

# The hanging gardens of babylon



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The ancient city of Babylon could have been a wonderful sight to a traveller's eyes. The outer walls were 56 miles in length, 80 feet thick and 320 feet high. Inside the walls were the most beautiful temples, structures, and statues made of gold, limestone, ivory, and etc. Out of all these structures the city's most spectacular sites were: The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon are believed to have been built near present day Al Hillah, Babil in Iraq. They are sometimes called as the Hanging Gardens of Semiramis. The garden was built by King Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled Babylon for 43 years. King Nebuchadnezzar built many temples, streets, palaces, and walls. One of them was the gardens. Accounts say that he built this garden to cheer up his homesick wife, Amytis. Amytis, daughter of the King of Medes, was married to King Nebuchadnezzar to create an alliance between these two nations. However, she became very depressed because Babylon was not like her home. Babylon was in a desert; there was very little rain fall. The land where she came from was green, rugged, rich and mountainous however Babylon was dry, flat, and sun baked. Thus the king decided to recreate the tropical atmosphere of her homeland on an artificial mountain with gardens.

The hanging gardens did not actually "hang". The name comes from an inexact translation of the Greek word "kremastos" or the Latin word "pensilis", which mean not just "hanging", but "overhanging" as in the case of a terrace or balcony. The Greek geographer Strabo, who described the gardens in first century BC, wrote, "It consists of vaulted terraces raised one above another, and resting upon cubed-shaped pillars. These are hollow

and filled with earth to allow trees of the largest size to be planted. The pillars, the vaults, and terraces are constructed of baked brick and asphalt.”

Researchers have found out that the gardens were about 400 feet wide by 400 feet long and more than 80 feet high. Engineers had to come up with a way to lift water up from the local Euphrates River so it could reach every level of the terraces archeologists think that they may have used something called a chain pump. The chains moved in circles sending the buckets down to a pool to pick up water – and the p to the terraces to irrigate the gardens One can only wonder if Queen Amyitis was happy with her fantastic present, or if she continued to pine for the green mountains of her homeland.

#### The Statue of Zeus at Olympia

The statue of Zeus at Olympia was built on the most important Greek god, Zeus. The statue was built on 435 BCE in celebration of the Olympic games. It was made of gold and ivory and stood 12m tall

Many would remember watching Hercules talking to Zeus in the temple. Some may wonder how Zeus got there. Who put him there?

The Statue of Zeus was truly a wonder to behold. The temple itself was designed in 450 BC by the architect Libon, was as tall as a modern day four story tall building and the statue filled up most of it. The head of Zeus nearly touched the ceiling. The noted geographer Strabo once said that if Zeus were to come to life and stand up, ” he would un-roof the temple.”

The statue was made of gold and ivory. The ivory symbolized the reverence for the head of the gods. Zeus wore a robe and jewels made of gold; also

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made of gold were the sandals on his feet. The throne on which he sat was made of cedar wood and was inlaid with ebony, ivory, gold and many different jewels. Zeus head had a sculpted wreath of olive sprays. On his left hand he held a shining scepter, on which a large eagle sat. In his right hand rested a statue that resembled the goddess of victory, Nike. his garments were carved with animals and lilies. The statue of Zeus was creatively carved by Phidias, who is considered the greatest Greek sculptor.

The temple had the same design used on many other large Grecian temples. It was very similar to the Parthenon in Athens and the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus. The temple had a rectangular platform. There were thirteen columns that supported the roof along the sides and six supported it on both ends; thus there were about thirty-six columns. The roof of the temple had a slight peaking top which gave the form of a triangle. The triangles on both ends of the building were filled with little sculptures. Under the triangles and just above the columns, were twelve labors of Heracles; six on each end. The feeling of this temple could be similar to the Lincoln Memorial or the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D. C.

This temple served as an inspiration and destination to many people for many years. Through many years, the temple and statue survived earthquakes and other disasters; however it was lost in an accidental fire in 462 A. D. A few columns have been restored, however there are no remains of the great statue.

The Temple of Artemis

And what is now known as Turkey, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus was finished in 650 BCE. The Temple of Artemis the Greek god to the hunt, was made of marble and contained a total of 127 columns. It took nearly a century to finish. It was destroyed and rebuilt several times. Until, it was finally torn down for good in the year of 401 BCE. Today a few columns have been re-erected to make the spot.

