

# Academic Essay, Subject overview

Subject **Hagia Sophia**

## Architectural Wonders, Hagia Sophia

One of the main tourist attractions in Istanbul and an architectural wonder of the times is the Hagia Sophia, or Ayasofya as it is known in Turkish. It was built during the Byzantine era, on the orders of Emperor Justinian, between 532 CE and 537 CE. The Hagia Sophia was originally a patriarchal Basilica which remained the largest cathedral in the world until 1520 CE. It is best known for its impressive central dome, which had a diameter of 31.24 meters and a height of 55.6 meters. The architecture inside the Hagia Sophia is dominated by beautiful, colorful patterned walls and gold mosaics.

The Hagia Sophia was changed from a church to a mosque by the Ottoman Turks. In the process, they removed the original decorations typical of Christian churches. The Hagia Sophia became adorned with attractive geometrical designs, using expensive colored stones, gold and mother of pearl. Huge discs, covered in calligraphy, were hung from the ceiling.

The change from a Christian church to an Islamic mosque was extremely impressive. Islamic features such as the 'mihrab', 'minbar' and the four 'minarets' outside were added over the following years. Great architects like Mimar Sinan contributed to the maintenance of the mosque in later years. Sinan built two impressive large minarets at the western end of the building and the mausoleum of Selim II to the southeast of the building in 1577 CE. The Hagia Sophia underwent several alterations and additions and remained an Islamic mosque till 1935 CE, after which it was transformed into a museum by the secular Republic of Turkey.

**HAGIA SOPHIA IN NUMBERS**

- THE ROUND DOME IS **55 METERS TALL** AND **31 METERS WIDE**
- THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ORIGINAL CATHEDRAL STARTED IN YEAR **537**
- IT TOOK ONLY **6 YEARS** TO COMPLETE THE BUILDING WORK
- BUILDING THE GREAT DOME REQUIRED TO WORK OF MORE THEN **10,000 MEN**
- IN **1453**, IT WAS TURNED INTO A MOSQUE AFTER SULTAN MEHMED II CONQUERED CONSTANTINOPE
- IT WAS THE WORLD'S LARGEST CATHEDRAL UNTIL THE SEVILLE CATHEDRAL WAS COMPLETED IN **1520**
- IT HAS SERVED AS A CENTER OF PRAYER FOR THE **GREEK ORTHODOX, ROMAN CATHOLIC AND SUNNI MUSLIMS**

Source: Carlson, P. (2002). Architectual Wonders, Hagia Sophia. *The Times*. Retrieved from, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/archives/2002/travel/carlson43.htm>