 people are allowed to visit each day.

Back cover: Girls cheer for the Taj Mahal. Over 100 million people voted for their favorite Wonders of the World.

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