



Great Man Made Wonders - Angkor Wat, Cambodia

Angkor Wat is a temple complex at Angkor, Cambodia, built for the king Suryavarman II in the early 12th century as his state temple and capital city. As the best-preserved temple at the site, it is the only one to have remained a significant religious centre since its foundation—first Hindu, dedicated to the god Vishnu, then Buddhist. The temple is the epitome of the high classical style of Khmer architecture. It has become a symbol of Cambodia, appearing on its national flag, and it is the country's prime attraction for visitors.

Angkor Wat combines two basic plans of Khmer temple architecture: the temple mountain and the later galleried temple, based on early South Indian Hindu architecture, with key features such as the Jagati. It is designed to represent Mount Meru, home of the devas in Hindu mythology: within a moat and an outer wall 3.6 kilometres long are three rectangular galleries, each raised above the next. At the centre of the temple stands a quincunx of towers. Unlike most Angkorian temples, Angkor Wat is oriented to the west; scholars are divided as to the significance of this. The temple is admired for the grandeur and harmony of the architecture, its extensive bas-reliefs and for the numerous devatas (guardian spirits) adorning its walls.

The modern name, Angkor Wat, means "City Temple"; Angkor is a vernacular form of the word nokor which comes from the Sanskrit word nagara meaning capital or city. Wat is the Khmer word for temple. Prior to this time the temple was known as Preah Pisnulok, after the posthumous title of its founder, Suryavarman II.

The initial design and construction of the temple took place in the first half of the 12th century, during the reign of Suryavarman II (ruled 1113 – 1150). Work seems to have ended shortly after the king's death, leaving some of the bas-relief decoration unfinished. In 1177, approximately 27 years after the death of Suryavarman II, Angkor was sacked by the Chams, the traditional enemies of the Khmer. Thereafter the empire was restored by a new king, Jayavarman VII, who established a new capital and state temple (Angkor Thom and the Bayon respectively) a few kilometres to the north of Angkor Wat.

In the late 13th century, King Jayavarman VIII, who was Hindu, was deposed by his son in law, Srindevrvarman, who had spent the previous 10 years in Sri Lanka becoming ordained as a Buddhist monk. Hence, the new King decided to convert the official religion of the empire from Hinduism to Buddhism. Since Buddha was born and died a Hindu and divisions between both the faiths appeared seamless, citizens were quick to follow a faith founded on tranquility without a need for material gain and power. This made the conversion relatively easy. Hence, Angkor Wat was converted from Hindu to Theravada Buddhist use, which continues to the present day.

One of the first Western visitors to the temple was Antonio da Magdalena, a Portuguese monk who visited in 1586 and said that it "is of such extraordinary construction that it is not possible to describe it with a pen, particularly since it is like no other building in the world. It has towers and decoration and all the refinements which the human genius can conceive of". However, the temple was popularised in the West only in the mid-19th century on the publication of Henri Mouhot's travel notes.

Mouhot, like other early Western visitors, was unable to believe that the Khmers could have built the temple, and mistakenly dated it to around the same era as Rome. The true history of Angkor Wat was pieced together only from stylistic and epigraphic evidence accumulated during the subsequent clearing and restoration work carried out across the whole Angkor site.

The temple has become a symbol of Cambodia, and is a source of great national pride. Over 2 million tourists visit Angkor Wat each year.



Location: Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria



Ruins from different countries and cultures all over the world tell fascinating stories of the distant past. Though now they may be destroyed, their legacies still live on and on...

Kourion: located on the southern coast of Cyprus was founded by Argos sometime in 13th century BC. It was an early centre of Christianity before the earthquake in 365 AD destroyed the city. The House of Eustolios and the Sanctuary of Apollo can be seen among the ruins that remain. It had a prominent Christian community even before Barnabas and Paul arrived in Cyprus. Missionaries were sent from Cyprus to preach to Greeks at Antioch. The inhabitants of Kourion were poor, as excavations revealed. A family of three was unearthed: one man, one woman and a baby. In an act of self-sacrifice, the man had used himself as a shield to cover the woman and the baby from the collapsing building during the earthquake of 365 AD. On his hand was a bronze ring inscribed with "chi rho", a symbol of Christianity.

Cyrene: located in Libya, with its fertile soil, was great for agriculture. Greeks began their expansion of Libya around the late 7th century BC. The Libyans initially welcomed the Greeks in Cyrene, but the increase in Greek population threatened them and they requested the Egyptians to provide assistance. Pharaoh Apries waged an unsuccessful battle against the people of Cyrene. He returned to Egypt with a huge army of Greek mercenaries, which led to a revolt by Amasis, who overthrew Pharaoh Apries and later become the next Pharaoh of Egypt. With the approval of the Oracle at Delphi, Ancient Greeks expanded at Cyrene in 630 BC and Cyrene rapidly grew to become prominent in the region. However, it suffered a steep decline after the destructive earthquake in 365 AD.

