

HISTORY
ARTS
CULTURE

DOCUMENTARY
60 MIN.

VERSIONS

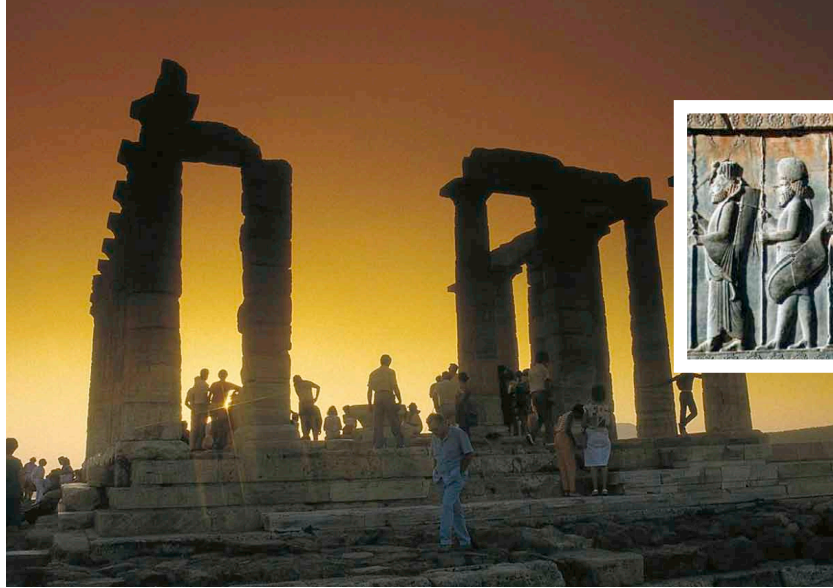
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Sites of the World's Cultures

This series looks at landscapes, cities, cult sites and monuments, all of which have made a unique contribution to the cultural heritage of mankind. Each episode brings alive civilizations which rose in the last ten thousand years and then sank – sometimes without a trace – into the mists of history. The films focus on epochs which moulded the identity of nations and continents, and on cult sites which have retained their fascination and influence through to the present day.

- 01 Stonehenge and Megalithic Cultures**
There are some 5,000 neolithic monuments in Europe – relics of a culture which left nothing in writing and whose religion is shrouded in mystery. This film looks at the megalithic enigma of Stonehenge and builds up a picture of the culture that created it.
- 02 Xian – Changan: Cradle of Chinese Civilization**
Xian, the Changan of ancient China, is a major world cultural site. The city on the Huang (Yellow) River and the area around it were a cradle of Chinese culture and civilization.
- 03 Southern India and the Dance of the Gods**
According to an ancient Indian myth, the world emerged from a kumbha, a pot – and it all began in Kumbakonam. The city in the south of India claims to be the hub of the universe – a status reserved by Hindus for the sacred city of Benares.
- 04 Tikal and the Gods of the Maya**
The Maya emerged from the mists of history more than 3,000 years ago and created an advanced civilisation which lasted six times longer than the Roman Empire.
- 05 Egypt and the Nile Valley**
Everyone has heard of the pyramids, the legendary gold mask of Tutankhamun and Egyptian mummies. Even so, these products of an advanced civilization born 5,000 years ago continue to pose questions that still puzzle historians today.
- 06 Athens – Birthplace of Democracy**
Athens – model and mother of western civilization – is still one of the liveliest cities in Europe, an ancient metropolis that has retained its youth.
- 07 The Baltic and the Hanseatic League**
In the 13th and 14th centuries, Northern Europe was dominated by a loose association of independent cities: the Hanseatic League. Although not sovereign states, they created a network of privilege that made them a powerful force in international trade from Britain to Sweden, Flanders to Russia.

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08 Palmyra Part 1 – Hub of Trade and Military Crossroads

A country criss-crossed by trade routes, Syria looks back on thousands of years as a cultural and commercial transit zone between East and West.

09 Palmyra Part 2 – Bride of the Desert

The oasis city of Palmyra on the northern fringe of the Syrian Desert is a treasure trove of ancient architecture, a place where the magic of desert life and desert civilization can still be felt in the remains of magnificent temples and baths, theatres and tombs.

