

Collection Building:

Around the World in 80 Issues?

by John F. Dunn



In his April 7 column, our New Issues Editor, Dave Kent featured an issue from Alderney, part of the Guernsey island group in the English Channel, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the publication of the book “Around the World in 80 Days” by celebrated author Jules Verne. Arguably the most popular of Verne’s Voyages Extraordinaires series of novels, “Around the World in 80 Days” is an adventure novel about the journey of an English gentleman, the unflappable Phileas Fogg, who, accompanied by his emotional French manservant, Passepartout, sets out to prove that he can circumnavigate the globe in 80 days. The stamps were illustrated by Keith Robinson, who has depicted some of the key events from Phileas Fogg’s globe-trotting adventure.

This led me to bring together in my “Publisher’s Desk” column in that same issue some examples mail that circumnavigated the globe, from an 1890 postal card to John Glenn’s 1962 Project Mercury flight, which took about 88 minutes—with an unanswered question as to what is the fastest circumnavigation on record.

Since then, it occurred to me that a fascinating collection can be built based on the “Around the World _____” theme. In this case, it would be “Around the World in 80 Issues”. It fits well with one of the interests of stamp collectors, that being scenes ‘from faraway places with strange sounding names,’ a theme that attracted many of us to the hobby.

I placed a question mark in the title of this piece because, for the time being, I do not want to put an actual number on the quantity of issues it will take to cover the globe. It may take more, it may take less; I think we could accomplish it in less than 80 issues, but limiting it to 80 might well take some of the thrill of the search as we embark on this project, keeping in mind that postal administrations provide use with thousands of views of the world, presented from various perspectives: landscapes and native costumes being just two of the many possibilities.

In building this collection, I decided to rely on two sources. For the stamps, the Inter-Governmental of New York website, igpc.com, provides images of thousands of issues from their client nations as well as other stamp issuing entities, all sorted by topic, usually in colorful mini-sheets, some of which include background information on the subjects.

To provide or supplement the brief descriptions that can be fit on the essentially pictorial presentations that stamps bring us, I turn to Wikipedia.com, a site devoted to providing accurate information without being cluttered by ads and politicking, and on that note, let’s get started.

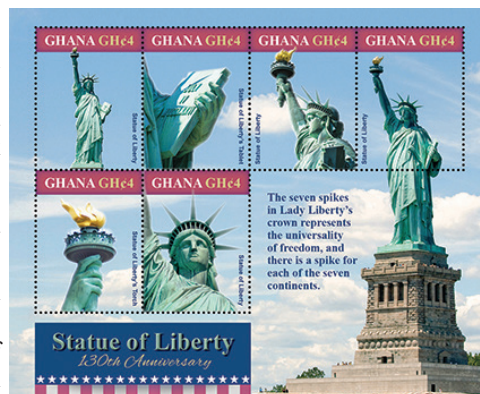
One of the most recognizable sites in the world is the USA’s very own, the Statue of Liberty, seen here on a 2016 sheetlet from Ghana that is still available at igpc.com.

Not that much information is needed by almost all of our worldwide readers, for the record, we provide this from Wikipedia: “The Statue of Liberty (Liberty Enlightening the World) is a sculpture on Liberty Island in New York Harbor in New York City. The copper statue, a gift from the

people of France, was designed by French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and its metal framework was built by Gustave Eiffel. The statue was dedicated on October 28, 1886.

“The statue is a figure of Libertas, the Roman Goddess of Liberty. She holds a torch above her head

with her right hand, and in her left hand carries a tablet inscribed July 4, 1776 in Roman numerals, the date of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. After its dedication, the statue became an icon of freedom and of the United States, seen as a symbol of welcome to immigrants arriving by sea.”



Before leaving U.S. shores, we can view another American icon, the Empire State Building. It is seen here on a 2021 issue from Grenada, with photos including a worker during the construction of the building. (In a future column, we will visit One World Trade Center, which was erected on the site where the twin towers collapsed; however you can see it in the distance on this 2021 issue.)

From Wikipedia, “The Empire State Building is a 102-story Art Deco skyscraper in Midtown Manhattan, New York City [that] was built from 1930 to 1931. Its name is derived from “Empire State”, the nickname of the state of New York. The building has a roof height of 1,250 feet and is a total of 1,454 feet tall, including its antenna. When completed, it was the world’s tallest building. As of 2022, the building is the seventh-tallest building in New York City, the ninth-tallest completed skyscraper in the United States, the 54th-tallest in the world, and the sixth-tallest freestanding structure in the Americas.

