

The World's Largest Churches

Basilica of Our Lady Queen of Peace in Ivory Coast

For a long time, the largest church in the world was St Peter's in the Vatican. In some ways it remains the largest, but in many ways it has been surpassed by the church in Ivory Coast.



It was commissioned by Houphouët-Boigny, the first president of Côte d'Ivoire after the country's independence from France, and built in 1985-1990 in the capital Yamoussoukro (the former village where he was born). The president-dictator was widely popular in his country throughout the 33 years he ruled (until his death). While the marble and granite plaza can hold 300,000 people and 18,000 people inside (it cost about \$300 million to build, but the cost figures have a pretty wide range of \$175-600 million), the church has rarely been filled in the last 25 years.

The length of the *basilica* (a title given to churches - it is a *Papal church*) is 195 meters long, 150 meters wide. The nave is 55 metres wide and 158 metres high. The diameter of the dome (outer) reaches 90 metres.





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Basilica of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Ivory Coast

St. Peter's Cathedral, Vatican City



The first basilica was built by Pope Sylvester with the support of Emperor Constantine in 324 over the tomb of Saint Peter the Apostle. However, his tomb is not commonly seen: visits to the burial site below the basilica, where Saint Peter's tomb is located, are only possible by special permission

granted by the „Fabbrica di San Pietro“. Approximately 250 visitors per day are allowed, groups of approximately 12 people, and only people over 15 years of age may participate in the tour - no exceptions are granted.

The basilica and piazza we see today are the result of the contributions of many famous artists and architects under the direction of several popes over the centuries. Through the beauty and magnificence of St. Peter's Basilica, their aim was to help us contemplate the omnipresence of God, the creator of all beauty, to participate in the great experience of faith and thus to evoke a longing for heaven.



The dome of St. Peter's Cathedral was designed by Michelangelo, who worked continuously on the basilica since 1547. At the end of his long life (he died in 1564 at the age of 89), the construction of the dome had not yet been completed.

After his death, the management of the construction passed to Giacomo Della Porta, a pupil of Michelangelo, who raised the dome's vault by about 7 metres and completed the work in just 22 months, in 1590, during the pontificate of Pope Sixtus V.

The double dome has an inner diameter of 42.56 metres and a height at the top of the cross of 136.57 metres; the lantern is 17 metres high.

In the Western world, St Peter's Dome has served as a model for later buildings: among many others, though created in technically different ways, are the dome of St Paul's in London (1675), the Invalides in Paris (1680-1691) and the neoclassical roof of the Capitol in Washington (1794-1817).

The **Fasade** is the work of architect Carlo Maderno, who completed it in 1614. It is 114.69 m wide and

48 m high, with a series of columns and Corinthian pilasters, on which is an imposing cornice with a central tympanum, topped by a balustrade on which rise thirteen statues (nearly 6 m high) with the statue of the blessing Redeemer in the centre. The inscription on the superstructure reminds us that the work was carried out under Pope Paul V. In the lower row there are five entrances to the atrium, above which are nine windows, three of which have balconies. The central window is the so-called „Loggia delle Benedizioni“ (balcony of blessing), from which the Pope, immediately after his election and on the occasion of Christmas and Easter, makes his wishes with the apostolic blessing *Urbi et orbi* (to the City and to the World).