10 Teotihuacán – City of the Gods

Only a short bus ride from Mexico City are the remains of the ancient city of Teotihuacán. Founded more than 2,000 years ago, it was the home of some 200,000 people – creators of gigantic pyramids and stunning murals and sculptures who ruled over large parts of Central America for many centuries.

11 Jerusalem – City Between Religions

Jerusalem is a city sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians alike and the home of three religious communities living more side by side than together. Their holy places are only metres apart. Each of the great monotheistic religions has laid claim to this city.

12 Venice – The Insatiable City-State

Venice's glorious past is literally paraded by its wealth of splendid buildings, especially along the Grand Canal. Thanks to the lagoon city's prowess in international maritime trade, it was for centuries one of the most influential places in Europe.

13 Paris – A Celebration of the 19th Century

In the middle of the 19th century, Paris was a desperately overcrowded city choking on its own waste. Within decades, however, demolition and redevelopment had turned it into one of the world's most resplendent capitals with a magnetic attraction for artists, writers, revolutionaries and pleasure-seekers.

14 The Ganges – The Divine River

Ganga, as the Indians call it, Mother Ganges, the goddess Ganges, is the sacred river of India. Devout Hindus believe that bathing in the holy waters of the Ganges can wash away their sins.

15 Damascus – Paradise on Earth

After the Umayyid dynasty chose Damascus as its seat in the middle of the seventh century A.D. the Syrian city acquired a legendary reputation. For around one hundred years Damascus was the focal point of world culture. Alongside its Islamic history, the name Damascus also has close links with Christianity.

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16 Macchu Pichu and the Legacy of the Incas

Macchu Pichu is a magical place. Yet more than any other historical site; it has come to symbolize the lost culture of those who built it: the Incas.

17 Florence and the Spirit of the Renaissance

Florence is regarded as the focal point of the development that restored the revolutionary ideas of the Renaissance and its enthusiasm for the art of antiquity. Back then, this Italian city on the River Arno was one of the most important commercial centres in Europe and a centre, too, of culture and political power.

18 Pergamon and the New View of the World

Greece is regarded as the cradle of European culture. But the origins of Greek philosophy, and thus of the history of European thought, are to be found in Asia Minor. Through the influence of Greek immigrants, in cities such as Smyra (modern-day Izmir), Milet, and Ephesus those ideas emerged to form the basis of the writings of Plato and Aristotle.

19 Persepolis – The Stage of Kings

King Darius I of Persia had a residency built which was intended to be more magnificent than anything the world had ever seen: Persepolis. It was soon regarded as the “richest city under the sun”.

20 St. Petersburg – Window on Europe

When he laid the foundation stone for his new capital of the Russian Empire in 1703, Peter the Great wanted to create a window on Europe. But it was only under Catherine the Great that Petersburg developed into the flourishing metropolis Peter the Great had dreamt of: a “Venice of the North”, a city of the arts, science, and literature.

22 Hue – The City on the Perfume River

Hue, the city on the much extolled Perfume River, can be described as Vietnam’s centre of culture. Based on the Forbidden City in Peking, in the 19th century an imperial palace was built in Hue to bear witness to the power and wealth of the Nguy dynasty.

23 Chartres and the Spirit of the Middle Ages

In the eyes of many, the Gothic cathedral at Chartres is the most beautiful of the numerous splendid cathedrals in northern France. A synthesis of architecture, sculpture, and glass painting, this vast work of art has survived down the centuries with very little damage.

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24 Lhasa and the Spirit of Tibet

The Potala Palace overlooking Lhasa bears testimony to the former power of the Dalai Lama and to a once colourful culture.

25 Konya and the Whirling Dervishes

The Turkish city of Konya is regarded as the heart of Sufism, a mystical movement within Islam. Sufism is characterized not by a fundamental interpretation of the Koran but by the search for a deep and passionate love of God. The legendary dance of the whirling dervishes also originated in Konya.

26 The Escorial – The Dream of a Devout Monarch

As a bulwark of faith and a symbol of the greatness and power of the Spanish Empire, the Escorial is a perfect reflection of the 16th century. An aura of the Inquisition pervades this huge and austere monastic castle which was built by King Philipp the Second of Spain and from which he ruled his empire with an iron fist.