

UNESCO's World Heritage Sites: Names from India

World Heritage is the designation for places on Earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity. Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Galápagos Islands in Ecuador, the Taj Mahal in India, the Grand Canyon in the USA, or the Acropolis in Greece are examples of the 1000+ natural and cultural places inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites List to date.

What is a World Heritage Site?

- A World Heritage Site is a place on earth having a special cultural or physical significance and outstanding universal value to the humanity.
- It may be a building, a city, a complex, a desert, a forest, an island, a lake, a monument, or a mountain.

They have been inscribed on the World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.



Rani Ki Vav, Gujarat

- According to the sites ranked by country, Italy is home to the greatest number of World Heritage Sites with 51 sites, followed by China (48), Spain (44), France (41), Germany (40), Mexico (33), and India (32).

Who lists World Heritage Sites?

- A world Heritage site is listed by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** which is based in Paris, France.

- The International World Heritage Programme administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee establishes the sites to be listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- The **World Heritage Committee** is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage or the World Heritage Convention), defines the use of the World Heritage Fund and allocates financial assistance upon requests from States Parties.
- It is composed of 21 state parties which are elected by the General Assembly of States Parties for a four-year term.
- Currently, India is a member of the World Heritage Committee.

How is a World Heritage Site selected?

- The first step towards the listing is the nomination of a site by the respective government of a country.
- The site should have an Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for World Heritage nomination.
- To determine the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for World Heritage nomination, there are **ten enlisted criteria**.
- The proposed nomination **must satisfy at least one of these ten criteria**.
- The Nomination File is then evaluated by the International Council on Monuments and Sites and the World Conservation Union.
- These bodies then make their recommendations to the World Heritage Committee.
- The Committee meets once per year to determine whether or not to inscribe each nominated property on the World Heritage List and sometimes defers the decision to request more information from the country which nominated the site.

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What are the ten criteria for determining Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)?

(i)	to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
(ii)	to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
(iii)	to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
(iv)	to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
(v)	to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

(vi)	to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria.
(vii)	to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
(viii)	to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
(ix)	to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
(x)	to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

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How does this program helps the listed site and the country?

- When a site is inscribed on the World Heritage List, the resulting prestige often helps raise awareness among citizens and governments for heritage preservation.
- Greater awareness leads to a general rise in the level of the protection and conservation given to heritage properties.
- A country may also receive financial assistance and expert advice from the World Heritage Committee to support activities for the preservation of its sites.
- The site will also get immediate international recognition which boosts the tourism of the country.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the nodal agency for forwarding any request for World Heritage status to any Indian site whether cultural or natural.
- Based on the proposals received from the Central or State Government agencies as well as management Trusts, etc., and after their due scrutiny, the Government forwards the nomination dossiers to the World Heritage Center.
- India now has 35 sites, including 27 cultural properties, seven natural sites and one mixed site, notified as World Heritage Sites.
- The latest entries in 2016 were – (1) Nalanda University (2) Capitol Complex and (3) Khangchendzonga National Park (mixed site).
- The list of places in India which have been granted World Heritage status by UNESCO is given below:

Cultural Sites

Under protection of Archaeologic Survey of India

S.No	Name of Site	State

1.	Ajanta Caves (1983)	Maharashtra
2.	Ellora Caves (1983)	Maharashtra
3.	Agra Fort (1983)	Uttar Pradesh
4.	Taj Mahal (1983)	Uttar Pradesh
5.	Sun Temple, Konarak (1984)	Odisha
6.	Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (1984)	Tamil Nadu
7.	Churches and Convents of Goa (1986)	Goa
8.	Group of Temples, Khajuraho (1986)	Madhya Pradesh
9.	Group of Monuments at Hampi (1986)	Karnataka
10.	Group of Monuments, Fatehpur Sikri (1986)	Uttar Pradesh
11.	Group of Temples, Pattadakal (1987)	Karnataka
12.	Elephanta Caves (1987)	Maharashtra
13.	Great Living Chola temples at Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram and Darasuram (1987 & 2004)	Tamil Nadu
14.	Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (1989)	Madhya Pradesh
15.	Humayun's Tomb, Delhi (1993)	Delhi
16.	Qutb Minar Complex, Delhi (1993)	Delhi
17.	Prehistoric Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka (2003)	Madhya Pradesh
18.	Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park (2004)	Gujarat
19.	Red Fort Complex, Delhi (2007)	Delhi
20.	Hill Forts of Rajasthan (Chittaurgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Jaisalmer and Ranthambhore, Amber and Gagron Forts) (2013) Note: Amber and Gagron Forts are under protection of Rajasthan State Archaeology and Museums	Rajasthan
21.	Rani ki Vav (2014)	Gujarat
22.	Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda University) (2016)	Bihar
23.	Capitol Complex (2016)	Chandigarh

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Under Protection of Ministry of Railways

24.	Mountain Railway of India (Darjeeling, 1999), Nilgiri (2005), Kalka-Shimla (2008)	West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh
25.	Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) (2004)	Maharashtra

Under Protection of Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee

26. Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhgaya (2002) Bihar

Under Protection of Rajasthan State Archaeology and Museums Department

27. Jantar Mantar, Jaipur (2010) Rajasthan

Natural Sites

Under Protection of Ministry of Environment & Forest

28.	Kaziranga National Park (1985)	Assam
29.	Manas Wild Life Sanctuary (1985)	Assam
30.	Keoladeo National Park (1985)	Rajasthan
31.	Sunderban National Park (1987)	West Bengal
32.	Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (1988, 2005)	Uttarakhand
33.	Western Ghats (2012)	Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu
34.	Great Himalayan National Park (2014)	Himachal Pradesh
35.	Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) (2016)* [Mixed site]	Sikkim

