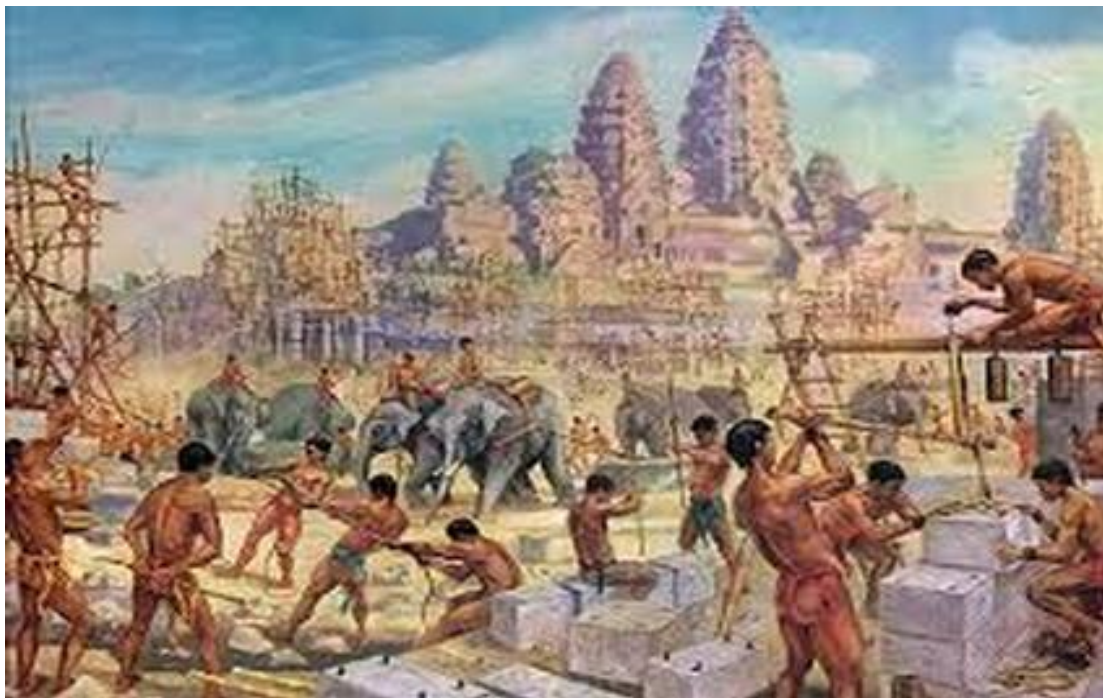




## **How Angkor Wat was built**

The massive sandstone bricks used to construct the 12th-century temple of Angkor Wat were brought to the site via a network of hundreds of canals, according to new research. ... The complex was built to honor the Hindu god Vishnu, but 14th-century leaders converted the site into a Buddhist temple.



This is how they actually built the temples.



This is picture showing the carving that the Khmer people spent much time perfecting



Aerial view, Angkor Wat, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 1116-1150

## History

Angkor Wat lies 5.5 kilometres (3.4 mi) north of the modern town of Siem Reap, and a short distance south and slightly east of the previous capital, which was centred at Baphuon. In an area of Cambodia where there is an important group of ancient structures, it is the southernmost of Angkor's main sites.

According to a myth, the construction of Angkor Wat was ordered by Indra to serve as a palace for his son Precha Ket Mealea. According to the 13th-century Chinese traveller Zhou Daguan, some believed that the temple was constructed in a single night by a divine architect.

The initial design and construction of the temple took place in the first half of the 12th century, during the reign of Suryavarman II (ruled 1113 – c. 1150). Dedicated to Vishnu, it was built as the king's state temple and capital city. As neither the foundation stela nor any contemporary inscriptions referring to the temple have been found, its original name is unknown, but it may have been known as "Varah Vishnu-lok" after the presiding deity. Work seems to have ended shortly after the king's death, leaving some of the bas-relief decoration unfinished. The term *Vrah Viṣṇuloka* or *Parama Viṣṇuloka* literally means "The king who has gone to the supreme world of Vishnu", which refers to Suryavarman II posthumously and intend to venerate his glory and memory.

