



This is Amazing Architecture: classic, quirky, contemporary.

When we travel it's often to see a building – the Taj Mahal, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Eiffel Tower. We then photograph ourselves in front of them and, let's face it, the feeling of having claimed these sights is part of the joy of tourism.

But why? Because, buildings are endlessly intriguing: things of beauty, symbols of their age and emblems of human endeavour. As the world's most famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright put it: 'The mother art is architecture. Without an architecture of our own we have no soul of our own civilization.' They speak of ambitions and ideas – and even, occasionally, the basic human need for shelter.

Sometimes, buildings are the reason we decide to go to a place: think of an icon such as Bilbao's Guggenheim and Cambodia's Angkor Wat temple complex. Other times, buildings are less the decoration on the cake than the filling, such as the golden Georgian terraces of Bath in the UK, and the silvery boulevards of Georges-Eugène Haussmann's Paris. From the sublime and the extraordinary to the curious and vainglorious, we've rounded up some of the world's most amazing buildings. You'll find such retro joys as the Atomium in Brussels and the Shabalovka Radio Tower in Moscow, as well as inspirational individualities such as Spain's Dalí Museum.

Among the classics, discover great religious edifices like the Great Mosque of Djenne in Mali, Istanbul's Hagia Sophia, and the UK's glorious Lincoln Cathedral. For cool-hunters, there's Gaudí's Sagrada Família in Barcelona and the cinematic delights of the Berlin Alexanderplatz TV Tower and New York's Chrysler Building. We've included old favourites and some you may not have seen before.

From the sublime to the strange, join our grand tour of the world's most amazing architecture.





