

WORLD HERITAGE DAY
(Ministry of Culture)

“Until we feel proud of our heritage, we will not be able to preserve it.”

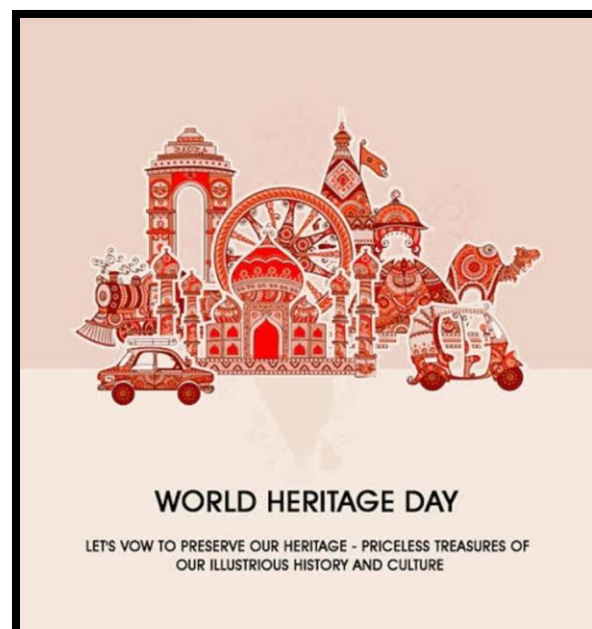
-Prime Minister Narendra Modi

April 18, 2022

Introduction¹

World Heritage is the shared wealth of humankind. Protecting and preserving these valuable assets demand the collective efforts of the international community. Therefore, each year on 18 April, every nation celebrates the ‘World Heritage Day’ to raise public awareness about the diversity of cultural heritage and the efforts that are required to protect and conserve it.

Being a signatory to the [World Heritage Convention](#), India undertakes various initiatives on World Heritage Day (18 April) and World Heritage Week (19-25 November) each year, to celebrate the spirit of the World Heritage Convention. Some of these initiatives include providing free admission at ticketed monuments, publishing books on World Heritage, involving youth and children through painting competitions and heritage walks, among others.



Background²

The [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. In order to ensure this, the Member States of UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention in 1972. 191 State Parties have ratified this World Heritage Convention including India. India formally signed the Convention on November 14, 1977. What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the people of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.

¹<https://www.gdrc.org/heritage/world-heritage-day.html>

²<https://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>

What is a World Heritage Site?³

World Heritage is the designation for places on Earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity and as such, have been inscribed on the World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.⁴

A [World Heritage site](#) is a landmark or area with legal protection by an international convention administered by the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation \(UNESCO\)](#). World Heritage sites are designated by UNESCO for having cultural, historical, scientific or other forms of significance. The sites are judged to contain “cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity”.

As of April 2022, a total of 1,154 World Heritage Sites (897 cultural, 218 natural, and 39 mixed properties) exist across 167 countries; the countries with the most sites are Italy (58), China (56), Germany (51), France (49), Spain (49), India (40), Mexico (35), the United Kingdom (33) and Russia (30).⁵



India's role in the World Heritage Committee

India has been a member of the World Heritage Committee thrice before (1985-91, 2001-07& 2011-15) and is serving a fourth term (2021-25). India was playing an active role to promote ideals and objectives of World Heritage Convention. India was also the Vice-Chair of the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee (2015) held in Bonn, Germany. India has also conducted international workshops on Historic Urban Landscape (2011) and Visual Integrity (2013) to enhance the understanding of the Convention and the Operational Guidelines among different stakeholders. UNESCO Category 2 Centre on World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region at Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun has been established in the year 2013.

Through constant efforts towards protection and promotion of World Heritage properties, India has been a strong proponent of the **Five Cs of the Convention, i.e., Credibility, Conservation, Capacity Building, Communication and Communities.**

³ <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/world-heritage-day-2022/>

⁴ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/faq/19>

⁵ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list>

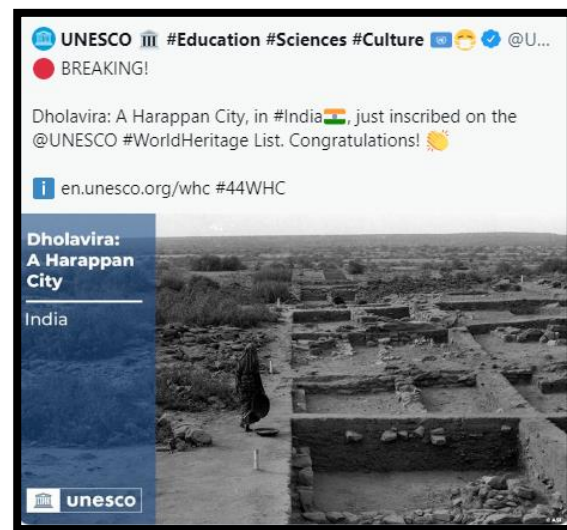
World Heritage Sites in India



India has 40 sites on the World Heritage List with 32 Cultural and 7 Natural Sites and one in the mixed category.⁶ The latest inscriptions in the year 2021 included Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple and Dholavira: A Harappan City (Cultural category).⁷

