

Facts About the Leaning Tower of Pisa

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When people travel to Italy, they often want to visit the Leaning Tower of Pisa, a grand, old, stone tower that looks a bit like a slim wedding cake at risk of falling over.

The Tower of Pisa was constructed to be a freestanding bell tower for the cathedral of Pisa. The tower took hundreds of years to build. The builders broke ground in 1173, and the tower was not completed until 1372.

Work on the tower was stopped for about a hundred years because the town was involved in fighting other towns. This was good luck for the tower, because it allowed time for the soft ground to compress and become firmer.

Scientists have concluded that the tower leans because the ground was too soft and its foundation was too small. The surprising thing is that the problem of the tower tilting

was evident even when the builders were working on the second floor, and yet they added six more levels. You might wonder why they did not abandon the project and start over in a spot that was more solid.

The old builders did alter their plans in order to make the tower lean less. They made the walls on one side of each of the remaining levels taller than the other walls to compensate for the tilt.

Over time, the tilt of the tower increased; and, by 1990, the tower had to close to the public. Scientists came up with a plan to prop the tower up by removing dirt on one side and adding weight to the other. Scientists now say that the tower is safe for another three hundred years.

More people want to visit a leaning tower rather than a perfect one. They love to post comical photos of themselves which look as though they are holding the tower up.