“In 1929, Empire State Inc. acquired the site and devised plans for a skyscraper. The design was changed fifteen times until it was ensured to be the world’s tallest building. Construction started on March 17, 1930, and the building opened thirteen and a half months afterward on May 1, 1931.

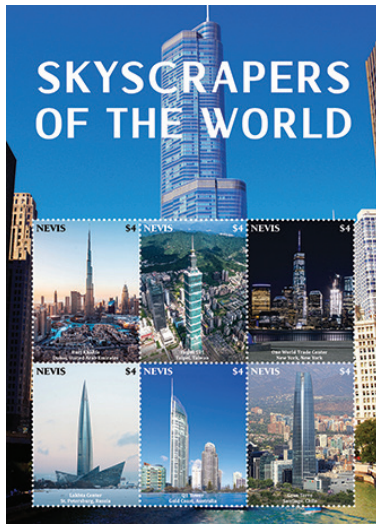
“Around four million tourists from around the world annually visit the building’s 86th- and 102nd-floor observatories; an additional indoor observatory on the 80th floor opened in 2019.”

While still on the subject of skyscrapers, this mini-sheet from Nevis depicts a few of the current tallest buildings, including the tallest building in the world, the 2,717 foot tall Burj Khalifa in Dubai, which is seen in the upper left stamp in this issue.

The other stamps, left to right, top row first, are 101 Taipei; One World Trade Center; Lakhta Center in St. Petersburg, Russia; Q1 Tower, Goldcoast, Australia; and Gran Torre, Santiago, Chile.

These are not the second through sixth tallest buildings in the world. For example, the second tallest pictured here is One World Trade Center, which ranks seventh in the Wikipedia list. For the top 91 you can search list of tallest buildings on wikipedia.com.

Having ventured abroad to some of these skyscrapers, we can now turn to famous European landmark on a mini-sheet from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.



A view of La Sagrada Familia dominating the Barcelona skyline

To *Mekeel's & Stamps* readers, the Sagrada Familia may be the least familiar of these six landmarks. I had the pleasure of learning about it in a January 2011 Stamp News Online study on the works of Antoni Gaudi, and present that section here, which was written by Geir Sør-Reime for one of our World of Stamps features.

“Gaudi’s most spectacular work may be the huge Templo Expiatorio de la Sagrada Familia (Church of the Holy Family), which, although still unfinished at his death [and scheduled to be completed by 2026], is acknowledged as his masterpiece. Its lofty semicubist towers, with mosaic-covered finials, dominate the Barcelona skyline, and its imaginative forms, colors, and textures are unmatched in European architecture....”

“Every part of the design of La Sagrada Familia is rich with Christian symbolism, as Gaudi intended the church to be the ‘last great sanctuary



Top to bottom, left column first, they are:
 St. Basil’s, Moscow; Colosseum, Rome; Big Ben, London;
 Brandenburg Gate, Berlin; Acropolis, Athens; Sagrada Familia, Barcelona.

La Sagrada Familia



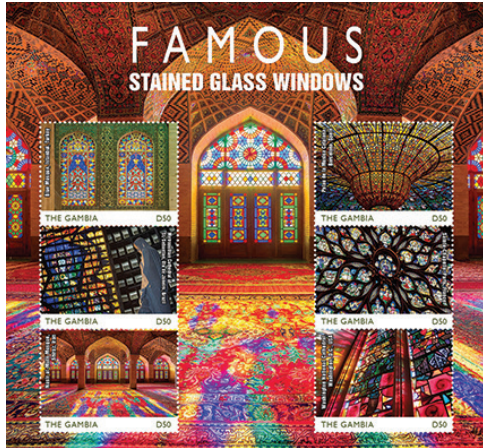
An internal view of the church, showing two of the windows, flanked by statuary and intricate carvings.



La Sagrada Familia today, still under construction

of Christendom.” Its most striking aspect are its spindle-shaped towers. [When completed] a total of 18 tall towers are called for....There is no ‘recognizable style’ in the architecture, which is a mixture between Art Nouveau, Modernisme, and Gothic Architecture.

“The evangelists’ towers will be surmounted by sculptures of their traditional symbols: a bull (St. Luke), an angel (St. Matthew), an eagle (St. John), and a lion (St. Mark). The central tower of Jesus Christ is to be surmounted by a giant cross, and the tower’s total height will be one metre less than that of Montjuic [the Mountain in Barcelona], as Gaudí believed that his work should not surpass that of God. The lower towers are surmounted by bunches of grapes, representing spiritual fruit.”