Out of these 40 World Heritage Sites, 24 are managed by the Archaeological Survey of India, eight by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, two by the Ministry of Railways, two by the Government of Rajasthan, one by Chandigarh U.T. administration, one by Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee, one by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and one by Bombay Municipal Corporation. **For the year 2021-22 dossier namely Santiniketan, India and for the year 2021-23 dossier namely Sacred Ensembles of Hoysalas have been submitted for inscription in the World Heritage List.**⁸

Besides 40 World Heritage Properties, India already has 46 sites on the [UNESCO Tentative list](#) which is a mandatory requirement before a site is finally considered for the nomination. In pursuance of the guidelines of WHC India has successfully completed three cycles of Periodic Reporting, the latest being in the year 2021⁹, during which training was also imparted to the Site Managers across the country. Additionally, India has undertaken an extensive study of “Filling in the gaps” in the tentative list.



⁶ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/in>

⁷ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1739513>
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1738864>

⁸ <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1703267>

⁹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/in>

The ‘UNESCO World Heritage Sites’ in India are as follows:¹⁰

Cultural Sites (32)

1.Agra Fort: Agra Fort, also known as “Agra Quila”, is located in Agra, India. It was tagged as a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1983. The fort is about 2.5 kilometres away from the Taj Mahal. It was designed and built by the great Mughal Emperor Akbar in the year 1565 A.D. Agra was the capital of India in the ancient times. This glorious fort is built alongside Yamuna River. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.

2.Ajanta Caves: The Ajanta Caves in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra state of India are about 30 rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments which were constructed from the 2nd century BCE to about 480 or 650 CE. These paintings are magnum opus of Buddhist religious art, with figures of the Buddha and depictions of the Jataka tales (stories related to the life Lord Buddha). The Ajanta Caves have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.



3.Ellora Caves: Ellora is an archaeological site 29 km north-west of the city of Aurangabad in Maharashtra, built by Kalachuri, Chalukya and Rashtrakuta dynasties during the 6th and 9th centuries. The 34 "caves" are actually structures excavated out of the vertical face of the Charanandri hills. These caves are dedicated to Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions. The Ellora Caves were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.

4.The Taj Mahal: The Taj Mahal is located on the right bank of the Yamuna River in a vast Mughal garden that encompasses nearly 17 hectares, in the Agra District in Uttar Pradesh. It was built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal with construction starting in 1632 AD and completed in 1648 AD. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.



5. Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram: This group of sanctuaries, founded by the Pallava kings, was carved out of rock along the Coromandel coast in the 7th and 8th centuries. It is known especially for its rathas (temples in the form of chariots), mandapas (cave sanctuaries), giant open-air reliefs such as the famous 'Descent of

¹⁰ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/in>

the Ganges', and the temple of Rivage, with thousands of sculptures to the glory of Shiva. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984.

6. Churches and Convents of Goa: The Churches and Convents at Velha (Old) Goa owe their existence to the Portuguese rule in this part of the western coast of India. The most comprehensive group of churches and cathedrals built during 16th to 17th century AD at Old Goa comprise of the following: Se' Cathedral, Church and Convent of St. Francis of Assisi, Chapel of St. Catherine, Basilica of Bom Jesus; Church of Lady of Rosary; Church of St. Augustine. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

7. Fatehpur Sikhri: Fatehpur Sikri was built during the second half of the 16th century by the Emperor Akbar. Fatehpur Sikri (the City of Victory) was the capital of the Mughal Empire for only some 10 years. The complex of monuments and temples includes one of the largest mosques in India, the Jama Masjid. Akbar shifted his residence and court from Agra to Sikri to honour the Sufi Saint Sheikh Salim Chishti, who resided here. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

8. Group of Monuments at Hampi: The austere and grandiose site of Hampi comprise mainly the remnants of the Capital City of Vijayanagara Empire (14th-16th Cent CE), the last great Hindu Kingdom. The property is located in the Tungabhadra basin in Central Karnataka, Bellary District. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

9. Khajuraho Group of Monuments: Khajuraho Temples, in Madhya Pradesh are among the most beautiful medieval monuments in the country. These temples were built by the Chandella rulers between AD 900 and 1130. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

10. Elephanta Caves: The Elephanta Caves (natively known as Gharapurichi Leni, basically Gharapuri) are a network of sculpted caves located on Elephanta Island, or Gharapuri (literally "the city of caves") in (Mumbai) Maharashtra. The island, located in the lap of the Arabian Sea, consists of two groups of caves- **the first is a large group of five Hindu caves, the second, a smaller group of two Buddhist caves.** It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.



