

Great Pyramid of Giza

Designed by: Ryan McNaught

Piece count: 28,259

Built by: Ryan McNaught

Build hours: 71

Wonders of Great Pyramid of Giza

Date: c. 2575 – c. 2465 BCE

Size: The base of each side measures 230 metres, and was originally 147 metres high. After years of pillaging during ancient and medieval times removed the smooth white limestone that once covered the pyramid, it now stands at 138 metres high

Place: West bank of the Nile River, near Giza, northern Egypt

The Great Pyramid has been described as the most colossal building ever constructed by humankind. It was built for Pharaoh Khufu, the second king of the fourth ancient Egyptian dynasty, who is recognised as having been the most powerful ruler of Egypt's Old Kingdom. According to Greek historian Herodotus, Khufu (known as Cheops, in Greek) had his pyramid built over a period of 20 years, by over 100,000 men. Approximately 2.7 million blocks of stone were cut to create the mammoth structure, using little more than copper hand tools.

The pyramid is filled with elaborate intricate passages, chambers, and compartments, each finished with incredibly skilled and detailed masonry work. The King's Chamber, which sits precisely in the centre of the huge structure, is lined by huge granite slabs. It contains the remains of Khufu's sarcophagus, a fractured mass of red stone that is said to ring like a bell when struck. Khufu's Great Pyramid was the centre of a complex number of burial sites, surrounded by a number of smaller pyramids, five boat pits, a mortuary, temple, causeway and tombs for other royal family members and officials, almost all of which has since been destroyed.

Designer and Builder notes

I had just finished building Himeji castle with its insane roof angles and other weird geometry. So it was with much relief that I started work on the pyramid, its simplistic geometry allowed my brain to take a much-needed break.

Often when working on simplistic models (such as this one), though, it is great to try get in something that challenges us. So on the tombs, I really tried hard to be as accurate as possible to the depiction of their floating slabs of rock and unusual sizes, and I even managed to go "half stud" – meaning that some parts of the model are half the usual unit of measurement in LEGO, the term for which is "stud". – *Ryan*

Mummy

Designed by: Russell Søren-Larson

Piece count: 7,500

Built by: Claire Ashworth

Build hours: 22

Wonders of the Mummy

Date: Earliest intentional mummification currently dates between 3000-9000 years ago. Egyptian mummification commenced about 2600 BCE.

Size: Dependent on the size of the person

Place: Ancient Egypt and other cultures

A Mummy is the embalmed and preserved remains of a usually wealthy, powerful member of an ancient society. Ancient Egypt is the best-known society to mummify their dead. It was also practiced by other cultures in differing time periods. In Ancient Egypt, the mummification process almost became a professional career as the practice evolved, and could take up to 70 days per body, as the process became more sophisticated. The bodies of royalty and wealthy Egyptian citizens were mummified by removing their organs, having their bodies dried out and skin treated with oils and resins, before being wrapped in linen. The wrapped Mummy was often covered in precious or significant amulets then placed in a coffin. The coffins were entombed with generous supplies of food, drink, and (in the case of royalty) priceless treasures within a vast pyramid. Sacred animals such as crocodiles and cats were also mummified, and joined the human Mummies in their burial tombs or pyramids. Treasure hunters, who pillaged the pyramids and tombs of ancient Egypt, prized Mummies as a precious commodity, and traded them well into the 18th century CE.

Designer notes

When we started doing research for this project, we quickly figured out that this one was going to be a challenge. In contrast to the Easter Island head, this model would require a lot of small detail. After working through a few rough drafts we decided to streamline the details by utilising colour and contrasting shapes to create a model that had enough iconic elements to read as a sarcophagus. To quickly summarise the highpoints in this model, we are very proud of the limited use of special elements, the majority of the model being brick, not plate. – *Russell*

Builder notes

What Egyptian theme would be complete without a mummy? The pharaoh still has to rule his kingdom, even in the afterlife. I would have loved to cover this model in the LEGO pearl gold colour but it just doesn't come in enough parts. So I figured yellow would be a fine substitute and I think it looks great with all of the red and blue elements. The hardest part to tackle on this model was the face, so I needed to work on this first to make sure I could get the detail just right. It was a hot debate on whether we would display it standing up or laying down. We went with standing so we could have all of the extra detail on the back. I hope I did it justice. – *Claire*

Sphinx

Designed by: Ryan McNaught

Piece count: 2,400

Built by: Ryan McNaught

Build hours: 12

Wonders of the Sphinx

Date: The archaeological evidence suggests that it was created by ancient Egyptians of the Old Kingdom during the reign of Khafre (c. 2558–2532 BC).

