

The History Of The Taj Mahal

In the 17th century, most of the country we now know as India was ruled by the Mughals, an Islamic people who were extremely powerful in the area for over 300 years.

The Taj Mahal was built because of a love story! In 1607, Prince Khurram of the Mughals, at the age of 14, fell in love with a 15 year girl and became engaged. The couple had to wait 5 years for their wedding day, but then had a long and very happy marriage. Prince Khurram became Emperor in 1628 and was then known as Shah Jahan ("King of the World"), and his wife was known as Mumtaz Mahal ("Beloved Ornament of the Palace").

In 1631, Mumtaz Mahal died while giving birth to their 14th child. The grief-stricken Emperor ordered that a beautiful memorial to his wife should be built. This memorial is known as the Taj Mahal.

Shah Jahan, although devoted to his wife, is known as a cruel leader, who killed his brothers to make sure that he became Emperor. Eventually, in 1657, he was overthrown by one of his sons, and he spent the last 9 years of life locked up in a tower overlooking the Taj Mahal.

TAJ MAHAL FACTS

- The Taj Mahal is a famous mausoleum in India.
- A mausoleum is a building that contains burial chambers (tombs) for the deceased, they can be large or small and are often created in honor of influential people.
- The Taj Mahal is located in Agra, a city in the Uttar Pradesh region of northern India.
- It was built as the final resting place for Mumtaz Mahal, the third wife of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.
- The name Taj Mahal means "crown of palaces".
- Construction of the Taj Mahal took around 20 years, beginning around 1632 and finishing around 1653.
- The Taj Mahal is made of white marble.
- One of the Taj Mahal's most recognizable features is a large white dome that is often called an 'onion dome' due to its shape. It has a height of around 35 metres (115 feet) and is surrounded by 4 smaller domes.
- The full height of the Taj Mahal is 171 metres (561 feet).
- The Taj Mahal is considered to be one of India's most admired works of art, as well as a famous landmark and a tourist attraction that draws millions of visitors every year.
- The Taj Mahal complex includes a large garden, a reflecting pool, a mosque and other mausoleums.

Questions

1. What year was the Taj Mahal built?
2. Who was the emperor who built the Taj Mahal?
3. What empire was in power when the Taj Mahal was built?
4. What is the Taj Mahal made of?
5. What is a mausoleum?
6. What city is the Taj Mahal located in?
7. What ironic moment/ending is mentioned within this reading?