Kanesh in Turkey was an important trading hub in 20th century BC. However, it was destroyed by Pithana, a Hittite king, during the 17th century BC. Anitta texts and Kültepe texts were excavated in this city. King Pithana destroyed Kanesh, while his son Anitta destroyed Hattusa, as written in Anitta texts. The Anitta texts were the oldest texts written in Hittite and were excavated in Kanesh. Hittites, being an Indo-European group, descended into Anatolia around 2000 BC in huge droves. They spoke Hittite, which played an ancestral role in modern Indo-European languages. The Hittite language is now a focus point for historians and scholars trying to piece together "the mother of all Indo-European language", which is known as the proto-Indo-European.

Hattusa In 1834 AD, French archaeologist Charles Texier found the ruins of this ancient city, the Lion Gate can be seen there today in Turkey. Under Hattusili I (1586 BC-1556 BC), the capital city was relocated from Kanesh to Hattusa. Hattusa, being located high up in the mountainous region with tough weather conditions, was far away from sea or land-trade routes. It was also far from major rivers and had a huge encirclement of massive wall structures at the top of steep cliffs. These unfavourable conditions, however, served to deter attacking enemy troops. In addition to that, the soil in the area was fertile which was conducive to agriculture. Hattusa was served by natural springs, which were more than enough to sustain around 50,000 people.

Vix located in France A small settlement in Vix was renowned for an incredibly rich Celtic grave, known as the Vix Grave. It dated back to around 6th century BC. Vix Krater, a large, bronze wine-mixing vessel, was

excavated and was one of best-preserved early Greek metal works ever found. Vix was located in northern Burgundy, France and it contained several burial mounds. There were also several buildings, like the Palace of the Lady of Vix, that were modeled after early Greek architectural designs. The Vix Krater found in Vix weighed about 200 kg and measured about 1.63m in height. It was intricately designed with magnificent craftsmanship.

Heuneburg in Germany, excavations revealed that it had been inhabited since the Middle Bronze Age, and grew to become an important Celtic centre for trade and commerce. However, it was abandoned roughly around 4th century BC and the reasons remain unknown. Heuneburg was an important early Celtic settlement located in Germany, north of the Alps and near the upper Danube. Its citizens were active in trading goods such as tin, wine, amber, leather and fur. The burial sites found there were also some of the most extravagant in the ancient world. Weapons, fabrics laced with gold, jeweleries, and bronze were found in burial mounds. Also, the mud-brick walls with stone foundations were influenced by Greek architectural design. The Heuneburg settlement later declined due to its cold climate and the Celtic migrations to other places.

Karakorum in Mongolia was built in 1220 AD as the capital and trading settlement of the Mongol Empire. This city was completed in 1235 AD during the rule of Ogedei Khan. When Ming forces toppled the Yuan Dynasty, they laid siege to this city, which was destroyed in 1380 AD. There was a famous "silver tree" fountain located within the court of the palace in Karakorum, which was designed by French artisan Guillaume Boucher. In the 13th century AD, Karakorum had twelve idol temples of different nations, two mosques, and one church located towards the end of the city. Karakorum was also the launchpad from where Genghis Khan invaded the Khwarezmian Empire in 1220 AD. A further eleven years of fighting was continued by Jalal ad-Din Mingburnu, the last ruler of the Khwarezmian Empire, until he was killed in 1231 AD by a Kurdish assassin.

Persepolis in Iran An ancient capital of the Achaemenid Empire, this city was constructed around 518 BC by orders of Darius the Great. It was destroyed in 330 BC by Alexander the Great. Under Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire was at its peak. It stretched far and wide from Greece and Libya in the west to India in the east. Persepolis was built to showcase the wealth and might of the Achaemenid Empire. It was also a place of residence for the Persian kings. Tribute-bearing nations under the Empire would bring gifts when annual celebratory festivals, like Noe-Rooz, were held.

Helike in Greece was located in Achaia, Northern Peloponnesos and was rediscovered in 2001 by a team of archaeologists. It was a prosperous city and also one of huge religious significance in the ancient Greek world. Its destruction made many ancient writers speculate that the inhabitants had incurred the wrath of Poseidon by not giving a statue of Poseidon to Ionian colonists. It was Struck by an earthquake in 373 BC and ravaged by seismic sea waves. When the ancient city of Helike began to sink. many early writers attributed this sinking to the wrath of Poseidon

Denmark - The Black Sun

No, it's not the title of some sinister Scandinavian movie: The term "Black Sun" (*Sort Sol* in Danish) refers to an innocuous gathering of black starlings each spring (early March through April) and autumn (mid-September through October). Just before sunset, for around 20 minutes, up to a million of the birds take flight over western Denmark the largest flocks gather above Tonder Marsh in southern Jutland blotting out what's left of the fading light. While the birds' sheer number is impressive enough, the incredible formations created as they wheel back and forth are worthy of a Sundance award.