Size: 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.

Place: Giza, Egypt

The Great Sphinx of Giza, commonly referred to as the Sphinx of Giza or just the Sphinx, is a limestone statue of a reclining sphinx, a mythical creature. Facing directly from west to east, it stands on the Giza Plateau on the west bank of the Nile in Giza, Egypt. The face of the Sphinx appears to represent the pharaoh Khafre.

Cut from the bedrock, the original shape of the Sphinx has been restored with layers of limestone blocks. It measures s. It is the oldest known monumental sculpture in Egypt and one of the most recognisable statues in the world.

The archaeological evidence suggests that the Great Sphinx was created for the pharaoh Khafre, the builder of the Second Pyramid at Giza. The stones cut from around the Sphinx' body were used to construct a temple in front of it, however both the enclosure and this temple were never completed.

Hanging Gardens of Babylon

Designed by: Mark Curnow

Piece count: 24,585

Built by: Mark Curnow

Build hours: 79.5

Wonders of Babylon

Date: 6th century BCE

Size: unknown

Place: Near the Royal Palace of Babylon, Babylonia (approximately 70 kilometres south of modern day Baghdad, Iraq)

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were a lush, exotic splendour, rising above the desert city of Babylon. According to classical texts, Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II had the wondrous gardens planted for his homesick wife Amytis in the 6th century BCE. Princess Amytis longed for the lush mountainous scenery of her home in Media (north-western Iraq), so her husband created an oasis of exotic vegetation, which cascaded down sheer terraces, with waterfalls and overwhelming floral fragrances. The gardens first appeared in writing around the 4th century BCE, however this was not a firsthand account – in fact, many of the histories of the gardens were written by Roman and Greek authors, centuries after the garden's alleged destruction. Around 250 BCE Greek engineer Philo described the gardens as 'A work of art, of royal luxury... suspended above the heads of spectators'. The exact location of the gardens has never been conclusively established. There is continuing speculation as to what this Babylonian paradise really looked like, if indeed it existed at all, or was just a figment of the Classical imagination.

Designer and Builder notes

When I was first learning about the seven wonders of the ancient world as a child, The Hanging Gardens was my favourite. So when it came to building them for the show, I jumped at the chance to depict the legendary gardens in LEGO! The Hanging Gardens are certainly the most mysterious of the ancient wonders, as there are no consistent accounts of what they actually looked like, or even proof that they actually existed, which gave me a certain degree of freedom to design them as I wanted. I decided to arrange my gardens in a circular fashion, which proved to be quite difficult to build and manage all the intersecting angles of the multiple terraces from rectangular bricks. Even though no descriptions include the walls of the garden, I decided to decorate mine with the same dark blue lapis lazuli tiles and golden animal designs as Babylon's Ishtar Gate (which was also at one stage considered one of the seven wonders before the Lighthouse of Alexandria was built) and I think the colours really make the model stand out.

The Gardens were supposedly built by Nebuchadnezzar II for his mountain queen and featured some kind of engineering marvel that brought water up from the river to the upper levels of gardens. I took inspiration from this and populated the gardens with pampered Babylonian nobles and their servants who laboured behind the scenes to water the gardens with buckets brought up by a huge pulley system in the lower levels. – *Mark*

Statue of Zeus at Olympia

Designed by: Russell Søren-Larson

Piece count: 10,000

Built by: Mitchell Kruik, Troy Walker

Build hours: 42

Wonders of Olympia

Date: around 430 BCE, taking eight years to construct

Size: almost 12 metres high

Place: Olympia, Greece

Zeus, the God of Thunder, was known as the leader of the Ancient Greek Gods. His towering likeness was carved by famed Ancient Greek sculptor Phidias, and placed in the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. The statue was plated with gold and ivory, sitting on an elaborate cedar wood throne ornamented with ebony, ivory, gold and precious stones. Upon visiting the temple, Roman general Aemilius Paullus was said to have been 'moved to his soul, as if he had beheld the god in person'. The statue was held within the immense Temple of Zeus at Olympia for over 800 years, before Christian Priests convinced Emperor Theodosius II to close the temple amid the banning of all pagan worship in 400 CE. The statue was reportedly moved to Constantinople (modern day Istanbul, Turkey) around 420 CE, to join Chamberlain Lausus' private collection of ancient monuments. It is not clear whether the statue was destroyed in the fire that consumed Lausus' collection in 475 CE, or earlier in 426 CE when the Temple of Zeus was included in the general destruction of pagan temples in Greece. Today, a few columns are all that remain of the ruins of the temple.

