

PYRAMIDS

Pyramids were built as tombs for the pharaohs. They were always located on the west bank of the Nile because this is where the sun would set and where the Egyptians believed the afterlife was located. Egyptians were mummified once they died and placed in the pyramids with many things they would need in the afterlife such as, jewelry, chariots, furniture and clothes. (All the items they needed while they were living) Fresh food and wine was often brought to the tombs so the dead could eat.

The building of the pyramids were huge tasks. Usually pharaoh's would start building their pyramids as soon as they started to rule. Workers cut limestone and granite stones and floated them up the Nile on barges. Other workers would unload the stones and push them up ramps built alongside the pyramid using sledges. The bricks averaged about 2,000 pounds each!

There were over 80 pyramids. The largest one is called the Great pyramid of Giza. It was built by pharaoh Khufu in 2600BC. It took over 20 years and 100,000 workers to build. It is over 480 feet tall! His son, Khafre, also built a huge pyramid in Giza as well as his son Menkaure. The famous sphinx guards over the three pyramids. It was built by pharaoh Khafre from the left over pyramid stones. It has his face and the body of a lion which symbolizes the power of the pharaoh.

The very first pyramid was the step pyramid built for pharaoh Zoser.

Pharaohs use to be buried in small mud brick mounds called mastabas, but Zoser wanted more. He had his famous vizier Imhotep design a grand tomb that was actually 6 mastabas on top of each other. The result was a step pyramid that was over 200 feet tall and had a wall surrounding it. This tomb was known throughout all of Egypt and many pharaohs sought to copy it. One pharaoh that tried to imitate it was Snefru. He ended up building 3 pyramids because he couldn't get it right. First he built a step pyramid but it crumbled. Then he built what was known as the Bent pyramid and finally he was successful with the Red pyramid.

Pyramids were built to protect the pharaoh's body from Floods animals and robbers, but because they were so eye-catching they were easy targets for tomb robbers. These bandits were searching for gold and jewels and because this was big business in Egypt, they were willing to defy the gods. Many trapdoors were built into the pyramids to prevent them from being robbed, but all the pyramids were eventually ransacked! Finally, pharaohs started building their tombs into the sides of cliffs in an area known as the Valley of the King. Although they had secret entrances and they tried to keep their construction a secret, they too, were eventually robbed.

The only tomb not discovered was that of King Tutankhamun until Howard Carter discovered it in 1922 on an archeological dig. Much of what we know about the wealth of pharaohs comes from Carter's excavations.