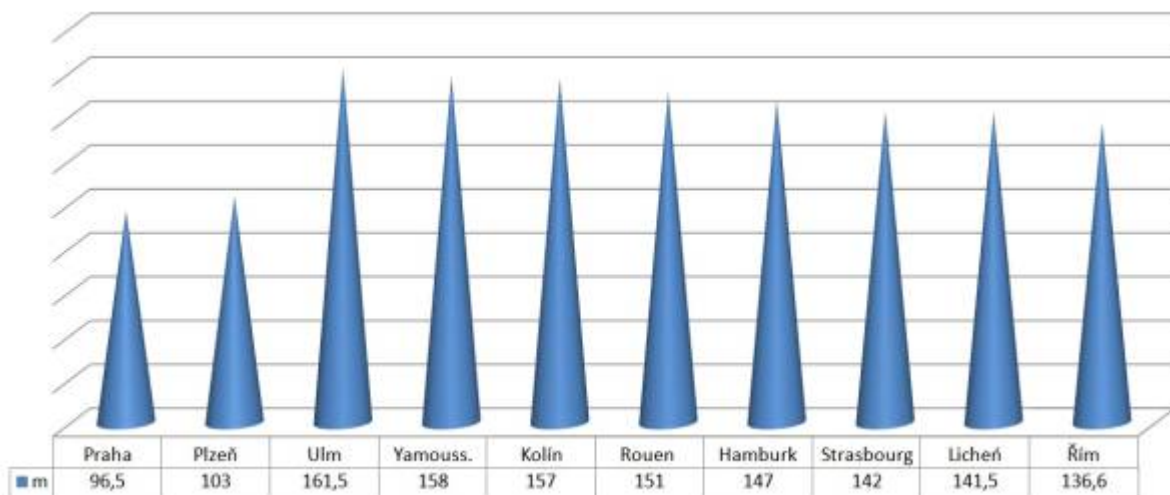
The **Piazza** was built by Bernini in 1656-1667 under Pope Alexander VII (1655-1667). According to Bernini, the construction of the piazza had a certain symbolism, *because St. Peter's is the forerunner of all the others, it must have a portico to welcome Catholics with open arms to confirm them in their faith, heretics to unite them in the Church, and unbelievers to instruct them in the true faith.* √ In 1950, when the Via della Conciliazione was opened on the site of the Spina di Borgo, a new wide access road to the Vatican Basilica was built, which, while improving the majestic view of St. Peter's dome, fundamentally changed Bernini's original design. The square has extraordinary dimensions: it is 320 metres deep, its central diameter is 240 metres and it is surrounded by four rows of 284 columns and 88 pillars. The balustrade above the columns is crowned with 140 statues of saints, 3.20 metres high, created around 1670 by Bernini's pupils. On either side of the obelisk, which Domenico Fontana moved to the centre of the square in 1585, are two large fountains by Bernini (1675) and Maderno (1614). Below, at the foot of the steps, statues of St Peter and St Paul seem to welcome the faithful.







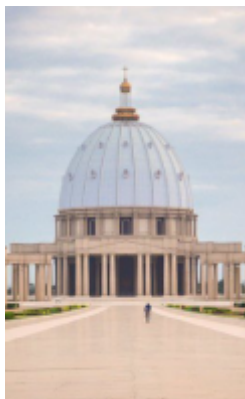
The world's tallest churches (towers)



1. Lutheran Church in Ulm, Germany (founded as a Catholic church in 1377, completed in 1890. The height of the main tower is **161,5 m** (it is 58,5 m more than the cathedral in Pilsen).



2. Basilica of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Ivory Coast. Height: 158 m.



3. Cologne Cathedral of Our Lady and St. Peter (Cologne, Germany). Construction took place between 1248 and 1880. Between 1880 and 1884 it was the tallest building in the world. Height: 157 m.



4. Gothic cathedral of Notre-Dame de Rouen (France). Construction took place between 1220 and 1877. Height: 151 m.



5. The neo-Gothic church of St. Nicholas in Hamburg, Germany. Year of completion: 1874. It is effectively a ruin (though carefully maintained), as the church was damaged during World War II and was never rebuilt. Height: 147 m.



The church tower itself did not appear on the stamp, only in the panorama of the whole city with the ship and the Elbe (stamps from 1973 and 1889).

Highest churches in the world (height of vault)

It's even more complicated with the height of the vault than the height of the tower, which is why the difference between the first and the tenth in the world top ten is only about 3 m.

1. **St. Peter's (Saint-Pierre) Cathedral in Beauvais, France - the cathedral with the highest Gothic vault in the world (48 m).**



The Cathedral of Beauvais shows the competition between bishops and cities in the 13th century for the height of vaults in cathedrals. It also shows the limits of what is possible in the Gothic style. The vault was built between 1225 and 1272, but a large part of it collapsed in 1284, stopping the work. The individual vaults on the sides of the roof were subsequently doubled and iron connecting bars were installed. The present tie rods were re-installed in the 1960s, shortly after the removal of the originals, but the piers became unstable in gusts of

wind.

