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World's 20 Tallest & Biggest

By Paul Stasi
Provided by Forbes TRAVELER

The Tower of Babel, whose top was meant to reach unto heaven, was destroyed by an angry God, who wished to punish human hubris and reserve the best views for himself.

The 630-foot-tall St. Louis Arch has the distinction of being the world's tallest monument. (©istockphoto/Dan Whobrey)

As we humans have, inevitably, built our way back into the heavens, we have also continuously competed over the record for the world's tallest building. That record is currently held by the **Taipei 101 Tower** in Taiwan. Built in 2004, the Taipei 101 rises to 1,671 feet easily beating out the Ancient Babylonian Ziggurat scholars name as a possible source for the Biblical tower (which stood around 300 feet tall). But Taiwan has little time to gloat. The **Burj Dubai Tower** is scheduled for completion in 2009, and its height -- a closely guarded secret -- is rumored to be over 2,200 feet.

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Complicating matters is the definition of "tallest building" itself. Until 1998, the **Sears Tower** in Chicago (1,730 feet) was considered the tallest building in the world. Then along came Malaysia's **Petronas Towers**, whose antennae, in a direct slap at Midwestern supremacy, extended 30 feet higher than that of the Sears Tower. (The Patronas Towers building without the antennae is, in fact, smaller than the Sears). Finally two organizations -- Emporis, a real estate data company headquartered in Germany, and the imaginatively named Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat located in Illinois -- stepped in to clarify matters.

The term "building" is now defined as a "continuously inhabited structure," thus creating the new category of "tallest free-standing structure," a title currently held by the **CN Tower** in Toronto. Architectural height is now measured in four separate categories: Height to Architectural Tip (including spires but excluding antennae); Height to Top of Roof (excluding spires); Height to Tip (including everything) and Highest Occupied Floor (a measure of the tallest building with continuously occupied floors). Currently the Petronas Towers has been superseded in all four categories.

Problem would seem to be solved, though the dispute rages on in cyberspace, where the CN Tower, for instance, still proudly refers to itself as the "tallest building in the world." Of course Worrell's Seafood Restaurant in Wilson, North Carolina, also claims to have the "World Tallest Replica of the World's Tallest Lighthouse" in its parking lot, so clearly you can't believe everything you read on the Internet. Nevertheless, here are 20 interesting record-holding places to visit throughout the world.

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