Designer notes

Wowza! This is the model for which I will wake up with new plans for expansion at least once a month for the remainder of my life. I really loved this project. I am happy with the use of colour to frame the important aspects of this sculpture. The gilded elements truly frame the model. I searched far and wide to try and find as many different versions of the original sculpture of legend. As I reviewed the various illustrations, I noticed that scale seemed to be central in them all. I responded by adding a large base which I hope reads as a physical barrier (similar to Mount Olympus) that separates Zeus from man. In addition to being out of reach, I made Zeus large enough to be an imposing presence. I really played with the scale of his throne. The idea of a throne that towered over the King of Gods, I really liked. Imagine you're a LEGO minifigure standing at the base looking up – I would be in awe! - *Russell*

Builder notes

I felt pretty confident in finishing off the list of models with this one. Unfortunately, the statue, in real life being covered in gold and silver, shone a hole in the extensive LEGO colour palette. The designer had conceived the model in colours that couldn't be achieved. So with a bit of alteration and with respect to what we could use, the less bright but simpler scheme of medium stone grey with sand yellow was adopted, and thus, it started. In a way though, it gave us the chance to incorporate gold in small amounts to accentuate the detail on the model.

My highlight was being able to add the little thrones and 'mini' Zeus statues underneath. Also making the little details like the buttons and the columns was pretty fun too. – *Mitch & Troy*

Temple of Artemis at Ephesus

Designed by: Centuri Chan

Piece count: 14,517

Built by: Centuri Chan

Build hours: 71

Wonders of Ephesus

Date: Originally built around 550 BCE, rebuilt in 356 BCE after burning down

Size: 110 metres long, 55 metres wide, 18 metres high

Place: Ephesus, ancient Greece (west coast of modern day Turkey)

The Temple of Artemis was famous for its colossal size and abundant artistic adornment. It was built by Croesus, the last King of Lydia, whose immense wealth enabled him to build the enormously elaborate monument. The Temple worshiped the cult of Greek goddess Artemis (the daughter of Zeus) who was goddess of wild animals, the hunt, vegetation, chastity and childbirth. Located within an Eastern-trading port city, the Temple at Ephesus incorporated elements of Eastern deities, such as Cybele, an earth-mother goddess of the modern Turkish region. It was said to have towered over the Ephesian skyline, and frequently rendered visitors awe-struck and overwhelmed. Guides warned visitors not to stare at the white marble walls too long, to avoid being blinded by their brilliance. In 100 BCE, ancient Greek author Antipater described the brilliance of the Temple: “only in Heaven has the Sun ever looked upon its equal”. The Temple was attacked a number of times: most notably by a madman named Herostratus, who burned the Temple to the ground in 356 BCE. It was rebuilt, but was finally destroyed by invading Christianised Germanic Ostrogoths in 262 CE. Today, a small collection of ruins is all that remains of the Temple.

Designer and Builder notes

The Ancient Greek Temple of Artemis was an interesting model to research, as historically it had been rebuilt several times on the same site, often on the foundations of the previous temple. I chose to recreate the temple as it was built in the 2nd century BC, described as the most impressive version of this temple, with a total of 127 columns.

I was determined to build this accurately in terms of the number of and layout of these columns. Creating a cutaway model gave me the opportunity to feature the column layout as well as the interior which housed the statue of Artemis. It also meant that I didn't have to build all 127 columns!

I chose to build the temple predominantly in white to represent the marble it was made from. The roof is dark red which contrasts nicely with the building. Marble steps were highlighted by adding a touch of light grey and finer details were added in gold to add to the majesty of this ancient masterpiece.