Architecture of a different sort is seen on a Ghana sheetlet picturing stained glass windows. Top to bottom, left column first, they are:

Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey; Cathedral of St. Sebastian of Rio de Janeiro; Nasir al-Mulik Mosque, Shiraz, Iran;

Palau de la Música, Catalana, Barcelona; Sainte-Chapelle Cathedral, Paris; Washington National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.

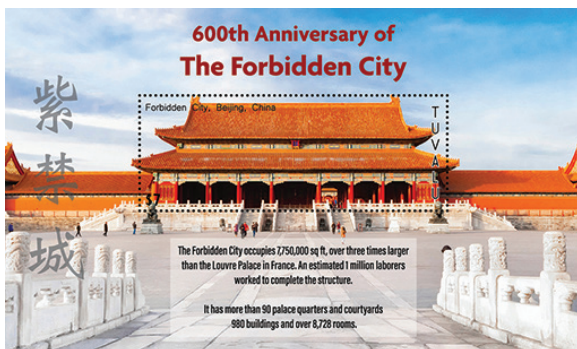
The stamp that caught my attention was the Palau de la Musica, the only one that is not a religious site. This from Wikipedia:

“Palau de la Música Catalana is a concert hall in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. Designed in the Catalan modernista style by the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, it was built between 1905 and 1908 for Orfeo Català, a choral society founded in 1891 that was a leading force in the Catalan cultural movement that came to be known as the Renaixença (Catalan Rebirth). It was inaugurated on 9 February 1908.

“Between 1982 and 1989, the building underwent extensive restoration, remodeling, and extension. In 1997, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, more than half a million people a year attend musical performances in the Palau that range from symphonic and chamber music to jazz and Cançó (Catalan song).

“The palace is located in the corner of a cramped street, Carrer Palau de la Música, and Carrer de Sant Pere Mes Alt, in the section of old Barcelona known as Casc Antic. Most of the other prominent modernista buildings, **those designed by Antoni Gaudí, for example** [emphasis added] are located in the chic 19th-century extension of the city known as the Eixample.”

We now begin to go further back in time, with a Tuvalu souvenir sheet commemorating, in 2020, the 600th Anniversary of the Forbidden City, in Beijing, China.

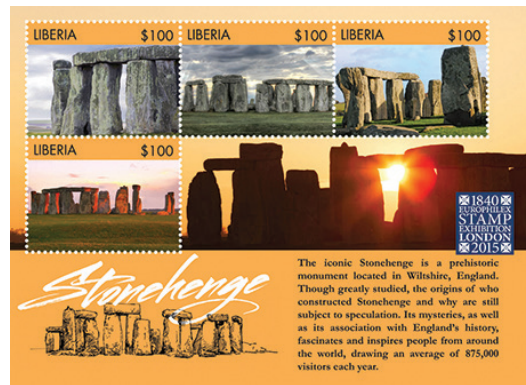


Again, to supplement the information on the souvenir sheet, we turn to Wikipedia:

“The Forbidden City is a palace complex in Dongcheng District, Beijing, China, at the center of the Imperial City of Beijing. It is surrounded by numerous opulent imperial gardens and temples including the 54-acre Zhongshan Park and the sacrificial Imperial Ancestral Temple.

“The Forbidden City was constructed from 1406 to 1420, and was the former Chinese imperial palace and winter residence of the Emperor of China from the Ming dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty, between 1420 and 1924. The Forbidden City served as the home of Chinese emperors and their households and was the ceremonial and political center of the Chinese government for over 500 years. It was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987.

The complex consists of 980 buildings, encompassing 9,999 rooms. Since 2012, it has seen an average of 14 million visitors annually, and received more than 19 million visitors in 2019. In 2018, the Forbidden City’s market value was estimated at 70 billion USD, making it both the world’s most valuable palace and the most valuable piece of real estate anywhere in the world.



Going way back in time, we visit Stonehenge in England, on this Liberia sheetlet. As the sheetlet indicates, more than 875,000 people visit the site each year, and wonder at how it was built, with an outer ring that consists of vertical sarsen standing stones (pictured on the sheetlet), each around 13 feet high, seven feet wide, and weighing around 25 tons, topped by connecting horizontal lintel stones.

