

*Kids & Schools Tools*

## *The Taj Mahal, Agra, India*

The Taj Mahal is one of the 21 finalist candidates in the campaign to choose the New 7 Wonders of the World. The winners of this unique vote will be announced on July 7, 2007 – 07.07.07 and will become part of history. They will be recognized as monuments that have truly global meaning—they are part of our common cultural heritage. We can all be proud of the 21 finalists, since each of them is a unique monument that belongs to its particular culture and country in a very special way.

The Taj Mahal is regarded as the most perfect jewel of Muslim art in India. This huge mausoleum mosque was built by Shah Jahan, the fifth Muslim Mogul emperor, in memory of his beloved wife, a Persian princess born as Arjuman Bano Begum but known as Mumtaz Mahal. She was a significant influence in his life and in his policies, but died at age thirty-nine while giving birth to their fourteenth child in 1631. The ruler went into deep mourning. Her last wish to her husband was "to build a tomb in her memory such as the world had never seen before." So Shah Jahan set about building this fairytale-like marvel of white marble, surrounded by formally laid-out walled gardens. The emperor, later buried in the Taj, was overthrown by his son and imprisoned in the nearby Great Red Fort for eight years, from which, it is said, he could see the Taj Mahal out of his small cell window.

The origin of the name "Taj Mahal" is not clear. Court histories from Shah Jehan's reign only call it the rauza (tomb) of Mumtaz Mahal. It is generally believed that "Taj Mahal" (usually translated as either "Crown Palace" or "Crown of the Palace") is an abbreviated version of her name.

The Taj Mahal was built between 1631 and 1648, with some 20,000 workmen employed on it daily, who lived in a specially built small town next to it called "Mumtazabad" for the dead empress, now known as Taj Ganj. The material was brought in from all over India and central Asia with the help of 1,000 elephants. The central dome is 57 meters, or 187 feet, high in the middle. A total of 28 beautiful stones were used: red sandstone was brought from Fatehpur Sikri, jasper from Punjab, jade and crystal from China, turquoise from Tibet, lapis lazuli and sapphire from Sri Lanka, coal and cornelian from Arabia and diamonds from Panna. The luminescent white marble was brought from far-off Makrana, Rajasthan. Nearly every surface of the entire complex has been decorated, and the exterior decorations are among the finest to be found in Mughal architecture of any period.

Unlike other Mughal tombs, the Taj Mahal gardens are all in front of the tomb and do not play any part in the background. Instead, the background is the sky. Since the tomb is set against a plain across a river, this background of eternal sky works its magic of colors that, through their reflection, subtly reflect on the white marble surface of the Taj Mahal, always changing its color and complexion. The composition of the forms and lines of the Taj Mahal is perfectly symmetrical. The colossal height of the tomb, along with its pyramidal appearance, fill it with grace and make it seem to float or soar.

**The Taj Mahal is a great symbol of Love & Passion!**



If you want to find out more about the exciting campaign to name the New 7 Wonders of the World, please go to the New7Wonders website at [www.new7wonders.com](http://www.new7wonders.com).

**07.07.07**

**Official Declaration of the New 7 Wonders of the World**

**... be part of the making of history!**

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