

WE CHOSE 7 WONDERS OF AZERBAIJAN

Last year the magazine IRS-Nasledie (Heritage) announced a competition – Seven Wonders of Azerbaijan. Below we give the list of historical monuments that were mentioned most frequently by participants in the competition during last year. We ask you, dear readers, to select the seven monuments which in your opinion are most deserving of the status of 'Wonder' from this list. Your opinions may be sent to the specially created website www.7chudes-az.ru, www.7wonders-az.ru or to the email address of the magazine.



1. Azigh Cave is one of the largest karst caves in Azerbaijan. It is located in the District of Khodjavend. The cave has six interconnected chambers. Archaeological investigations started in 1960. A 350,000 year old mandible of a primitive human was discovered here in 1968. This is the third such finding in the world. Ten cultural layers revealed during excavations testify that primitive man lived here for a long period. People settled in the cave lived off fishing, hunting and gathering plants. Azigh Cave demonstrates that humans settled in the territory of Azerbaijan in the very distant past.



2. Atashgah – the Temple of the Fire Worshippers. Since the beginning of time the Absheron has been famous for its natural sources of fire, around which sanctuaries and temples of fire worshippers have been built since antiquity. One such temple is located 30 km from Baku, in Surakhany. The temple was erected in the 17-18th centuries by Indian merchants on the foundations of a more ancient structure. In plan, the temple is a pentagonal enclosed area, in the centre of which is a sanctuary holding an eternal flame. There are cells for ascetics and priests inside the enclosure, the rituals of which were described by Alexandre Dumas Senior, Dmitry Mendeleyev, the German traveller A. Kempfer and many others who visited this place at different times. The natural fire in the temple burned until 1883. Now it is a state preserve.



3. The Gandzasar Monastery is located in Vanglu village in the District of Kalbajar. During hundreds of years the monastery served not only as the residence of the Catholicos of the Caucasian Albanians but also as the ancestral burial place of Albanian princes. The principal buildings of the monastery were erected in the 13th century. The monastery complex consists of a church, hall and auxiliary buildings. The whole complex is enclosed by a defensive wall which has entrances from the south and west. The hall of worship is cruciform. The central hall is topped with the tall drum of the dome. The external parts of the drum are decorated with different subjects and representations in bas-relief. From its foundation in the 13th century until the 19th century the Gandzasar Monastery was the spiritual and cultural centre of Caucasian Albania.



4. Garabaghar Mausoleum. It is located in the village of the same name, in the District of Kangarli in the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchevan. The mausoleum is a component part of a whole architectural complex, which also includes two minarets and a building located between them. The construction dates to the 13th century. It is supposed that the mausoleum was built in honour of Gutı Khatun, the spouse of Khulaghu Khan, the ruler of the Ilkhanid State. The mausoleum is made up of twelve semi-circular sections which form the drum. The surface of the mausoleum is covered with turquoise glazed tiles. The entrance of the building is richly decorated. The mausoleum was restored in 2003.

5. Gobustan – a geographical area to the south west of Baku where a national historic and artistic preserve has been created. Here, on the lower slopes of the Kichikdash, Boyukdash, Gindaghdag, Shongar and Shikhgaya Mountains, a whole gallery of rock art has been discovered, which cover a wide span of history, from the Upper Palaeolithic to the late medieval periods. This complex was inscribed onto the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites as a unique monument of world importance. In total about 6000 petroglyphs and compositions reflecting the world-view, activities and way of life of primitive man are found here. In addition to petroglyphs, there are barrows and shelters of primitive man rich in archaeological material. Moreover, in the process of investigation inscriptions in Arabic, Farsi and Latin have been discovered on a number of rocks. The last bears witness to a visit to this region by Roman legionaries in the first century AD. Many petroglyphs, in addition to bearing scientific importance, have high artistic merit, which testify to the level of civilization of the people who settled this territory in the distant past.

6. Giz Galasi (Maiden's Tower) in Gadabey. The fortress citadel was constructed from roughly hewn local stone in a difficult to reach position close to the village of Soyudlu, in the Gadabey District. The tower is located on the top of a mountain which provided a wide view of the surrounding area. It is possible that it, along with other neighbouring castles and fortresses, formed a single defensive observation system.