Looking for a plausible explanation, I turned to Wikipedia:

“Stonehenge was produced by a culture that left no written records. Many aspects of Stonehenge, such as how it was built and for what purposes it was used, remain subject to debate. A number of myths surround the stones. The site, specifically the great trilithon, the encompassing horseshoe arrangement of the five central trilithons, the heel stone, and the embanked avenue, are aligned to the sunset of the winter solstice and the opposing sunrise of the summer solstice. A natural landform at the monument’s location followed this line, and may have inspired its construction. The excavated remains of culled animal bones suggest that people may have gathered at the site for the winter rather than the summer. Further astronomical associations, and the precise astronomical significance of the site for its people, are a matter of speculation and debate.

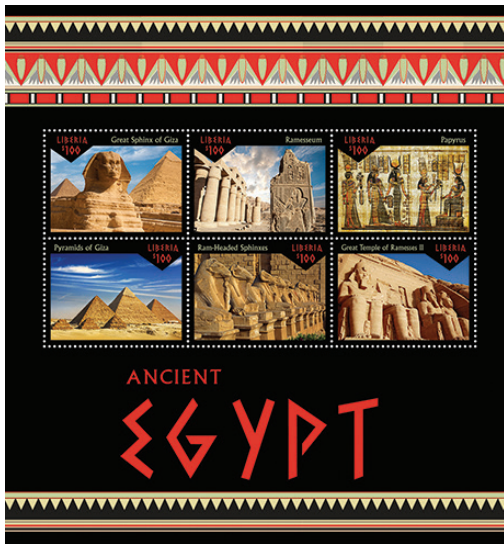
“There is little or no direct evidence revealing the construction techniques used by the Stonehenge builders. Over the years, various authors have suggested that supernatural or anachronistic methods were used, usually asserting that the stones were impossible to move otherwise due to their massive size. However, conventional techniques, using Neolithic technology as basic as shear legs, have been demonstrably effective at moving and placing stones of a similar size. The most common theory of how prehistoric people moved megaliths has them creating a track of logs which the large stones were rolled along. Another megalith transport theory involves the use of a type of sleigh running on a track greased with animal fat. Such an experiment with a sleigh carrying a 40-ton slab of stone was successfully conducted near Stonehenge in 1995. A team of more than 100 workers managed to push and pull the slab along the 18-mile journey from the Marlborough Downs.

Archaeologists believe that Stonehenge was constructed in stages, from around 3000 BC to 2000 BC. It is striking that around the same time the Egyptians were constructing the Sphinxes and pyramids that are seen on this sheetlet from Liberia.

Among these is the Great Sphinx of Giza. Pictured on the upper left stamp, it is a limestone statue of a reclining sphinx, a mythical creature with the head of a human, and the body of a lion. Facing directly from west to east, it stands on the Giza Plateau on the west bank of the Nile in Giza, Egypt.

The face of the Sphinx appears to represent the pharaoh Khafre. It is the oldest known monumental sculpture in Egypt and one of the most recognizable statues in the world. The archaeological evidence suggests that it was created by ancient Egyptians of the Old Kingdom during the reign of Khafre (c. 2558–2532 BC).

The original shape of the Sphinx was cut from the bedrock, and has since been restored with layers of limestone blocks. It measures 240 feet long from paw to tail, 66 feet high from the base to the top of the head and 62 feet wide at its rear haunches. It is uncertain why the Sphinx's nose was broken off. However, an archaeological study performed by Mark Lehner concluded that although the Sphinx's nose was intentionally broken, as opposed to being damaged by weather and corrosion, it happened sometime between the 3rd and 10th centuries.



Concluding this first journey in our trip Around the World, we visit Machu Picchu, on this Guyana souvenir sheet. This from Wikipedia:

“Machu Picchu is a 15th-century Inca citadel located in the Eastern Cordillera of southern Peru on a 7,970 foot mountain ridge, and is often referred to as the “Lost City of the Incas”. It is the most familiar icon of the Inca Empire.

“The Inca civilization had no written language and no European visited the site until the 19th century, so far as is known, so there are no written records of the site while it was in use. The names of the buildings, their supposed uses, and their inhabitants are the product of modern archaeologists on the basis of physical evidence, including tombs at the site.

“Most recent archaeologists believe that Machu Picchu was constructed as an estate for the Inca emperor Pachacuti (1438–1472). The Incas built the estate around 1450 but abandoned it a century later, at the time of the Spanish conquest.”

In the meantime, at igpc.com you can find many other issues related to a trip around the world, including the Alderney “Around the World in 80 Days” issues that inspired this project.

You can also explore scores of other topics, as well as articles on many topics at the IGPC section of our StampNewsNow website: <http://www.stampnewsnow.com/IGPC-Inter-GovernmentalStamps.html>