As with most of the ancient wonders, much of this build was left to interpretation, particularly the features, details and statues. I quite enjoyed the freedom to experiment with these details while adhering to the style of ancient Greek architecture.

According to historical reports, the temple was set on fire in 356 BC by Herostratus. You may find him sneaking around in the model somewhere. – *Centuri*

Mausoleum of Halicarnassus

Designed by: Mitchell Kruik

Piece count: 13,312

Built by: Mitchell Kruik

Build hours: 65

Wonders of Halicarnassus

Date: 353 - 351 BCE

Size: Said to be almost exactly square, with a periphery of 125 metres, reaching a height of 45 metres

Place: Halicarnassus, Carnia (modern day Bodrum, Turkey)

The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus was ordered by Queen Artemisia of Carnia as a monument and tomb for King Mausolus, her deceased husband and brother. The monument was planned by Mausolus himself, who left behind clear plans for its construction. The Mausoleum was an immensely tall and imposing monument, made entirely of white marble. It boasted a vaulted ceiling above 36 towering columns, finished with an oversized stepped pyramid and four-horse marble and gold chariot on top. Mausolus and Artemisia planned their capital city as an homage to classical Greek art and architecture (and to themselves). The Mausoleum was no exception. The monument contained enormous figures of Mausolus and Artemisia, and was positively groaning with works from famed Greek sculptors Scopas, Bryaxis, Leochares, and (most likely) Timotheus, who each decorated a side of the Mausoleum. Over 400 years after its construction, Ancient Roman author Pliny the Elder wrote “even today, the hands of the sculptors seem to vie with one another in artistry”. The Mausoleum was likely destroyed in an earthquake between the 11th and 15th century CE, after which its ruins were used as the foundations for a castle on the site.

Designer & Builder notes

The mausoleum is another one of those ‘long lost’ wonders of the ancient world. Not many details remain, apart from artistic impressions and small amounts about the structure, so it gave me a chance to pick and choose the most aesthetically pleasing elements from all ideas out there, while trying to maintain certain points – like the steps on the roof being an exact number – and base the building and its surrounds on that. The construction includes some nice smooth pyramid-like walls and probably the biggest use in the show of the jumper plates in order to get the correct number of steps in the roof! I really had to add some lovely gardens underneath with custom made cypress trees, and a couple of large stone soldiers guarding the entrance. – *Mitch*

The Colossus of Rhodes

Designed by: Russell Søren-Larson

Piece count: 10,000

Built by: Claire Ashworth, Ryan McNaught

Build hours: 38

Wonders of Rhodes

Date: c.294-282 BCE

Size: 32 metres high

Place: Rhodes, Greece

The Colossus of Rhodes was a towering bronze sculpture of the ancient Greek sun God Helios. From the early 5th century BCE, Helios was regarded as the chief God of Rhodes, and it was believed the island belonged to him. Rhodes stood at the intersection of two major ancient trade routes through the Mediterranean. The Colossus towered over the entrance to the port, and would have been well known throughout the trade routes. The statue of Helios was created by Chares of Lyndes, to commemorate the island's resistance to the lengthy siege of Rhodes by Demetrius I Poliorcetes, the King of Macedonia. The statue was destroyed by an earthquake around 225 BCE, after standing for only 56 years. Its ruins were left for over 850 years, until raiding Arabian forces dismantled them in 654 CE. Even in ruins, the statue was so imposingly large that Roman scholar Pliny the Elder wrote that "lying on the ground, it is a marvel... few people can even put their arms around the figure's thumb, and each of its fingers is larger than most statues".

Builder notes

Creatively, this was one of the best things I could ever work on. I recall seeing the original Clash of the Titans as a young lad and to be able to strike out and create something that could live in that world was incredible. In a similar way to the ancient builders that might have worked on a project like this, I struggled with the figure's stance. I had to keep refining the placement of the shield and spear to ensure that they would be strong enough to stand up to the ages. – *Russell*

Designer notes

A colossal amount of detail in such a small package! The biggest challenges were building the foundations strong enough to support the body. The ankle and wrists are quite thin and required some special thought to ensure they would be rigid enough to help our colossus stand tall. There is no metal work in the body for extra support, so a lot of thought and effort went into making him as stable as possible – *Claire & Ryan*