In 1177, approximately 27 years after the death of Suryavarman II, Angkor was sacked by the Chams, the traditional enemies of the Khmer. Thereafter the empire was restored by a new king, Jayavarman VII, who established a new capital and state temple (Angkor Thom and the Bayon respectively) a few kilometres to the north.

Towards the end of the 12th century, Angkor Wat gradually transformed from a Hindu centre of worship to Buddhism, which continues to the present day.<sup>[1]</sup> Angkor Wat is unusual among the Angkor temples in that although it was largely neglected after the 16th century it was never completely abandoned. Fourteen inscriptions dated from the 17th century discovered in Angkor area testify to Japanese Buddhist pilgrims that had established small settlements alongside Khmer locals.<sup>[17]</sup> At that time, the temple was thought by the Japanese visitors as the famed Jetavana garden of the Buddha, which originally located in the kingdom of Magadha, India. The best-known inscription tells of Ukondayu Kazufusa, who celebrated the Khmer New Year at Angkor Wat in 1632.





Angkor Wat. Siem Reap, Cambodia, 1116-1150







# Top 10 Facts About Angkor Wat That Will Blow Your Mind

## 1. Angkor Wat is the largest religious monument on the planet.

Angkor Wat is spread across over 400 acres / 1.6 km<sup>2</sup>, and is said to be the largest religious monument in the world. It was listed as a UNESCO's World Heritage Site in 1992, which encouraged an international effort to save the complex.

## 2. Angkor Wat is featured on the Cambodian flag.

Since around 1850, Angkor Wat has been featured in the center of the national flag of Cambodia, as if to show their incredible pride in the ancient monument. Their pride is also reflected by putting images from Angkor Wat on many denominations of the riel (Cambodia's currency).

## 3. Angkor Wat means "City of Temples" in Khmer.

In Khmer, the Cambodian language, Angkor means "city" or "capital city", and Wat means "temple grounds". So Angkor Wat means "Temple City" or "City of Temples". Its original name was Vrah Vishnuloka or Parama Vishnuloka, meaning the sacred dwelling of Vishnu in Sanskrit.

## 4. Angkor Wat was shared by two religions.

It was originally built as a Hindu temple dedicated to the god Vishnu, breaking the previous kings' tradition of worshipping Shaiva. It gradually turned into a Buddhist temple towards the end of 12th century and is still used for worship today.

## 5. Angkor Wat was built as a symbolic representation of Mount Meru.

Mount Meru, in Hindu Mythology, is the sacred five-peaked mountain standing in the center of the universe. It's said that the three Hindu chief gods - Brahma (the Creator),



Vishnu (the Preserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer), and Hindu demi-gods (Devas) reside on the top of this mountain.



6. Unusually, Angkor Wat is oriented to the west, a direction typically relate to death in Hinduism.

Unlike most Angkorian temples which are commonly directed to the east, Angkor Wat is oriented to the west, a direction associated with death in Hindu culture. So, many archaeologists and scholars have concluded that Suryavarman intended to use it as a funerary temple.

Also, the direction means it faces the sunset, which adds to its beauty and attracts many visitors at this time.

7. The bas-reliefs at Angkor Wat read counterclockwise, which is the reverse of the normal order, and is thought to be another indication that the temple is associated with funeral rituals.

## 8. Five million tons of sandstone were used to build Angkor Wat.

The sandstone blocks used were quarried from the holy mountain of Phnom Kulen over 50 kilometers / 31 miles away from the site. Each block weighs up to 1,500 kilograms / 3300 pounds, so the logistics of moving this sandstone are mind blowing and must have been extremely labor consuming. The workers had to get creative, which is why it's thought that the sandstone was transported to the Siem Reap River using canals and then floated down the river on rafts.

## 9. The construction of Angkor Wat is thought to have taken 35 years, 300,000 laborers and 6,000 elephants, according to inscriptions.

Angkor Wat was initially designed and constructed in the first half of the 12th century, during the reign of Suryavarman II (ruled 1113 – c. 1150), as the king's state temple and capital city. It was built without the aid of any machinery, as there was no machinery available at that time.

## 10. The temple walls are decorated with thousands of story telling bas-reliefs.

The bas-reliefs on the walls represent important deities and figures in the Hindu and Buddhist religions and key events in their narrative tradition.



*The story-telling bas-reliefs on the wall*





Angkor Wat from space