

A New York City landmark¹

The Empire State Building is one of the first things that Americans think of when they hear “New York City” because it has become one of the city’s most famous symbols.

Although it isn’t the world’s tallest building any more, the Empire State Building held that title from 1931 to 1972 and is still one of the tallest buildings in the United States. From the ground floor² to the top of the antenna, the New York landmark is 1,472 feet (or 448.7 meters) tall.

The architect³, William Lamb, designed⁴ the building in the form of a pencil. 3,400 workers were needed to build the Empire State Building. Most of the workers were immigrants from Europe, but there were also hundreds of Mohawk Indians who worked on the project. Although there are stories of how hundreds of people died during work on the building, actually only five people died – a very small number for such a huge and dangerous project. Work began on March 17, 1930. Four and a half floors⁵ could be built a week. By November 13, 1930, they had finished 102 floors but the building wasn’t officially opened until May 31, 1931.



The Empire State Building: like a giant pencil



From the top you can see the skyline and another landmark skyscraper: the Chrysler Building

If you are in New York City, you’ll find the Empire State Building on the corner of Fifth Avenue and West 34th Street. This tourist attraction is open daily, 365 days a year from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. There are two observatories⁶ (on the 88th and 102nd floors), but the outdoor observatory on the 102nd floor is the most popular one. On clear days you can see for 80 miles – as far as the states of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts!

In 1964 floodlights⁷ were added to the skyscraper to illuminate the top of the building at night. The colors are chosen to match special times of the year: For example, at Christmas the lights are red and green, and for Independence Day (July 4th) they’re red, white and blue.

People who haven’t been to New York City still ‘know’ the Empire State Building from the movies. Fans of action movies remember how King Kong climbed to the top of the skyscraper with a beautiful woman in his hand. Love-story fans think about how Cary Grant waited for Deborah Kerr to join him on the 88th-floor observatory in *An Affair to Remember*, or how Tom Hanks met Meg Ryan on the 102nd-floor observatory in *Sleepless in Seattle*.

Even if some Americans aren’t big fans of love stories, the Empire State Building is a New York City – and American – landmark that lies close to their hearts and is always worth a visit⁹.

¹landmark [ˈlændmɑ:k] = a building/structure which is a symbol of a place • ²ground floor [ˌgraʊnd ˈfloː] = Erdgeschoss • ³architect [ˈɑ:kitekt] = sb who says how a building should look and be built • ⁴to design [dɪˈzaɪn] = to give sth a design and create a plan for it • ⁵floor [floː] = one of the levels of a building • ⁶observatory [əbˈzɜ:vətɹi] = a place where you get a nice view of sth • ⁷floodlights [ˈflʌdlaɪts] = Flutlichter • ⁸to illuminate [ɪˈluːmɪneɪt] = to light sth up • ⁹worth a visit [ˌwɜ:θ ə ˈvɪzɪt] = einen Besuch wert

1 Reading comprehension: True or false?

1. The Empire State Building is the tallest building in the United States.
2. William Lamb designed the building in the form of a pencil.
3. A lot of people died when the Empire State Building was built.
4. The building is closed for tourists on Mondays.
5. You can see red, white and blue lights on Independence Day.
6. King Kong climbed to the top of the Empire State Building with a woman in his hand.

True False

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2 Why is the Empire State Building so famous?

Talk about what makes the ESB a famous landmark. Here are some ideas which can help you.

the view • the design • the lights • was world's tallest building • ...

3 Your turn: Landmarks in your region

- a) What landmarks are there in your region? Why are they so well-known?
- b) Where are the most of the visitors from: your region, other parts of Germany, other countries?

4 Internet task: Skyscrapers then and now

Find out about more about skyscrapers:

1. Which city is usually called the 'Home of the Skyscraper'? What is the tallest building there?
2. Find out about the three tallest buildings in the world today:
 - a) Where are they?
 - b) How tall are they?
 - c) Which ones do you find the most interesting? Why?

5 Internet task: Empire State Building lights

At what times of the year is the Empire State Building illuminated with colored floodlights? Which colors are used when? Make a list.

- Christmas (red, green)
- Fourth of July (red, white, blue)
- ...

Lösung: Ex. 1: 1. F, 2. T, 3. F, 4. F, 5. T, 6. T • Ex. 2: Individuelle Antworten, z. B.: The ESB is a landmark because it was the world's tallest building and because it has a great design. • Ex. 3: Individuelle Antworten • Ex. 4: 1. Chicago; the Sears Tower; 2 a) + b) Unterschiedliche Antworten, je nach aktuellen Bauprojekten. Auf absehbare Zeit dürfte das Bury Dubai das höchste Gebäude der Welt bleiben; 2 c) Individuelle Antworten • Ex. 5: Eine Auswahl an Sonderbeleuchtung: Earth Day (green); end of Ramadan (green); Valentine's Day (red); St. Patrick's Day (green); US Open tennis tournament (yellow). Also for special people regularly, e.g. Queen Elizabeth II in 2002 (purple and yellow), Mariah Carey in 2008 (purple, pink, white)