

# World Heritage sites in India

## [UPSC Notes]

### What are the World Heritage sites in India?

World Heritage sites can be any place (an island, lake, forest, monument, desert, or building) recognized as having a particular cultural or physical significance by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization formed the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 1972. But, India accepted the convention in November 1977. After the acceptance, India became eligible to make its sites a nominee for the list of World Heritage sites.

As per the 2022 stats, there are 40 World Heritage sites in India. It stands 6th on the list of the countries with the most significant number of World Heritage sites in the world. Also, 49 Indian sites have been added to its tentative list.

### World Heritage sites in India Latest news

Before 2021, India had 38 World Heritage sites, including 7 Natural properties, 30 Cultural properties, and one mixed site. In the 44th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee conducted in 2021, 2 Indian sites were declared as UNESCO World Heritage sites. These are-

- **Ramappan Temple**- The Ramappan Temple ( also known as the Rudreswara Temple), Palampet, Telangana, was recognized as a World Heritage site on **25th July 2021**.
- **Dholavira**- It is a Harappan civilization city found in the Rann of Kutch near the Dholavira village. The historical site was added to the list of World Heritage sites on **27th July 2021**.

### List of World Heritage sites in India

India is a land with 40 World Heritage sites. Ramappa Temple and Dholavira were recently marked as the UNESCO World Heritage site. With the addition of Dholavira to the list of World Heritage sites, India entered the super 40 clubs along with Spain, Italy, Germany, China, and France.

Here is the list of the 40 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India in increasing order of their addition to the UNESCO Mixed World Heritage Sites below-

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India	State	Year
Agra Fort	Uttar Pradesh	1983
Ajanta Caves	Maharastra	1983
Ellora Caves	Maharastra	1983
Taj Mahal	Uttar Pradesh	1983

Sun Temple, Konarak	Orissa	1984
Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram	Tamil Nadu	1984
Keoladeo Ghana National Park	Rajasthan	1985
Manas Wildlife Sanctuary	Assam	1985
Kaziranga National Park	Assam	1985
Sundarbans National Park	West Bengal	1987
Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers	Uttarakhand	1988
Khajuraho Group of Monuments	Madhya Pradesh	1996
Group of Monuments at Hampi	Karnataka	1996
Fatehpur Sikri	Uttar Pradesh	1996
Churches and Convents of Goa	Goa	1996
Group of Monuments at Pattadakal	Karnataka	1997
Great Living Chola Temples	Tamil Nadu	1997
Elephanta Caves	Maharashtra	1997
Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi	Madhya Pradesh	1989
Qutb Minar and its Monuments	Delhi	1993
Humayun's Tomb	Delhi	1993
Mountain Railways of India	Tamil Nadu	1999
Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya	Bihar	2002
Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka	Madhya Pradesh	2003
Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus	Maharashtra	2004
Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park	Gujarat	2004
Red Fort Complex	Delhi	2007
The Jantar Mantar	Rajasthan	2010
Western Ghats	Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala	2012
Hill Forts of Rajasthan	Rajasthan	2013

Rani-Ki-Van	Gujarat	2014
Great Himalayan National Park	Himachal Pradesh	2014
Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda University)	Bihar	2016
The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement	Chandigarh	2016
Khangchendzonga National Park	Sikkim	2016
Historic City of Ahmedabad	Gujarat	2017
Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai	Maharashtra	2018
Jaipur City	Rajasthan	2020
Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple	Telangana	2021
Dholavira	Gujarat	2021

Of these 40 World Heritage Sites in India, 32 are cultural sites, 7 are natural properties and one among them is a mixed site.

## UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites in India

UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites in India are sites that offer natural features, physiographical, and geological formations. The UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites in India are-

### Kaziranga National Park

Kaziranga National Park is an area with minor human interference. It is situated in Assam. It is the home to the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses. Along with it, there are panthers, elephants, bears, and tigers. It was considered one of India's UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites in 1985.

### Keoladeo Ghana National Park

Keoladeo Ghana National Park is the home to many aquatic birds in winter, including the rare Siberian crane. It has 364 bird species. Keoladeo Ghana National Park was marked as one of the UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites in India in 1985.

### Manas Wildlife Sanctuary

Manas Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the foothills of the Himalayas and is composed of tropical forests and alluvial grasslands. It has several endangered species like Indian rhinoceros, Pygmy Hog, Tiger, and Indian elephant. It was marked as the UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site in India in 1985.

## Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers

Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers has meadows of endemic alpine flowers in the western Himalayas. It has endangered and rare animals like blue sheep, snow leopard, Asiatic black bear, and snow leopard. Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers were recognized as the UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site in India in 1988 and 2005, respectively.

## Sundarbans National Park

The Sunderbans National Park is located in the Ganges delta, covering about 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land and water. It has the largest Mangrove forest in the world ( in terms of area). The endangered species of the Sundarbans National Park are aquatic mammals, tigers, reptiles, and birds. It became one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India in 1987.

## UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites in India

The UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites in India are comprised of monuments that include architectural work, inscriptions, and monumental sculptures. It also includes archaeological sites. The UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites in India are-

### Agra Fort

Agra Fort is an important Mughal monument built in the 16th century. It is popularly known as the Laal Qila or the Red Fort of Agra because it is made of red stones. The Agra Fort has an enclosure wall of 2.5 Km. The fort comprises a lot of fairy-tale palaces (Khas Mahal and Jahangir Palace). Along with this, the Agra Fort has two beautiful mosques. Agra Fort became the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in India in 1983.

### Ajanta Caves

Ajanta Caves are Buddhist cave monuments. These rock-cut caves date back to the 2nd and 1st century B.C. These are the rock-cut caves. During the 5th and 6th century A.D. i.e., the Gupta period, many other richly decorated caves were introduced into the original category. These caves depict the artistic influence over the sculptures and paints of Ajanta and other incredible artworks of Buddhist religious art. Ajanta Caves were marked as the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in India in 1983.

### Ellora Caves

Ellora caves extend to more than 2km in Maharashtra. It comprises 34 monasteries and temples that date from 600 to 1000 A.D. Just like the Ajanta Caves, the Ellora Caves also depict unique artistic creations with good use of technology. Its sanctuaries were devoted to Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Ellora Caves were marked as the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in India in 1983.

### Taj Mahal

Taj Mahal is an immense mausoleum built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in Agra. It is made of white marble between 1631 and 1648. This universally admired masterpiece is a symbol of

love that depicts Muslim art in India. Taj Mahal was considered the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in India in 1983.

### **Sun Temple, Konarak**

Sun Temple is located on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. It is believed to be built in India's most famous Brahman sanctuaries, i.e., in the 13th century. It is a monumental representation of God Surya (Sun god in Hindu mythology). There are 24 wheels of the cart that is decorated with symbolic designs. This site was marked as the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in India in 1984.

### **Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram**

Group of Monuments is a group of Sanctuaries carved out of a single rock along the Coromandel coast. Its rathas, mandapas, giant open-air reliefs, and sculptures depicting Shiva's glory are famous. The group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram dated back to the 7th and 8th centuries and became a World Heritage Site in 1986.

### **Qutb Minar and its Monuments**

Qutb Minar is another red sandstone monument in Delhi that was built in the 13th Century. It has a unique tapering design with a diameter of 14.32 m at the base and 2.75 m at its peak. It is surrounded by Alai-Darwaza Gate and the two oldest mosques of north India, including Quwwatu'l-Islam. It was built from the material reused from 20 Brahmin temples. Qutb Minar has considered the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in India in 1993.

### **Mountain Railways of India**

The mountain railways of India comprise three sites- Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Nilgiri Mountain Railway, and Kalka Shimla Railway. These three Mountain Railways of India became the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in India in 1999, 2005, and 2008 respectively.

### **Hill Forts of Rajasthan**

The Hill Forts of Rajasthan is a combination of six grand forts of Jaisalmer, Jaipur, Jhalawar, Sawai Madhopur, Kumbhalgarh, and Chittorgarh. These forts are evident of the Rajput princely power that flourished from the 8th to the 18th century. These forts depict the rich water harvesting structure still in working condition. The Hill Forts of Rajasthan were marked as the UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site in India in 2013.

### **UNESCO Mixed World Heritage Sites in India**

The mixed site has both natural and cultural importance. There is only one UNESCO Mixed World Heritage Site in India. It is Khangchendzonga National Park.

### **Khangchendzonga National Park**

Khangchendzonga National Park is located in the middle of the Himalayan range in Sikkim (North India). There are a large variety of unique glaciers, valleys, lakes, and plains. Along with this, the National park consists of snow-capped mountains. These mountains are entirely

covered with ancient forests. Mount Khangchendzonga, the world's third highest peak, is also situated in the Khangchendzonga National Park.

Apart from their natural importance, the mountains, caves, rivers, etc., hold cultural significance as various mythological stories are linked with them. Sikkim residents worship these objects as different sacred stories and practices are associated with them (as per the Buddhist beliefs).

