

St. Basil's

Arguably the most recognized building in Russia, it is an international symbol for the nation and for the city of Moscow. I visited it in 1972 and was more impressed with it than I was with St. Peter's, in Rome. It is beautifully exotic, especially to the eye of a Western traveler—the colors, the shapes. Once seen, the memory lasts forever.

The cathedral was commissioned by Ivan IV (also known as *Ivan the Terrible*) in Moscow to commemorate the capture of the Khanate of Kazan, and built from 1555 to 1561. In 1588, Tsar Fedor Ivanovich had a chapel added on the eastern side above the grave of Basil Fool for Christ, a Russian Orthodox saint after whom the cathedral was popularly named. Saint Basil's is located at the southeast end of Red Square, just across from the Kremlin. Not particularly large, it consists of nine chapels built on a single foundation. The cathedral's design follows that of contemporary tented churches. The interior of the cathedral is a collection of separate chapels, each filled with icons, medieval painted walls, and varying artwork on the top inside of the domes. The feeling is intimate and varied, in contrast to Western cathedrals which usually consist of a massive nave with one artistic style. The initial concept was to build a cluster of chapels, one dedicated to each of the saints on whose feast day the tsar had won a battle, but the construction of a single central tower unifies these spaces into a single cathedral. A popular historical legend says that Ivan had the architect, Postnik Yakovlev, blinded to prevent him from building a more magnificent building for anyone else. In fact, Postnik Yakovlev built a number of churches after Saint Basil's, including one in Kazan.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Basil%27s_Cathedral]

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