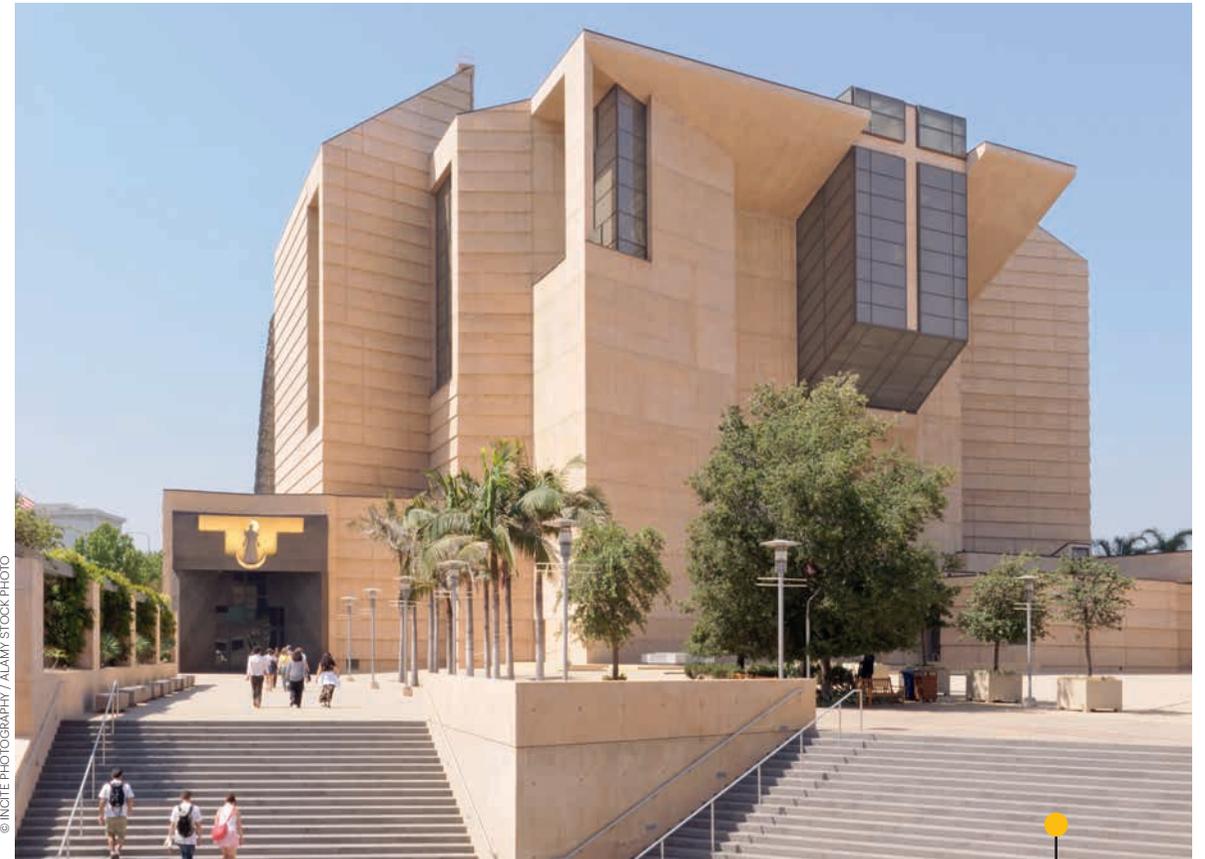
Bahá'í House of Worship

1986
Fariborz Sahba
Delhi, India

Best known as the Lotus Temple, the Bahá'í House of Worship really does look like a huge flower, its petals spread to encourage devotion. The temple is dedicated to the Bahá'í faith – with roots in Shia Islam – and it's open to all. Those 27 white marble 'petals' are

free-standing, and nine sides (it's a Bahá'í thing) face into a spectacular central hall large enough to accommodate 2500 people.

In 2001 CNN named it the most visited building in the world. See it in a Delhi sunset and grab yourself a sacred moment.



Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral

2002
Rafael Moneo
Los Angeles, US

There are few new cathedrals in the modern world, but OLA in LA is one. Designed by Spanish starchitect Rafael Moneo, it's been dubbed the world's only 'postmodern' cathedral. Well, it does have some sharp angles and a classic LA site close to the Hollywood Freeway.

But somehow it adds up to a convincing Catholic cathedral – and it even has the relics of 3rd-century martyr Saint Vibiana, resting alongside a more modern icon, Gregory Peck. Nor will its themes of 'Light' and 'Journey' faze the Oprah generation.





Ayutthaya temple complex

c1350

Architect N/A
Ayutthaya, Thailand

There's something thrilling about a lost historic city, and Ayutthaya has that excitement in spades. A world city in the 14th-18th centuries, its position on an island near the Gulf of Siam gave it real trading power.

But they couldn't let it lie. Sacked by Burma, it was abandoned... and the rest is archaeology. But what's left is stunning: elegant 'prang' (reliquary towers) that tease the eye, sturdy monasteries, plentiful preserved murals: all on a grid that speaks of past greatness. Sorry Bangkok... you just don't compete.





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Old Bridge **(Stari Most)**

1566

Mimar Hayruddin
Mostar, Bosnia and
Herzegovina

This 30m hump-backed arch over the river Neretva is a most elegant thing: like a cat stretching over the water below. But Stari Most is also a poignant symbol of reconciliation.

In 1993, the Balkans War took the middle out of the old Ottoman-era crossing,

and the two sides of the town, connected for 427 years, were rent asunder. By 2004 it was erected anew, and on baking summer days, the spectacular annual diving competition resumes.



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Pelourinho

c1550-1600

Architect N/A
Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

The old district of Pelourinho or 'Pelô', in the city of Salvador, has the kind of atmosphere you can slice – not least because, beneath its beauty, it was a place of past atrocity.

Cobbled, steep, and surrounded by colourful Portuguese colonial

buildings, including beauties like the light blue baroque Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos, it's UNESCO-listed but utterly alive. Attend one of the huge *bloco* or drum orchestras here on Sundays and you'll hear a defiant link to a difficult past.





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Old Mosque
City of
Bagerhat

15th century
 Ulugh Khan Jahan
 Bagerhat, Bangladesh

Not so many tourists come to Bangladesh. But perhaps they should, particularly to see the Mosque City of Bagerhat. It's where the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers meet, and still a trading post – but it's the ancient city, founded by a Turkish general, that's the

reason to come. With 81 domes and more than 60 pillars, it's a classic example of the baked brickwork or terracotta of Muslim Bengal, with artificial tusks of elephants decorating the exteriors of the minarets.



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Fasil Ghebbi
 1636–
 Emperor Fasilides
 Gondar, Ethiopia

Once a menagerie of beasts was kept at this imperial royal enclosure of Ethiopia in Gondar. They're no longer here, but the whole complex is recognisable as the estate of an extremely powerful ruler. It's a fortified palace in a style a Westerner would understand, thanks to the

baroque style brought by Jesuit missionaries, yet with Nubian, Hindu and Arabic influences in the decoration and domes. On the high plateau of northern Ethiopia near Lake Tana, it's a big stop on Ethiopia's 'golden triangle'.