The first memorial to the Goddess of Artemis was probably built around 800 BC on a marshy strip near the river of Ephesus. The Ephesus Artemis was not the same goddess as the Artemis of Greece. The Greek goddess of Artemis was the goddess of hunt. The Ephesus Artemis was the goddess of fertility and was often pictured as a woman with multiple breasts draped of eggs, symbols of fertility, from her shoulders to her waist. The earliest temple was destroyed and rebuilt for next few hundred years.

<http://www.unmuseum.org/ephesus.htm>

This great temple was built in 650BC and was constructed on a site already dedicated to the Anatolian Mother Goddess, Cybele. This temple attracted many people from far and near. However on July 21, 356 BC, it was set on fire by the arsonist Herostratus. That same night, Alexander the Great was born. Twenty years later, the Great offered to reconstruct the temple. The temple of Artemis was rebuilt on the same premises except it was now on a raised platform. Still, by 363 AD it was destroyed again by Goths. In the 4th century it was rebuilt but by the end of that century the temple was abandoned. The site of the temple was rediscovered in 169 on an expedition

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by the British Museum. Several of its artifacts and remaining sculptures can be found in the museum today.

The original Temple of Artemis was as long as 377 feet and as wide as 180 feet and was made entirely of marble. It consisted of 127 columns that reached a height of 60 feet. The columns had an iconic style.

The temple of Artemis had many beautiful artworks. There were many sculptures that were supposedly owned by Polyclitus, Pheidias, Cresilas, and Phradmon. The paintings that were hung were lined with silver and gold. Many have said that the Scopas had carved reliefs into the temple's columns.

The temple of Artemis was almost like a beehive; Artemis as the Queen. The temple was surrounded by priests, priestesses, musicians, acrobats, and dances. Yet, the only surviving remain of this temple is one column that can still be seen when visited.

#### The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus

Practically next door, also in Turkey, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus was built by Mausollos on the advice of his wife Artimisia. The rectangular tomb supported a colonnade with a pyramidal roof and a sculpture of 4 horses pulling a chariot on top. Unfortunately, Mausollos died before the tomb was finished around 350 BCE. The tomb was taken apart in the 16th century to reuse the stone. But some of the sculptures and freezes are on display today in the British Museum.

In 350 B. C. Mausolus died, leaving his queen and sister, Artemisia, to rule. As a tribute to him, she decided to build him a tomb. The building was beautiful and quite unique. It is well known for its luxury and elegance. The construction was completed three years after King Mausolos died and one year after Artemisia's death. The Mausoleum overlooked the city of Halicarnassus. It stood against many disasters for 17 centuries. It was not touched when Alexander the Great conquered the nearby city of Halicarnassus. It also withstood many pirate attacks in 62 and 58 B. C. However, a series of earthquakes shattered the whole tomb.

The tomb was set on hill and enclosed in a special court. The whole court was made of a stone platform on which the tomb was built upon. There was a staircase, there was edged by stone lions. On the outer walls, there were many carvings of different gods and goddesses.

The structure of the building had the basic square platform, with a periphery of 411 feet. It had 36 columns, and the top formed a 24 step pyramid surmounted by a four-horsed chariot made of marble. The foundation was a stepped podium that sides decorated with small statues. The burial chamber and the sarcophagus of white alabaster decorated with gold were located on the podium and surrounded by Ionic columns. These columns gave support to the pyramid roof. Another chariot pulled by four horses decorated the top of the tomb. This chariot stood almost twenty five feet tall.

Today the burial chamber can still be seen. Also there is a massive castle that was polished with the same stone and marble blocks that were from the Mausoleum. Some of the statues survived and are being displayed in the

British Museum in London. At the site itself, only the foundation remains of the once superb wonder.

### The Colossus at Rhodes

Travelers heading toward New York City, always get to see a marvelous sight. Erected on a small island in the harbor is a staggering statue of a robed woman, holding a book in her left hand, and a lifting a lit torch towards the sky with her right hand. This statue measures about 120 feet from head to feet. Today, it is sometimes referred to the “ Modern Colossus” but more often called the Statue of liberty. Many people can recognize the Statue of Liberty, yet they do not know that it is an echo of the original colossus: the Colossus of Rhodes.