7. The Palace of Sardar. It was the residence of the rulers of the Azerbaijani Erivan Khanate. It was supposedly built in the 18th century. The palace was richly decorated. The famous Azerbaijani artist Mirza Gadim Erivani actively participated in the design of its interior. In palace was demolished by Armenian nationalists in the 20th century and today it is problematic to reconstruct a complete picture of its architectural and compositional features.

8. The Palace of the Sheki Khans was built in a historic part of the city of Sheki in the second part of the 18th century. The palace, which served as the summer residence, has two storeys, six rooms, four corridors and two balconies decorated with mirrors and in addition to its architectural features it is famous for its decoration. Fretwork, wall painting and wooden tracery are used in the décor of the palace interior. The wall paintings possess the greatest interest and they reflect not only the aesthetic taste of that time but also serve as a valuable source of information about the history of the Sheki Khanate.

9. Maiden's Tower. It rises in the south western part of Old Baku – Icheri Sheher. In accordance with recent investigations this unique building was constructed in two stages: the lower part in the 6-7 centuries and the upper part in the 12th century. The height of the tower is 29.7 metres and its diameter is 16.5 metres. The tower is cylindrical and consists of eight tiers connected by a stone staircase hewn into the mass of the walls. There are many different versions and legends about its role. Its construction features have no analogies in the whole of the East. Maiden's Tower and Shirvanshahs' Palace and the defensive walls of Baku have been included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

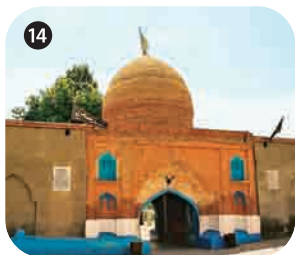
10. The Juma (Friday) Mosque in Ganja. It is often called the Shah Abbas Mosque. It is situated in the centre of Ganja. It was built in 1606 by the architect Sheikh Bakheddin Mohammad Amil. In 1776 two minarets were added to the mosque. The mosque was built out of red brick – a traditional building material in this region. The outstanding Azerbaijani poet and scientist Mirza Shafi Vazekh taught calligraphy in the madrasa of the mosque.

11. The Juma (Friday) Mosque in Shamakha. It is one of the earliest Islamic buildings in the whole of the Caucasus - first built in the 7-8th centuries, it later received numerous additions and alterations. The last such rebuilding took place in 1909, after a destructive earthquake in Shamakha. It gained its present appearance following this unfinished reconstruction. The building is rectangular, 47 metres in length and 28 metres in width. Internally the mosque consists of three square halls. Through its size and importance this monument holds a special place among the religious buildings of the Islamic period.

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12. The Caravanserai in Sheki. It is located in the historic part of Sheki City. It was built in the 18th century and in total covers an area of 6000 square metres. The building materials used were brick and river stone traditional to this region. The caravanserai has three stories, each with their own functions. This monument obviously testifies to the fact that Azerbaijan, and Sheki in particular, played an important role in the trade between East and West and North and South.

13. The Shirvanshahs' Palace Complex is located in the historic part of Baku City and represents one of the more outstanding creations, not only of Azerbaijani architecture, but also of all the architecture of the East. The complex is situated on a central hill and consists of a palace building, a divankhana (court), the ancestral burial vault of the Shirvanshahs, a palace mosque, the mausoleum of the scientist and philosopher Seyid Yakhya Bakuvi, the Key Kubad Mosque (only the foundations survive), the so-called Gates of Murad, the palace baths and an ovdan (well). The principal buildings of the complex were erected in the 15th century, though some of them were probably built on the foundations of earlier structures. All the buildings were constructed in three areas on different levels connected by narrow stone staircases. The complex is characterised by highly professional spatial and artistic compositions, by unique stone carving and the harmonic way that the shapes of the buildings fit with their surroundings. The Shirvanshahs' Palace Complex is included into the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

14. The Imamzade Complex in Ganja. It is situated near the city of Ganja in the old cemetery. The dome of the central building is covered with ornamental blue tiles. It is thought that a building was first erected here in the 8th century. After this the complex was repeatedly rebuilt, most recently in 1878.

15. The Red Bridge is located in Gazakh District on the border with Georgia on the River Khram. The name 'Red Bridge' relates to the red stone used in its construction. The bridge is also sometimes known as Sinig Korpu (the Broken Bridge). The length of the bridge is 175 metres. It was built in the 12th century on the site of an earlier structure.

