

Temple of Edfu

On land | Egypt | 237-57 BCE | Grades 3-5

Name _____

Date _____

The Temple of Edfu is so complete that it looks almost the way it did more than 2,000 years ago.

Read the story

The Temple of Edfu was built for Horus, the falcon-headed sky god and protector of Egypt's kings. Work started in 237 BCE and took about 180 years. By then, Egypt was ruled by the Ptolemies, a Greek family who came to power after Alexander the Great. They built in the old Egyptian style to win the people's support.

The walls are covered with carvings. One famous story shows Horus battling his uncle Seth, who sometimes appears as a hippopotamus. Other carvings explain how the temple was built and how festivals were run, almost like an instruction book in stone.

Each year, a statue of the goddess Hathor traveled by boat from her temple at Dendera to visit Horus at Edfu. Their festival lasted about two weeks, with music, feasting and crowds lining the river.

How it ended

The temple stopped being used after Roman emperors banned the old religion around 391 CE. Over the centuries, sand and Nile mud filled it, and a village grew on its roof. That covering actually protected it until it was dug out in the 1800s.

Key words

- pylon: a huge gateway with two tall towers at the front of an Egyptian temple
- relief: a carving that stands out from a flat wall
- shrine: a special place or box holding something holy

Wow facts

- The temple's great gateway, called a pylon, is about 36 meters tall.
- Sand and mud once buried the temple almost to its roof, and houses were built on top of it.
- A live falcon may have been chosen each year to stand for Horus.

Talk about it

1. How could being buried in sand help protect a building?

2. Why might Greek rulers build temples in the Egyptian style?

Try this

Draw a map of Temple of Edfu as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. Which god was the Temple of Edfu built for?

- A. Sobek
- B. Horus
- C. Osiris
- D. Amun

2. Who ruled Egypt when the temple was built?

- A. The Ptolemies
- B. The Romans only
- C. The Inca
- D. The Assyrians

3. What protected the temple for centuries?

- A. A glass roof
- B. Being buried in sand and mud
- C. A moat
- D. Ice

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/temple-of-edfu/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. B. Edfu was built for Horus, the falcon god.
2. A. The Ptolemies, a Greek family, ruled Egypt then.
3. B. Sand and silt filled it and kept it safe until it was dug out.