After the collapse of the vault in the 13th century, no Gothic builders attempted to match Beauvais Cathedral in height.

Another disaster befell the transept (transept nave) in 1573, when the tower above the transept collapsed. After repairs, the original and new parts are distinguished: the new supporting pillars are made of smooth stone, which distinguishes them from the original ones ⁴⁾

After this accident, the competition and efforts to get even higher were over, and the cathedral remained unfinished (when compared to the original plans). The world record for vault height, however, remained with the cathedral.



2. **St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican** (46 m)

Vault:



Dome:



3. **Cathedral of Florence** (45 m)

The 15th-century dome of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi, is said to be the largest brick *dome* in the world. (To avoid confusion: the tallest *brick vault* in the world is the one in Lübeck (Lübeck Marienkirche) at 38.5 m.)

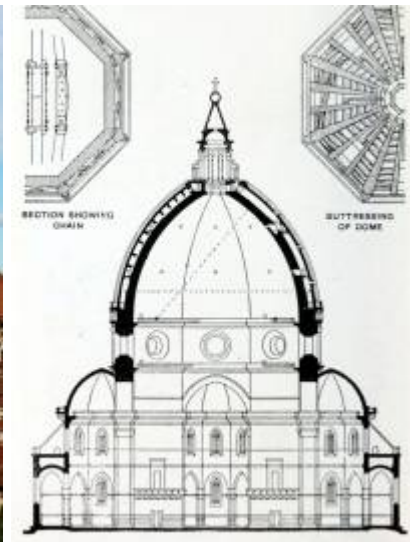


Photo: 2016 MaxPixel.net, ARCHI/MAPS ⁶⁾ ⁷⁾

4. **Milan Cathedral** (45 m)

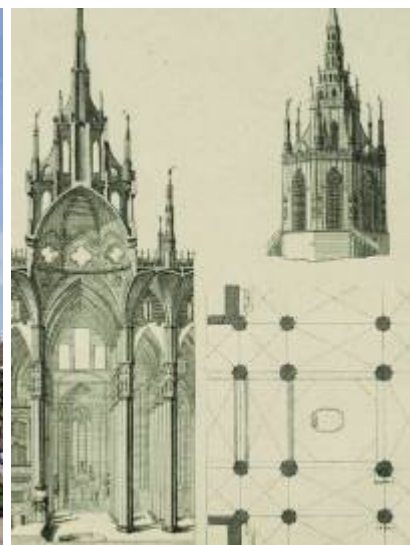


Photo: 2017 Hippopx.com, Jacques-Germain Soufflot ⁸⁾ ⁹⁾

5. **Cathedral of Naples** (Santa Chiara) (45 m)

6. **Sagrada Família in Barcelona** (45 m)

Other links (the largest and oldest churches in the Czech Republic and the world)

- [Nejstarší kostely na světě](#)
- [Nejstarší kostely v Čechách](#)
- [Největší kostely na světě](#)
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- [The World's Largest Churches](#)
- [The oldest churches in the Czech Republic](#)

Počet shlédnutí: 234

1)
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-largest-church-in-the-world-has-the-fewest-worshippers>

2)
[Tour the Cathedrals of Northern France, Far Horizons](#)

3) 4) 5)
[ARCHITECTUREFARM: beauvais](#)

6)
MaxPixel.net, free work.
<https://www.maxpixel.net/Dom-Architecture-Tuscany-Italy-Florence-Cathedral-2791817>

7)
ARCHI/MAPS Section of Brunelleschi's dome of the cathedral, Florence.
<https://cz.pinterest.com/pin/plans-diagrams-models-drawings--329536897704842012/>

8)
Hippopx.com, free work.
<https://www.hippopx.com/en/milan-dom-architecture-italy-church-duomo-of-milan-cathedral-282308>

9)
Jacques-Germain Soufflot, perspective view, section, and plan of the dome of Milan Cathedral, engraving by G. Taraval. From Oeuvres de Jacques-Germain Soufflot, Paris, 1757-77, Bibliothèque de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, collections Jacques Doucet.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337958936_Experiencing_the_Gothic_Style/figures?lo=1

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