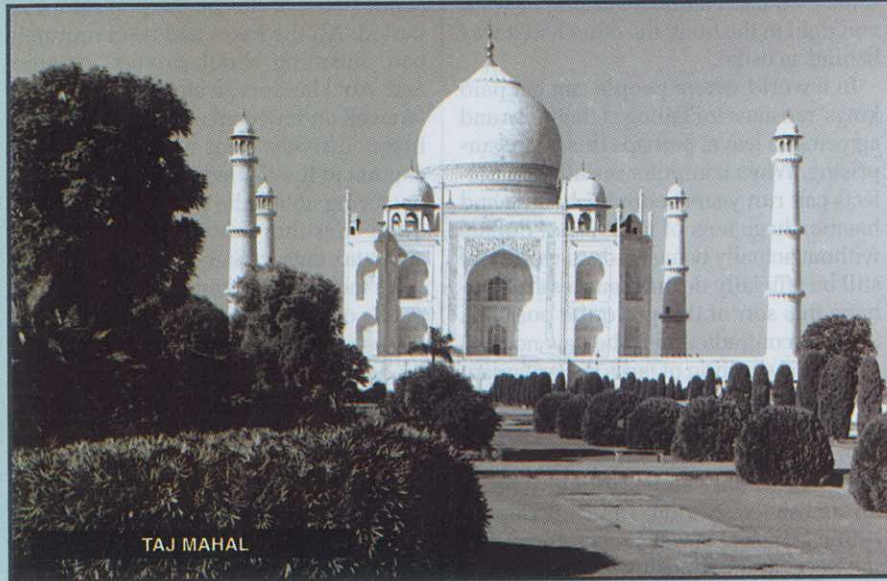


MILLENNIUM TOP 10

We think, therefore we build. Here are the 10 best public buildings of the millennium.



TAJ MAHAL

1. TAJ MAHAL A monument to undying love – the Shah Jahan for his wife Arjumand Banu, who died giving birth to their 14th child – it employed 20,000 labourers for 22 years. Result? A miracle of balance and feminine delicacy, given its four slender minarets, bulbous dome, gardens and canals – yet with the heft of a 20-storey building.

2. SAGRADA FAMILIA Antoni Gaudi's fabulous Holy Family church in Barcelona is unfinished, but comes festooned with enough shapes and symbols – wingless angels here, written messages there, sea-shells and plants adorning the Portal of Love – to entrance the faithful and sceptics alike.

3. CHRYSLER BUILDING King Kong (and others) prefer the Empire State Building, but this shining art deco masterpiece (dig the crazy hubcap motifs and those hood ornament gargoyles) is still the queen of New York skyscrapers.

4. POTALA PALACE, LHASA The Godzilla of religious buildings. Built in the 17th century – long before the current Dalai Lama made friends with Steven Seagal and praised India's nuclear tests – the vast Potala is one of the world's architectural wonders.

5. SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE Jorn Utzon's design was inspired not by sails, but by a plate of orange peels. The cheapskate interiors don't conform to his plans, but the outside reinforced concrete shells (inlaid with ceramic tiles) make this the only southern hemi-

sphere building known worldwide.

6. CHARTRES CATHEDRAL This greatest of medieval churches assumed its current form in 1220. On a sunny day the 175 stained glass windows make Chartres seem like the mere outline of a building, shimmering in coloured light.

7. POMPIDOU CENTRE The first major "inside out" building, using the building's own structural and service technology as its decoration. Now that the furore over its design has died down, it is also one of the most loved and best-used spaces in Paris.

8. ULM CATHEDRAL It was the flying buttress, which freed walls from their load-carrying roles, that set the Gothic imagination free to soar heavenwards – and the great 181m Ulm spire is its most striking outcome. And, if size isn't everything, Cologne Cathedral is just as beautiful.

9. BLUE MOSQUE, ISTANBUL Completed in 1616, this is Islam's finest church. The serenely beautiful building (with its great central dome and four semi-domes) was designed by architect Mehmet Aga, along Byzantine lines.

10. BILBAO GUGGENHEIM It's hard to choose between Frank Lloyd Wright's spiralling original and Frank Gehry's titanium-encased marvel in Bilbao. Yet Gehry's daring design – its lines evoke a ship in sail – would probably have wrung admiration even from crusty old Wright himself.