

The Pyramids of Giza: Egypt's Wonders

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Most people have heard of the Pyramids on the Giza Plateau, just outside [Cairo in Egypt](#).

Definitely one of the world's wonders, the Pyramids of Giza are one of those places you should try to visit if you can.

For as many years as I can remember, I've wanted to see the Great Pyramids for myself. I've been **enchanted by the sheer size and scale** of them and the fact that they were built thousands of years ago. Let's be honest, if we wanted to build something like that today, it would be a huge struggle for us, even with all the technology we now possess. I can't stop wondering how on earth it was possible to build such perfect pyramids five thousand years ago.

As we approached the first of the pyramids, the Great Pyramid, that **sense of wonder** became almost overwhelming. If I was hoping for some answers by seeing the pyramids close up, there were none to be had. If anything, they begged even more questions. No matter how many photos you've seen of these things, it doesn't prepare you for just how big they are in reality. Each block has to be around four or five feet high, as I wasn't much taller than one of them, when we approached them. They practically came up to my armpit, when I stood next to one and touched it. That was an amazing feeling and something I never expected to be able to do. I mean, surely you'd keep people far away from the pyramid to preserve it for future generations? Evidently not.

The Great Pyramid is otherwise known as **Khufu's Pyramid**, as that was the pharaoh for whom it was built. As you're probably aware, the pyramids were built to house the burial chambers of the kings. Sadly, the great show of strength by building a pyramid was like a magnet to grave robbers, showing them exactly where they should head. Eventually, pyramids would give way to tombs hidden away in mountains, to try and vainly provide extra protection for the jewels buried with the pharaoh.

The pyramid itself is estimated to contain around **two million stones**, weighing an average of two and a half tons. Some of the stones we were able to touch at the base, which were surprisingly smooth, weigh as much as 15 tons. It does make you wonder how on earth the workers were able to get them to the site all those years ago.

As if that wasn't impressive enough, the Great Pyramid was the **world's**

tallest structure until the 19th century. The precision that went into it was quite something as well, with only four centimetres or two inches difference in each of the sides, that all measure 230 metres or 756 feet in length.

No-one knows whether there's a **greater meaning to the pyramids**, but the three were built in almost perfect diagonal alignment, and some of the air shafts within them point towards important star constellations. How the ancient Egyptians could have possibly been able to construct them so perfectly is beyond me, and looking at the work that went into them, I couldn't help but think that our theory of a little bit of help from some alien friends might hold some water!

We didn't go into any of the pyramids, having heard various horror stories from a variety of people about how **narrow and winding the tunnels** were. Our guide was equally dismissive, explaining that of course, with the tombs ransacked millennia ago, there's nothing to see inside. The entrance certainly looked small enough and that was enough to put us off completely!

With the sun starting to rise over the pyramids and the whole plateau rapidly warming, we set off for the second and third pyramids. We parked up close to the **Pyramid of Menkaure**, the last pyramid to be built here. It allowed us to get some close-up shots of both that and the Pyramid of Khafre behind. Despite everything I'd been told before coming here about the pyramids being surrounded by the rapidly encroaching city, I was pleasantly surprised to see that they were in fact in a wonderful expanse of desert, with the Egyptian authorities obviously aiming to keep it that way -- and rightly so.

The **Pyramid of Khafre** can easily be spotted from amongst the three, as it's the only one to still have the limestone casing on the top of it. Originally, smooth limestone encased all three pyramids. We heard stories about what happened to that casing, ranging from weather erosion to theft by one of Egypt's later rulers, Mohammed Ali, who is rumoured to have taken it for his mosque. Looking at it, whatever the reason is, it's a shame that the casing is now gone, as it adds something to look of the pyramid. Although it looks larger than its Great Pyramid neighbour, a lot of that is to do with it having been built on higher ground, and it's actually 15 metres or 60 feet shorter.

The last pyramid to be built was the Pyramid of Mekaure, and the first thing you notice is the size of this one. It's a lot smaller, with the base area only about a quarter of the size of the other two. It's also home to an ugly scar, which came about in the 12th century, when one of Egypt's sultans tried to **dismantle the pyramid**. That was the only indentation

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that he managed to make on it, which is a real tribute to the craftsmanship that went into building this pyramid.

From here, it was back to the Great Pyramid, as located to the rear of it is the newest addition to Giza, the **Solar Boat Museum**. As the name suggests, this is home to a Solar Boat, one of the main artefacts that were placed with the pharaoh for their journey into the afterlife. It was found in the 1950s, and was put back together using only traditional ancient Egyptian material of wooden pegs and grass rope. That process took a total of 14 years! Marks on the boat suggest it had actually been sailed and may even have carried the body of Khufu. It's a fascinating place and another glimpse into the wonders of ancient Egyptian engineering.

There's one final element to the development on the Giza Plateau and one that everyone knows. Before coming to Egypt, I thought this was the only **Sphinx**, but I quickly learnt from the Egyptian Museum that this is the name for this type of animal, which can be found across the country. Of course, this is the most famous, although disappointingly, we weren't able to get that close to it, which was a real shame. Even from a distance, it's still impressive, standing guard as it does over all the pyramids.

Archaeologists reckon that the Sphinx dates from around 2,500BC, and that it was related to Khafre. Some even think it may be his face that the Sphinx was modeled on. We quickly learnt from our guide that the stories of its **nose being shot off by Napoleon's army is incorrect**, as it's believed it was lost well before the 15th century.

So did the pyramids live up to their billing as one of the world's wonders? Despite the intense crowds here, and the hustlers determined to sell you something at any given opportunity, yes they did. You can't fail to be moved by the sheer enormity of what you see, and the age of them. The **pyramids are truly wonders**, and something that everyone should see in their lives, if they get the opportunity.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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