Agadez **mosque**

1515, restored 1844

Architect N/A
Agadez, Niger

This is the tallest structure made of mud – or rather, adobe – in the world. The mosque and its 27m-high minaret are, amazingly, built from a robust mix of mud, straw and pebbles, which gives it the deliciously rounded look, and it's been here since the 14th century, when it was built as the residence of the Sultan of Agadez, leader of local Tuaregs. Rain isn't good for it – hence the strengthening beams that give it its distinctive façade – but it's sturdy enough that you can walk up it, if you're ready for a hot climb. You'll find it on the southern side of the Sahara.



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Bahla Fort

12th–15th centuries

Architect N/A
Bahlat, Oman

Bahla Fort is one of the oldest and biggest in Oman, and a gem: a huge edifice of mud, brick and stone in the Bahla oasis. Round towers, wells, castellations and miles of walls testify to a great cultural monument, augmented by timber doors, shelves and window screens – and you'll want to rock the Al Qabasah, a splendid five-storey collection of rooms. It's been renewed several times: the last time was 2012.



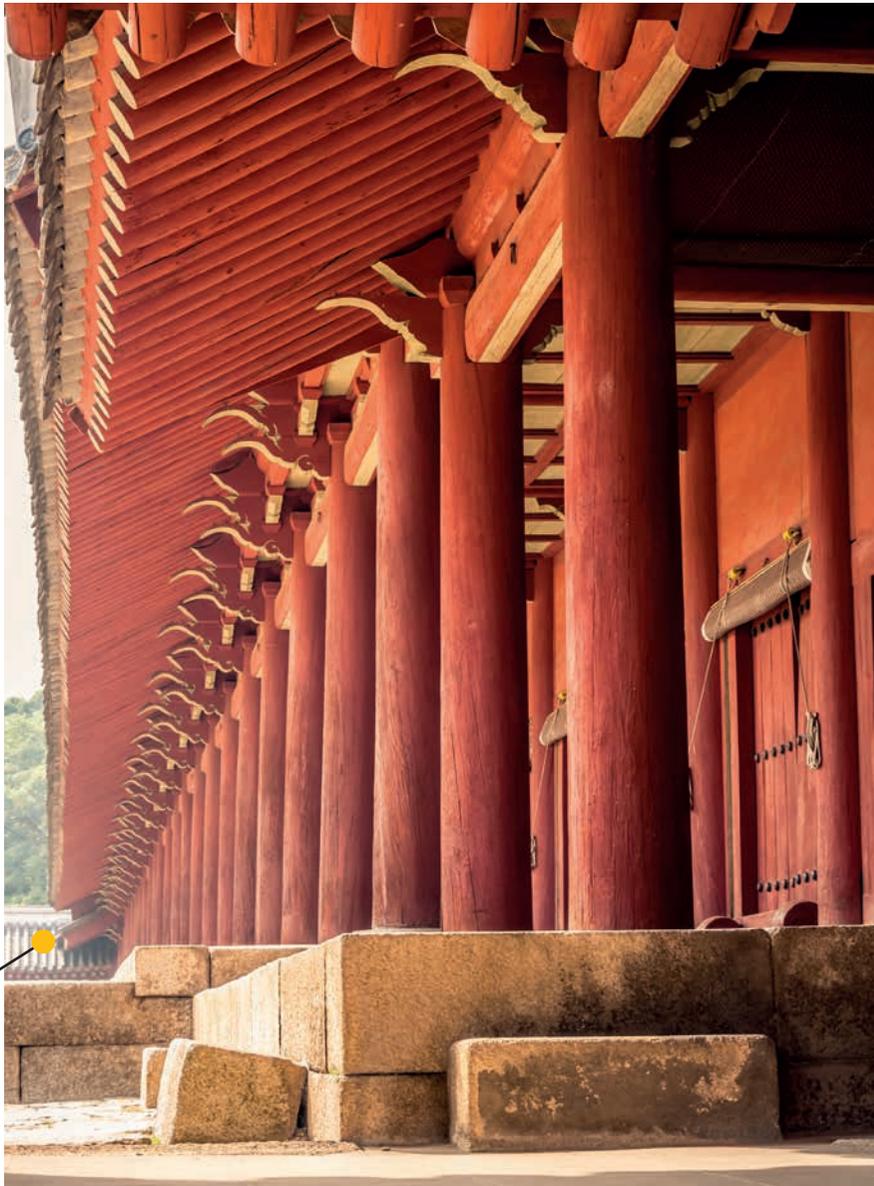
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Jongmyo shrine