DISNEY LAND LEGENDS

The Disney Legends program was established in 1987 to honor individuals who have helped create the Disney magic. Here are some of the legends associated with Disney land.

Buddy Baker: was known for his musical contributions not only to Disneyland but to Disney films and television as well. In film he scored the music for "Napoleon and Samantha" in 1973, earning an Oscar nomination. Then composed the music for "The Mickey Mouse Club" on TV. For Disneyland he co-wrote the theme for the Haunted Mansion, "Grim Grinning Ghosts", and is responsible for scoring the "Innoventions" attraction and eventually retired from Disney in 1983.

Herb Ryman: was trained in art at the Chicago Institute of Art and worked for MGM when he met Walt Disney. Walt was so impressed by his work that he invited him to join his studio and eventually served as the Art Director for "Fantasia" and "Dumbo". He spent an entire weekend with Walt Disney in 1953 sketching the concept art for Walt's idea of "Disneyland" in order to show the financiers what it would look like. They must've liked it, because they funded the park's development.

Thurl Ravenscroft's: voice can be heard throughout Disneyland on many different attractions. Most notably, his voice and face can be found in the Haunted Mansion, where many guests mistake his image for that of Walt Disney himself. With quartet, the Mellomen, he sang in many Disney pictures, including "Lady and the Tramp" and "Cinderella".

Joe Fowler: love a challenge! A retired Navy Admiral, was asked by Walt to oversee the construction of Disneyland, and later was responsible for planning and building Walt Disney World. He is one of the few men to hold the title of Chairman of the Board for WED (Walter Elias Disney) Enterprises.

Harriet Burns: first female Imagineer, was hired by Disney the same year Disneyland opened, 1955 she worked on many of the audio-animatronics attractions, including "The Haunted Mansion" and "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln", and was responsible for the design of all of the singing birds in the "Enchanted Tiki Room." She also designed many of the figures for Storybook Land.

Paul Frees: was a voice actor for Disney and other studios for many years. He was the primary voice of Ludwig Von Drake during the 60's and 70's, but

his most famous work can be found in Disneyland. He is the voice you hear when you hear these words: "Welcome foolish mortals, to the Haunted Mansion. I am your host; your Ghost Host." and "The Pirates of the Caribbean"

Bod Gurr: If it moves on wheels at Disneyland, probably designed by Bob. His Disney career started as a consultant for the Autopia, after which he was hired full-time as an Imagineer and helped design such attractions as the Monorail and the first tubular steel roller coaster in the world. After his Disney career he helped design the opening ceremonies of the 1984 Summer Olympics and the dinosaurs of Jurassic Park.

Steve Martin: time with Disney and his influence on the company may be less than any other legend. He was actually a "cast member" (employee) of Disneyland from the time he was 10 until he was 18. Steve studied the comedy routines Wally Boag at the Golden Horseshoe and worked in the Magic Shop for 3 years. Since his Disneyland career he has gone on to perform as a comedic and sometimes dramatic actor in many movies, including the Disney films "Father of the Bride" and "Bringing Down the House"

Harper Groff: An artist by trade, worked for the Disney Company on the feature "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" and is credited with the design of the submarine Nautilus. His Disneyland claim-to-fame is as the primary designer of the "Jungle Cruise" attraction, near which a window with his name inscribed is located. He was also a banjo player for the Disneyland-based jazz band, the "Firehouse Five Plus Two".

Art Linkletter: was a good friend of Walt Disney's and was fortunate enough to be asked to be part of the broadcast team on the day Disneyland opened. He was a well-known name and face prior to the Disneyland opening, having had hit shows on both radio and television. In fact, he was the only person in TV history to have five shows run concurrently on network TV. Walt didn't have enough money to pay him for his services, so instead he received as his fee the profits from the film concessions at Disneyland for ten years, which worked out pretty well for him.

Award Winning Wild Life Photo



Stalking India's Hemis National Park, a snow leopard lives up to its name in U.S. photographer Steve Winter's award-winning National Geographic magazine image. On October 30, 2008, "Snowstorm Leopard" was named best overall photo in the 2008 Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition, which is organized by the Natural History Museum of London and BBC Wildlife Magazine. "This is the hardest story I have ever done because of the altitude and the steepness of the mountains," the U.S. photographer told National Geographic. "At night it was 30 below zero". Over ten months Winter's 14 "camera traps" shot more than 30,000 frames in pursuit of the endangered cat. As few as 3,500 snow leopards remain in the wild.

- Word Wonders** : Angkor Wat, Bhutan, Borobudur, China, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tibet, Uzbekistan & Vietnam
- Wild Life** : Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania & Uganda
- Family Holidays** : Bali, Dubai, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore & Thailand
- South America** : Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru & Venezuela

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