

Giza Necropolis | The Site of the Pyramids of Giza

The Giza Necropolis is one of the most popular attractions in Egypt, with millions of visitors each year. Home to the Pyramids of Giza and many other ancient monuments, it is also a UNESCO Heritage Site and one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Before you [plan a visit](#), read on to find out more about what you will find at the Giza Necropolis.

What is the Giza Necropolis?

The Pyramids of Giza Complex

The Giza Necropolis is a large area near Giza, a suburb of Cairo that has many tombs and burial sites. It is also where you can find the famous Pyramids of Giza, the Great Sphinx, and more. The name comes from the ancient Greek word *nekropolis*, which literally means “city of the dead”.

The Giza Complex was once near the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis, and the Giza plateau is where a number of pharaohs, queens, and nobles of the Fourth Dynasty of ancient Egypt were buried. You can see the funeral complexes of the three pharaohs, Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. These complexes include a pyramid, various temples, and subsidiary pyramids.

When was the Giza Necropolis Built?

The oldest of the pyramids, the Great Pyramid of Giza was built during the reign of the Fourth Dynasty of Ancient Egypt, between 2550 and 2560 BC. That makes it about 4,500 years old. The second pyramid to be built, the Pyramid of Khafre, was completed in 2570 BC, and the last pyramid to be built was that of Menkaure between 2510 and 2500 BC.

Many of the tombs and cemeteries at the Giza Complex were added to after the construction of the pyramids, even during the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties (c. 2500 - 2180 BC).

Who Built the Giza Necropolis?

The Pyramids of Giza were built as royal tombs for three pharaohs from Egypt's Fourth Dynasty (which lasted from 2575–2465 BCE). The northernmost and oldest pyramid was built for Khufu, who was the second king of this dynasty of rulers.

The middle pyramid was built for Khafre, one of Khufu's sons, and the fourth king of this dynasty. Finally, the southernmost and last pyramid was built by Khafre's son and successor, Menkaure.

Around these three main pyramids are a number of smaller subsidiary pyramids belonging to various royal women, including Khufu's mother Hetepheres, and his wife Henutsen, as well as Khentkaus, daughter of Menkaure.

History of the Giza Necropolis in a Nutshell

c. 2600–2500 BC

The Giza Necropolis was once situated near the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis. During the Fourth Dynasty of Ancient Egypt, beginning with the Pharaoh Khufu, a series of rulers, their families, and courtiers began to build tombs there.

The ancient Egyptians believed that when a pharaoh died, they would live on in the afterlife as gods. However, first, their spirit needed to be able to reunite with their body. And to ensure this, they built enormous pyramids so that their spirits would be able to find them again. They also served as a place to store all the luxuries they wanted to use in the next world.

A number of pyramids were constructed before the mighty Pyramids of Giza. Early Egyptian rulers were buried in flat mounds known as mastabas. The mounds gradually grew taller and taller. Eventually, the Pharaoh Djoser built a Step Pyramid at Saqqara around 2670 BC. Around 2630 BC the Pharaoh Snefru, father of Khufu (who built the Great Pyramid) built the first true pyramid, the Red Pyramid at Dashur.

Inspired by this, Khufu, and later his son Khafre, and grandson Menkaure, built the three largest pyramids at the Giza Necropolis.

Pyramids of Giza Timeline

- c. 2560 BC: The Great Pyramid of Giza is constructed by Pharaoh Khufu
- c. 2530 BC: Pyramid of Khafre and the Great Sphinx are built at Giza.
- c. 2510 BC: Pyramid of Menkaure is built at Giza.
- c. 480 BC: Greek writer Herodotus visited the pyramids
- c. 100 BC – c.400 AD: Giza becomes a popular Roman tourist site
- 820 AD: Caliph al-Mamun tunneled into the Great Pyramid
- 1196: Al-Aziz Uthman, the Sultan of Egypt, attempts to demolish the pyramids
- 1700: Travelers and Egyptologists began exploring pyramids
- 1765: Englishman named Davison finds the King's Chamber in the Great Pyramid.
- 1798: Napoleon defeats a local Ottoman ruler of Egypt at the Battle of the Pyramids
- 1817–18: First modern archaeological dig, supervised by Giovanni Belzoni
- 1837: Egyptologist Howard Vyse finds Menkaure's sarcophagus
- 1838: Sarcophagus of the Pharaoh Menkaure sinks with the ship *Beatrice* on the way to Great Britain
- 1914–18: During World War I, the Giza complex was a barracks for allied troops
- 1925: Subsidiary pyramid of Khufu's mother, Queen Hetepheres, is found
- 1931–32: Excavations and restoration of the Great Sphinx by Émile Baraize
- 1954: Archeologists find two boat pits next to the Great Pyramid.
- 1985: Giza Solar boat museum constructed to house Khufu's ship
- 2021: Revamp of the Pyramid complex to make the site more accessible