



World Heritage

World Heritage is the designation for places on earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity and as such, have according to the **Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage** been inscribed on the **World Heritage List** by the **World Heritage Committee** to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.



The Origins of World Heritage

On 16 November 1945, the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** (UNESCO) was established “to build peace in the minds of men”. One aspect of this was recognition that our heritage is both precious and fragile. During the First and Second World Wars, the devastation caused by conflict led to the loss of significant amounts of cultural and natural heritage. In addition to the threat of war, other factors such as natural disasters, increasing urbanization, poverty, pollution, mass tourism and simple neglect, continue to affect the world heritage. Part of UNESCO’s work involves encouraging countries to cooperate in heritage conservation.



The **Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage** (commonly known as the **“World Heritage Convention”**) was adopted at the 17th General Conference of UNESCO in Paris in November 1972, in response to growing concern about the state of the world’s cultural and natural heritage. In this unique international treaty countries recognise that the sites located on their

national territory, and which have been inscribed on the **World Heritage List**, constitute a world heritage “for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate”.

In November 1976, four years after the adoption of the Convention, the World Heritage Committee was founded. The first group of twelve sites was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1978.



As of 31 March 2005, 180 out of 191 Member States had ratified the World Heritage Convention since its adoption at the 17th General Conference of UNESCO in 1972.



China's Initial Contribution to the World Heritage List

In December 1985, at the proposal of relevant experts, scholars and members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress ratified the UNESCO "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage", making China one of the States Parties. In 1986, China nominated the Great Wall, the Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Peking Man Site at Zhoukoudian, the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, and Mount Taishan for inclusion on the World Heritage List. After careful examination, the nomination was approved by the World Heritage Committee in 1987.

The inscription of "The Historic Centre of Macao" at the 29th Session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2005 raised the number of World Heritage sites in China to 31.



UNESCO World Heritage Committee

Inscription on the World Heritage List is decided by the **World Heritage Committee** of UNESCO. The **World Heritage Centre** in Paris is secretariat to the 21-member intergovernmental World Heritage Committee.

The World Heritage Committee meets once a year to define the World Heritage by selecting cultural and natural sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The essential functions of the Committee are to: (a) identify, on the basis of nominations submitted by States Parties, cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value which are to be protected under the World Heritage Convention and to list those properties on the World Heritage List; (b) monitor the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, in liaison with the States Parties; decide which properties included in the World

Heritage List are to be inscribed on or removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger; and decide whether a property may be deleted from the World Heritage List; and (c) examine requests for International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund.

The Committee is helped in its duties by the **International Council on Monuments and Sites** (ICOMOS) and the **World Conservation Union** (IUCN). While ICOMOS provides the World Heritage Committee with evaluations of cultural and mixed properties proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List, IUCN provides the same body with technical evaluations of natural heritage properties and, through its worldwide network of specialists, reports on the state of conservation of listed properties. The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) provides expert advice on how to conserve World Heritage sites, as well as training in restoration techniques.





Categories of World Heritage Properties

There are two categories of World Heritage under the World Heritage Convention: cultural and natural. The “Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention” offer the possibility of a “mixed cultural and natural heritage” category if a property satisfies part or whole of the definitions for both cultural and natural heritage. Within the category of cultural property, it is also possible to specify a “cultural landscape”.

Definitions of Cultural Heritage

According to the World Heritage Convention, “Cultural Heritage” is defined under three categories:

1. Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
2. Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;





3. Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view.

Criteria for Selecting World Cultural Heritage

Establishing the World Heritage List presents a major challenge to the international community as to judging one site, ensemble or monument, as opposed to another and in deciding what constitutes the outstanding universal value or World Heritage value of a cultural or natural site. The World Heritage Committee makes its selection based on ten criteria of which six are applied to the cultural heritage monuments, groups of buildings and sites that may be considered part of the World Heritage:

Cultural sites nominated should:

- i.** represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; or
- ii.** 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; or
- iii.** bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; or
- iv.** be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; or
- v.** be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement or land use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; or



- vi.** 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 justify inclusion in the List only in exceptional circumstances and in conjunction with other criteria cultural or natural).
The protection, management, authenticity and integrity of properties are also important considerations.

Application Process for World Heritage

The conservation of World Heritage is a lifelong process and involves a number of important steps. At the beginning of this process countries commit themselves to

World Heritage conservation by becoming States Parties to the Convention and then nominating sites for inclusion in the World Heritage List.

1. A country becomes a State Party by signing the World Heritage Convention and pledging to protect their cultural and natural heritage.
2. A State Party prepares a tentative list of cultural and natural heritage sites on its territory that it considers to be of outstanding universal value.
3. A State Party can present one site each year from its tentative list for nomination to the World Heritage List.
4. The completed nomination dossier is sent to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.
5. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre checks that the nomination is complete and sends it to IUCN and/or ICOMOS for evaluation.

6. Experts visit sites to evaluate their protection and management.
7. ICOMOS and/or IUCN evaluate the nominations using the cultural and natural heritage criteria.
8. ICOMOS and/or IUCN make an evaluation report.
9. The seven members of the World Heritage Bureau review the nominations and evaluations and make recommendations to the Committee.
10. The final decision is taken by the 21-member World Heritage Committee: inscribed – deferred – rejected.

World Heritage List in Danger

Just as the Committee sits to decide on inscriptions of nominations to the World Heritage List, so it also monitors the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Armed conflict and war, earthquakes and other natural disasters, pollution, poaching, uncontrolled urbanization and unchecked tourist development pose major problems to World Heritage sites. Dangers can be “ascertained”, referring to specific and proven imminent threats, or “potential”, when a property is faced with threats which could have negative effects on its World Heritage values.

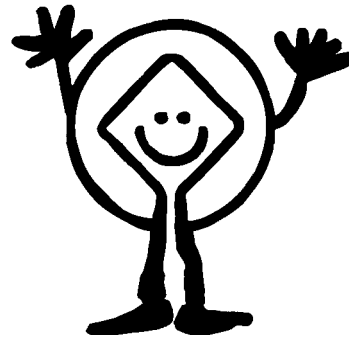
Under the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the World Heritage Committee can inscribe on the List of World Heritage in Danger properties “for the conservation of which major operations are necessary and for which assistance has been requested under [the] Convention”.

Among the responsibilities of listed sites is to monitor their condition and manage their conservation effectively so as to avoid the prospect of consideration for the List of World Heritage in Danger.



World Heritage Emblem

Following inscription, World Heritage sites are entitled to use the UNESCO World Heritage emblem. The World Heritage emblem is round, like the world, a symbol of global protection for the heritage of all humankind. Its central square symbolizes the results of human skill and inspiration, and the circle celebrates the gifts of nature, representing the interdependence of the world's natural and cultural diversity. It is used to identify properties protected by the World Heritage Convention and inscribed on the official World Heritage List, and represents the universal values for which the Convention stands.



Patrimonito

Patrimonito was 'born' during a workshop at the First World Heritage Youth Forum in Bergen, Norway, by a group of Spanish speaking students who wanted to create someone with whom they could identify. Patrimonito means 'small heritage' in Spanish and this character represents a young heritage helper.