The Lighthouse of Alexandria

Designed by: Centuri Chan

Piece count: 10,000

Built by: Centuri Chan

Build hours: 94

Wonders of Alexandria

Date: Completed in 280 BCE

Size: 100 metres high

Place: Island of Pharos, near Alexandria, Egypt

The Lighthouse of Alexandria, also known as the Pharos of Alexandria, was the first navigational-aid-come-monument of its kind, and was hailed as a technological triumph. Furthermore, it served as a reminder of the formidable power held by the Ptolemy dynasty over Egypt. The lighthouse was built by ancient Greek architect and engineer Sostratus of Cnidus for the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy I Soter, and completed during the reign of his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Illustrated on ancient coins, it is shown rising from a rectangular base (similar in shape to a modern skyscraper) topped by a smaller octagonal section, and finished with a cylindrical section that held a huge statue of either a Greek God, Alexander the Great, or Ptolemy I himself. The Lighthouse of Alexandria was the product of the 'Mouseion' (quite probably the first government-funded think tank) made up of Alexandria's brightest scientists, geographers and astronomers. They developed a lighthouse that guided ships safely through the Nile Delta's treacherous coast, and into the great harbour of Alexandria for almost two millennia. It was gradually destroyed during a series of earthquakes between 956 and 1323 CE; its ruins since found at the bottom of the River Nile.

Designer and Builder notes

The Lighthouse at Alexandria is one of the ancient wonders with some actual historical reference. Though it no longer exists, there have been extensive studies done on it by archaeologists. As a result, researching and designing this model was an interesting process as there was plenty of reference material and artist impressions based on historic findings.

The overall shape is based on a square tower with sloped walls and a lower outer wall. Because it is the same on all four sides, I decided to cross section the tower and add some activity inside. It is often described as and depicted as being on a jagged cliff or island, so this formed the groundwork of the LEGO model and allowed me to add a sailing ship and other coastal details – including a mermaid sitting on a rock!

The model was built using tan-coloured bricks which are ideal for an Egyptian building described as being built from limestone. Building a LEGO model in the style of ancient Egyptian architecture was enjoyable, and I spent a fair amount of time refining the details to achieve the desired look. The most difficult part of this build was the sloped walls of the main tower. I achieved this by building each wall as a separate component which locked in place once the central part of the tower had been constructed.

The Lighthouse reportedly used a large mirror during the day and a large flame during the night. I wanted to show the flame version to give a more dramatic look to the finished model. – *Centuri*

Trojan Horse

Designed by: Mitchell Kruik

Piece count: 9,500

Built by: Mitchell Kruik

Build hours: 53

Wonders of the Trojan Horse

Date: c.1200 BCE

Size: Huge! (no accurate size recorded)

Place: Ancient city of Troy, within the western part of modern day Turkey

The Trojan War was fought between the Kingdom of Troy in Anatolia and early ancient Greece. The conflict was sparked by the abduction of Queen Helen of Sparta, by Prince Paris of Troy (or sparked by their elopement, depending on the storyteller). In retaliation, Helen's jilted husband King Menelaus enlisted his brother Agamemnon, King of Mycenae, to wage war on Troy as an allied Greek army. Invading Greek armies ransacked Trojan villages, but still Prince Paris refused to return Helen, keeping her within the fortified city of Troy. After ten long years of war, the Greeks devised a plan to sneak an army into the walls of Troy; this was the Trojan Horse. Pretending to retreat, they sent their ships away from Troy, leaving behind an enormous wooden horse which was hiding a small army of Greek warriors inside it. The horse (mistaken as a gift by the Trojans) was brought into the walls of the city. The Greek warriors inside the horse waited for night to fall, then opened the gates for their fellow Greek soldiers who had been hiding after their false retreat, and attacked Troy from within, winning the Trojan War.

Designer and Builder notes

The Trojan Horse was one of those models that I felt cried for something a little different to the standard horse, and that was to take the point of view of a LEGO Trojan. What would you see was a horse if you were a mini figure? I built an enlarged LEGO horse, filling it with a whole army getting ready to attack the unsuspecting city, even as it's dragged in by slaves. The walls leading up to the gate are on a gentle slope made possible with quite a few hinge bricks hidden deep in the model. I thoroughly enjoyed making the little market surrounding the gates, with many little pots and pans on display, a very colourful scene surrounding the city's new resident. – *Mitch*