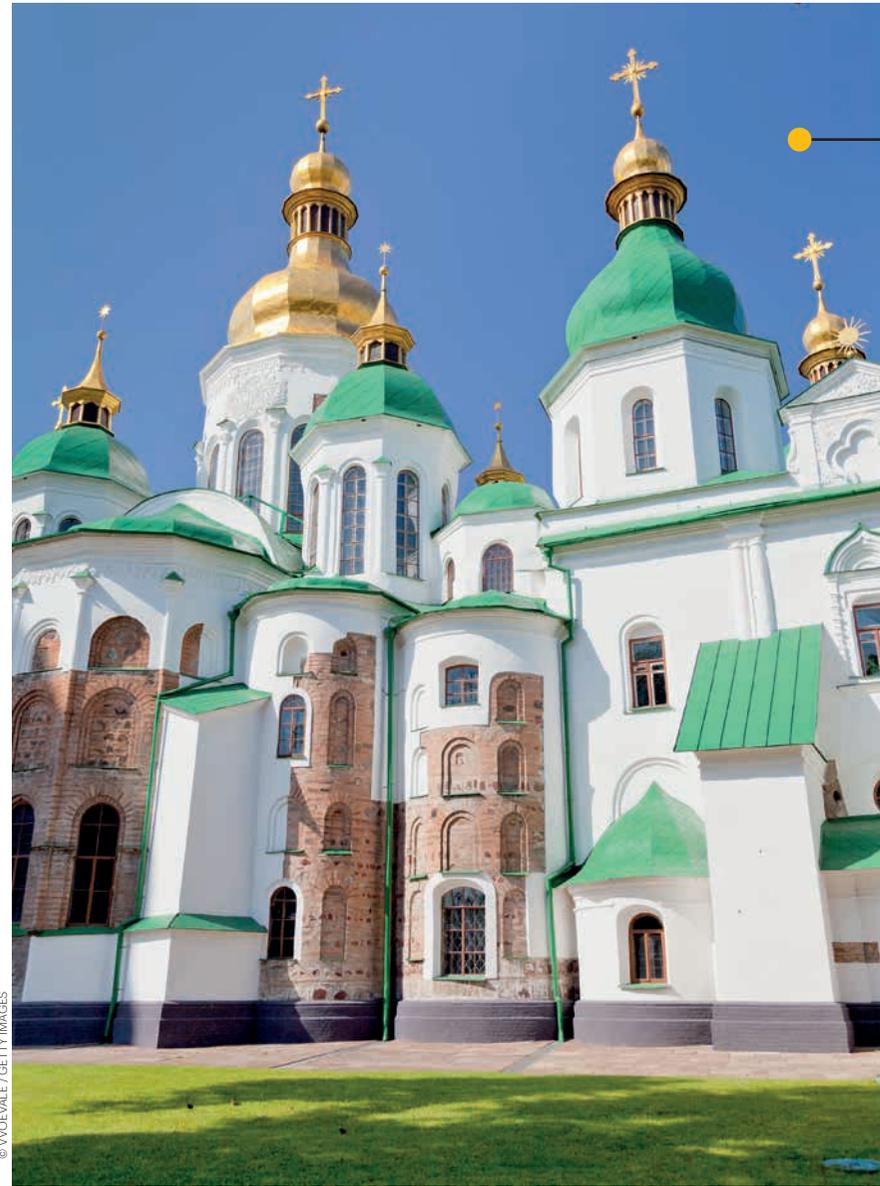
1394

King Taejo
Seoul, South Korea

Chosen for its understated charms – just look at those eaves – Jongmyo is a royal shrine for the ancestral Joseon dynasty. So it's muted and elegant. At 109m, the main hall is one of the world's longest single wooden structures, and Jongmyo's purpose was to honour his ancestors properly, with no undue ornamentation and a real sense of minimalist dignity.



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St Sophia Cathedral

1011

Prince Yaroslav
the Wise
Kiev, Ukraine

What can you not love about a church created by someone called 'Prince Yaroslav the Wise?' This, Kiev's oldest church, has Yaroslav's tomb inside, although in a bizarre twist, his remains are said to have been smuggled to the US; while outside are those 13 baroque cupolas, later additions. St Sophia is a symbol of Ukrainian nationalism, an Orthodox pilgrim site, a museum – and it hosted the first school in Kiev. Some of the rich frescoes and mosaics date back to the 11th century – an extraordinary survival.