16. The Mausoleum of Barda. It was built in 1322 by the architect Ahmed Ibn Ayyub al Khafiz Nakhchevani, whom the inscription above the north entrance mentions, and whose architectural and artistic features are close to those of the mausoleum in the village of Garabaghlar. Like its Garabaghlar counterpart it is decorated with turquoise glazed tiles which repeatedly form the word Allah.

17. The Mausoleum of Gutlu Musa. It is located in the village of Khachin Turbatli in the Agdam District. According to an inscription it was built in 1314. The mausoleum is conical and its body has the shape of a dodecahedral prism. It was built from yellow lime stone. Nine of its faces have niches and the north, west and eastern faces have entrance doors. All the apertures of the mausoleum are decorated with stalactite ornamentation. On each side over the entrances there are shallow reliefs depicting images of animals. In order to give the images more contrast they are coloured with ochre. Its construction and artistic features make the Mausoleum of Gutlu Musa a bright example of the Aran architectural school.

18. The Mausoleum of Diri Baba is located near the village of Maraza and was built in the 15th century. In accordance with historical accounts it was erected on the site of the burial of a famous Sheikh who lived in this area. The mausoleum is built in a rocky ravine, the slope of which was used as the rear wall of the burial vault. The mausoleum has two storeys. Ornaments which are often encountered in the Shirvan architectural school are used in the décor.

19. The Mausoleum of Momina Khatun. It is one of the outstanding works of Azerbaijani architecture and a marvel of Eastern architecture. The creator of this work, built in Nakhchevan in 1186, is the architect Ajami Abubakr Nakhchevani. The mausoleum was built on the site of the burial of Momina Khatun, the spouse of Shamsaddin Eldagiz, the founder of the Azerbaijani Atabey State. The mausoleum has a height of 34 metres and consists of a superstructure and an

underground chamber. It is decahedral in plan and each of its surfaces are decorated with non-recurring geometric patterns which were composed from mud-brick – the main building material, with the inclusion of turquoise tiles. The epigraphic inscription encircling the building on the upper part of its exterior is made in the same way. Drawings and photographs from the 19th century show that a whole memorial complex used to exist around the mausoleum.

20. The Mausoleum of Yusif Ibn Kuseyr is located in the city of Nakhchevan. According to an inscription the building was constructed in 1162 by the architect Ajami Abubakr Nakhchevani. The mausoleum consists of an underground chamber and an octahedral superstructure crowned with a pyramidal dome. Mud-brick was used as the building material. The surface of the mausoleum is covered with skilfully executed geometric patterns. As a whole the monument, despite its small size, appears monumental and deserves to be considered one of the more outstanding works of Azerbaijani architecture.

21. Mardakan Fortress. It is a medieval quadrangular defensive structure. It was built in the 12th century during the rule of the Shirvanshah Akhsitan and served as a component part of the whole system of fortresses and castles of the Absheron Peninsula.

22. Nardaran Castle. It was built near the village of Nardaran in the 14th century. The central tower, with a height of 12.5 metres, is circular in plan. The inscription on the tower testifies that it was built in 1301 by the architect Mahmud Abu Saad.

23. Ramana Castle. The castle is situated on a rocky outcrop in the village of Ramana on the Absheron. It was constructed in the 13-14th centuries from local sandstone. The height of the castle is 15 metres.

24. Khanega on the River Pirsaat. It is located 127 kilometres to the south of Baku in Hajigabul District. It was built in the 12-14th centuries on the site of the burial of the outstanding thinker and scientist Pir Hussein; it is surrounded by defensive walls, inside of which are a mosque, a minaret, a reception hall, dwellings and a mausoleum. The interior of the complex was richly decorated with carving and glazed tiles. Some of the décor is currently kept in the Hermitage in St Petersburg and the rest in the Azerbaijani Museum of Literature. In 2007 the complex was thoroughly restored.

25. The Church in the village of Kish. This is the earliest Christian church in the South Caucasus and is situated in the Sheki District. The building was constructed from stone and covered with skilfully dressed slabs. The church has no inscriptions but its construction and architectural and artistic features indicate that it is from the 3rd century. During many centuries the church in the village of Kish was a spiritual and instructive centre of the Caucasian Albanians.

