

Kids & Schools Tools

The Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey

The Hagia Sophia 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.

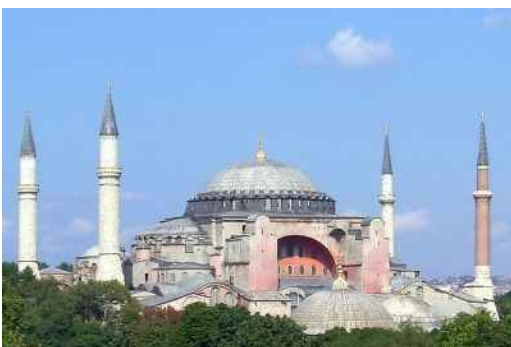
The Church of Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya in Turkish) was built during the reign of Emperor Justinian (532-537), when the Byzantine Empire was at the height of its power and influence. It was the Cathedral of the Patriarchate of Constantinople for more than 1,000 years. Originally known as the Great Church because of its size, it was later called Hagia Sophia—not dedicated to St. Sophia, as is often thought, but to the “Holy Wisdom” of Christ. It was converted to a mosque after Constantinople (now Istanbul) fell to the Ottoman Turks under Sultan Mehmed II (The Conqueror) in 1453. In 1935, Turkish president Kemal Atatürk ordered Hagia Sophia to be turned into the Ayasofya Museum.

Justinian’s architects, Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, a physicist and a mathematician, created a spectacular and revolutionarily domed church—the greatest cathedral ever built up to that time, and the largest one in the world for 1,000 years—until the completion of the cathedral in Seville. Today, it is the fourth-largest cathedral in the world. Old records list 600 persons working in Hagia Sophia: 80 priests, 150 deacons, 40 deaconesses, 70 subdeacons, 160 readers, 25 chanters and 75 door keepers.

Hagia Sophia measures 77 x 72 meters (252 x 236 ft), and the dome, with a diameter of 33 meters (108 ft), soars 62 meters (203 ft) high. The huge dome is the most remarkable part of the building, supported by four massive piers. Four arches swing across, linked by four pendentives—a structural element which had never been used before. The pendentives let the round dome transition gracefully into the square shape of the piers below, for beauty, but also allow the weight of the dome to push downward. This gives the light inside Hagia Sophia its famous, mystical quality, making the dome seem to float above the nave, or main aisle—possible because the dome is shaped like a scalloped shell or the inside of an umbrella, with the ribs or arches extending from the top down to the base. The temple itself was richly decorated.

In the 15th century, since conservative factions of Islam consider pictures of the human form to be blasphemous, Hagia Sophia’s mosaics were covered with plaster. However, thanks to the foresightedness and tolerance of the Ottoman Sultans, the plaster was periodically removed, the mosaics maintained, and replastered—so they have survived and many can now be seen in the museum.

Hagia Sophia now stands for Faith & Respect!



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.

07.07.07

Official Declaration of the New 7 Wonders of the World

... be part of the making of history!

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