



7 modern wonders of the world.(FROM PAST TO PRESENT).Jackson Kuhl. *Calliope* 17.1 (Sept 2006): p45(5). (953 words)

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Today, there's more to the world than just pyramids and hanging gardens. Here are CALLIOPE's picks for the most amazing wonders, both on and off the planet, all built after 1800.

1 Akashi-Kaikyo Bridge

Measuring more than a mile long (6,532 feet, to be exact), the central span of Japan's Akashi-Kaikyo Bridge makes it the longest bridge in the world. Its six lanes extend across a dangerous body of water called Akashi Strait to connect the islands of Honshu and Awaji. The sinking of two ferries during a 1955 storm led to plans for the bridge, which was begun only in 1988 and finished 10 years later. Originally, the central span measured only 6,529 feet, but the 1995 Kobe earthquake stretched it out!

2 Channel Tunnel

On December 1, 1990, workers digging separately from Britain and France met beneath the English Channel. Three years later, the "Chunnel" was opened. The Channel Tunnel actually consists of three separate tunnels: two for trains (one for north-to-south traffic and the other for south-to-north traffic) and a third that runs between these two for service vehicles. Numerous perpendicular connectors allow access among all three.

The world's second-longest railway tunnel--first place goes to Japan's Seikan Tunnel--the Chunnel does have the longest undersea stretch: 24 miles of its 31-mile length lie deep below the mud of the English Channel.

3 Hoover Dam

It is not the world's largest dam, nor the tallest, nor does it produce the most hydroelectric power. But the dam, begun in 1931 and completed five years later, is certainly a fantastic achievement, standing 726.4 feet from its foundation to the road that runs along its top. Originally, the dam was to be built along the Colorado River to prevent flooding and to harness its waters for irrigation. Finally, built within the Black Canyon near Las Vegas, Hoover Dam--named for the 31st president of the United States, Herbert Hoover--required more than five million barrels of concrete!

4 Panama Canal

In 1904, the United States began constructing a canal across the Isthmus of Panama to connect the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, completing the task a decade later. Before, ships sailing from Europe or the east coast of the United States had to sail around the southern tip of South America to reach the west coast. Today, the canal shaves 20 days off a ship's travel time. Ships using the canal move "uphill" and then down again to reach the opposite sea.

This is accomplished using locks, which are enclosures sealed with gates at either end. A ship enters the lock, and the gates are closed. Water is pumped into the lock. As the water level within the lock rises, so does the ship. At the top, the ship sails across the man-made Lake Gatun, then descends again through more locks to the sea. Since 2000, the canal has been under the control of Panama.

5 The World

Upon its scheduled completion in 2008, The World--a collection of 300 islets in the Persian Gulf--will be the largest group of man-made islands ever built. The islands are arranged to resemble a rough map of planet Earth, all surrounded by a protective barrier. Located just off the coast of Dubai, a city in the United Arab Emirates, the complex measures more than five miles long and nearly four miles wide. The developer plans to sell the islands for \$25 million each to be resorts or private homes.

6 Transcontinental Railroad

The biggest obstacle to running a railroad across the United States in the 1800s was where to put it. For economic reasons, both Northerners and Southerners wanted it in their part of the country. When the Southern states seceded from the Union, the question was settled in favor of the northern route. Construction began in 1862. Railroads already reached from the east coast to Omaha, Nebraska, but there was a 1,756-mile gap between there and the planned terminal in Sacramento, California. Hundreds of men worked six days a week from both ends in blistering sun and freezing cold--some even had to ward off attacks by American Indians. Finally, on May 10, 1869, a golden spike was driven into the railbed at Promontory Summit, Utah, and the railroad was complete (image above).

7 Zuiderzee Works

In 1916, a storm broke a number of dikes along the Netherlands' Zuiderzee, a North Sea inlet, flooding the land along the banks. The Dutch government embarked on a plan to tame the flooding, while simultaneously creating more agricultural land. First, a dam nearly 20 miles long was built across the Zuiderzee's mouth. Cut off from the North Sea but still replenished by the rivers feeding into it, this transformed the salty Zuiderzee into a freshwater lake. Then, polders--areas of the lake boxed in by dikes--were created and drained. The result was dry land for farming and housing. Actually, the dam created more than 637 square miles of new land. Today, the reclaimed area of the Works is kept dry by a series of canals, dams, and pumping stations.

8 Tranquility Base

There's not much there: a commemorative plaque, some equipment, and a bunch of footprints in the dust that may last millions of years. But, Tranquility Base is perhaps the most awesome site ever built by humankind. Statio Tranquillitatis (its Latin name) is where Apollo 11's lunar module Eagle touched down on the moon more than 225,000 miles away from Earth--and where human beings first walked upon its surface on July 20, 1969. Unlike the other modern wonders, Tranquility Base is a bit messy: The American flag left behind by astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, Jr., was knocked over when their module blasted off toward home!

Jackson Kuhl writes about archaeology, history, and travel.

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