26. The Khudafarin Bridge was built on the border with Iran on the Aras River which separates historic Azerbaijan into two parts. It is situated in the village of Gumlag, in the Jabrail District. Two surviving bridges are located not far from each other. One, which has 15 spans, can be dated to the 12th century by its architectural features; it was probably built on the site of an earlier structure. The total length of the bridge is 200 metres and its width is 4.5 metres. All the spans of the bridge were built from brick and its foundations from river stone. The other bridge, located upstream from the first, has 11 spans built completely from stone and covered with large stone slabs. This bridge was also constructed on the site of an earlier structure. The length of the bridge is 130 metres and its width is 6 metres. Its foundations, similar to the first bridge, were made of rocks which project from the river. These bridges, which are located on a main transport artery of the historic Great Silk Road, fulfilled an important role in cultural exchanges between West and East.

27. Chiraggala is located 20-25 kilometres from Davachi City, on a mountaintop. Researchers suppose that it was patrol observation building erected in the 4-6th centuries and

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formed part of a powerful system of Caspian defensive structures. Chiraggala is a principal element of the Gilgilchay defensive wall. In the construction of the fortress the topography of the surrounding area was successfully used. Its location allows for the observation of a large territory and to warn about threats with the help of fires lighted on towers. Its name Chiraggala probably comes from this – ‘the Lamp Fortress’.

28. Shusha. This city was founded in 1756-1757 by the Garabagh ruler Panahali Khan as a defensive stronghold in an extensive system of fortresses. First, the city was called Panahabad in honour of its founder. Already by the end of the 18th century Shusha was changed into one of the most developed cities of the whole of the Caucasus. Tall and powerful walls were erected and numerous quarters of craftsmen appeared around the city. Already then the city stood apart for its beauty – this was noticed by all travellers and historians. The houses had roofed galleries with stone columns. The market squares of the city were large and the main square – Meidan contained trade shops, a two-storey caravanserai and also a cathedral mosque with two minarets. Shusha is the temple of Azerbaijani culture; it is called the Conservatoire of the Caucasus. In many prosperous houses the walls and ceilings were decorated with ornamental compositions and thematic paintings depicting mainly battle scenes, portraits of rulers and ancient mythical heroes. Until the present day a few buildings with artistic paintings made by the famous master Gambar Garabagi (second half of the 19th century) survive. These are the houses of Karimbey Mehmandarov, Haji Mammadov, Iskandar Rustamov and the Safibeyes. In the planning and building of the primary development phase of Shusha the famous poet, diplomat and Great Vizier of the Garabagh Khanate, Molla Panah Vagif, actively participated. He defined the basic strategy and defensive points of the fortress, citadel, castles, Khan's palace and buildings for his attendants. The layout of the fortress structure was created over two periods: the building of the core of the fortress and the second phase when construction works exhausted the comparatively flat territory of the eastern part and carried on to the west on more uneven terrain. Living quarters of different sizes appeared on the principal streets of the city. In the eastern part of Shusha there were 17 mahalla – quarters: nine lower – Ashaghi Mahalla and eight upper – Yuxari Mahalla. In the second half of the 19th century all quarters within the structure of the city were formed as complete complexes with their own developed social centres – with a mosque, baths, a fountain kiosk and shops. In the western part of Shusha twelve quarters were created with planning centres. The eastern and western parts of the city formed a comprehensive whole both in architectural and building planning. The founder of the Garabagh architectural school was Karbalai-Safi-khan Garabagi (1817-1910) who built almost all major religious buildings (mosques, madrasas and imamzadeh). He changed the stylistic direction of the architecture and creatively used traditional features and created new compositional and constructional solutions. Among his creations may be noted the Friday Mosque Govhar-agma, the Ashghi Mosque, the Saatli Mosque and other buildings in tune with the times.

ВЫБИРАЕМ 7 ЧУДЕС АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА

В прошлом году журнал “IRS-Наследие” объявил конкурс «Семь чудес Азербайджана». Ниже мы помещаем список исторических памятников, наиболее часто упоминавшихся участниками конкурса в течение прошлого года. Просим вас, уважаемые читатели, отобрать из этого списка семь памятников, наиболее достойных, на ваш взгляд, звания «чудес». Свои мнения вы можете прислать на специально созданный сайт www.7chudes-az.ru, www.7wonders-az.ru или по электронной почте на адрес журнала.