Back in Greece, the Colossus at Rhodes stood at the entrance to the busy harbor of the city in Rhodes. Like the statue of liberty, it represented freedom. The island of Rodes had suffered from a long period of war. In 357 B. C. the island was captured by Mausolos of Halicarnassus. Then the island fell into the hands of Alexander the Great. However, after the sudden death of Alexander the Great, one of three successors, Ptolemy, succeeded in having this island in his kingdom. Antigous, the third successor of the Great, was upset and sent his son Demetrius to conquer Rhodes.

Demetrius brought 40, 000 men and used the Aegean pirates to help capture the island. The island of Rhodes was definitely out numbered, yet they stood and fought. The brave islanders won the war by flooding a ditch outside of the city walls.



To celebrate their victory and freedom, the Rhodians built a giant statue of the Greek sun god, Helios. They melted the metal bronze from many war machines that were left by Demetrius. According to the the Historian, Pliny, it took the Rhodians 12 years to finish the project. Other researchers place the start of the project in 304 B. C.

The statue stood with a height of 110 feet and stood upon a 50 foot pedestal placed near the harbor. Many have seen pictures of the Colossus with its legs spanned over the harbor entrance so that the ships could pass underneath; however the statue was posed in a traditional Grecian style. The statue stood with a spiked crown, shading its eyes from the sun with its right hand, while holding a cloak over its left arm nude. According to the book of Pilon of Byzantium, 15 tons of bronze and 9 tons of iron were used. Inside the statue, several stones column acted as main supports. Also there were some iron beams that were connected to the outer skin of statue to give support.

The Colossus stood for 56 years but then collapse in an earthquake and destroyed one regal work of art.

### The Pharos of Alexandria in Egypt

The Pharos of Alexandria in Egypt was the first ever light house. The story of this magnificent structure began with its founding city of Alexandria.

Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great in 332 B. C.; it is the only city that thrived for centuries out of 17 cities named after the Great. While building this city , Alexander died and his Successor of Egypt, Ptolemy, decided to finish this city. The city had two harbors that remained deep and clear. Under the rule of Ptolemy the city prospered and became very rich.

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Ptolemy wanted to give a symbol and a mechanism to help more trade ships to come to their harbor. Thus Ptolemy authorized the building of the pharos in 290 B. C.

The Pharos was one of the tallest structures on Earth. The design of the Pharos was very much different from the present day slim modern lighthouses. It had three stages, each of them built on top of the other. The Pharos was erected of marble blocks with lead mortar. The lowest stage was about 200 feet tall and 100 feet square. Inside this part was a large spiral ramp that allowed materials to be pulled to the top with horse drawn carts. During the day, a mirror reflected sunlight to guide the ships. At night, a fire was lit with fuel which carried out from the ground.

The Pharos helped guide sailors into the city harbor for more that 1, 500 years. It was the last of the six lost wonders to disappear. In the 14th Century A. D. a series of earthquakes toppled it over into the famous harbor.

### The Pyramid of Giza

Also in Egypt, the Great Pyramid of Giza was built around 2560 BCE as a tomb for the Egyptian Pharaoh Khufu (Cheops). Despite the fact that the builders were limited with tools, the structure was perfectly oriented. On each side it is 756 feet long, 450 feet high and is completed with 2, 300, 000 blocks of stone. Until the 1800's, the Great Pyramid at Giza was the tallest building in the world and at the age of 4, 500 years old, it is the only surviving monument of the “ Seven Wonders of the Ancient World”.

It is believed that it must have taken more than 100, 00 laborers and about 20 years to build Khufu's pyramid. There is one theory that, the crews dragged or pushed limestone blocks up mud-slicked ramps to construct the royal tombs.

Later on, 2 smaller pyramids were built on the same site. One was built by his son Kufra and the other by Kufra's son Mankaray. The pyramid stood 150 meters tall at the time of its completion

Yes there were other great structures in the world, like the Mayan Temples in South America or the Great Wall in China.