11. Great Living Chola Temples: The Great Living Chola Temples were built by kings of the Chola Empire, which stretched over all of south India and the neighbouring islands. The site includes three great 11 and 12th-century Temples: the Brihadisvara Temple at Thanjavur, the Brihadisvara Temple at Gangaikondacholisvaram and the Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

12. Group of Monuments at Pattadakal: Pattadakal, in Karnataka, represents the high point of an eclectic art which, in the **7th and 8th centuries under the Chalukya dynasty**, achieved a harmonious blend of architectural forms from northern and southern India. An impressive series of nine Hindu temples, as well as a Jain sanctuary, can be seen there. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

13. Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi: Sanchi is a hot spot for Buddhist tourist in India. It is situated at Sanchi in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh. The Great Stupa at Sanchi is the oldest stone structure in India and was originally commissioned by the emperor Ashoka the Great in the 3rd century BCE. The stupa is located on a hill whose height is 91m. Sanchi was tagged as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1989.



14. Humayun's Tomb, Delhi: Humayun's Tomb, Delhi is the first of the grand dynastic mausoleums that were to become synonyms of Mughal architecture with the architectural style reaching its zenith 80 years later at the later Taj Mahal. Humayun's Tomb stands within a complex of 21.60 ha. that includes other contemporary, 16th century Mughal garden-tombs such as Nila Gumbad, Isa Khan, Bu Halima, Afsarwala, Barber's Tomb and the complex where the craftsmen employed for the Building of Humayun's Tomb stayed, the Arab Serai. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993.

15. Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi: Qutb Minar was **built in the early 13th century a few kilometres south of Delhi**, the red sandstone tower of **Qutb Minar is 72.5 m high**. Its surrounding contain the Alai-Darwaza Gate, the masterpiece of Indo-Muslim art (built in 1311). Its construction was started by Qutub-ud-din Aibak in 1193 and finished by Iltutmish. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993.

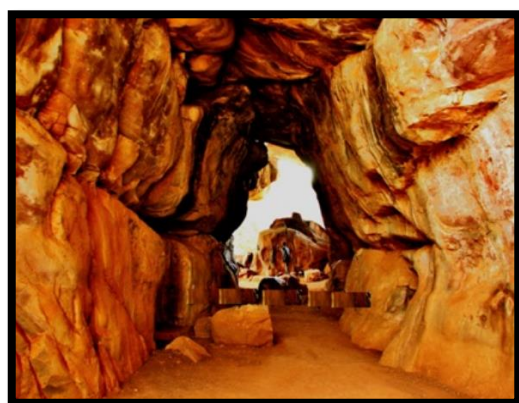
16. Mountain Railways of India (1999): The Mountain Railway of India consists of three railways: the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway **located in the foothills of the Himalayas in West Bengal (Northeast India)**, the Nilgiri Mountain Railways located in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu (South India) and the Kalka Shimla Railway located in the Himalayan foothills of Himachal Pradesh (Northwest India). It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999.



17. Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya: The Mahabodhi Temple Complex is the first temple **built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century B.C.**, and the present temple dates from the 5th–6th centuries. It is one of the earliest Buddhist temples built entirely in brick, still standing, from the late Gupta period and it is considered to have had significant influence in the development of brick architecture over the centuries. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002.



18. Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka: It is a group of "five clusters of rock shelters" and it was recognised in 2003 as a World Heritage Site. The Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka are in the foothills of the Vindhyan Mountains on the southern edge of the central Indian plateau. Within massive sandstone outcrops, above comparatively dense forest, are five clusters of natural rock shelters, displaying paintings that appear to date from the Mesolithic Period right through to the historical period. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003.



19. Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park: A concentration of largely unexcavated archaeological, historic and living cultural heritage properties stand in an impressive landscape which includes prehistoric (chalcolithic) sites, a hill fortress of an early Hindu capital, and remains of the 16th-century capital of the state of Gujarat. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004.

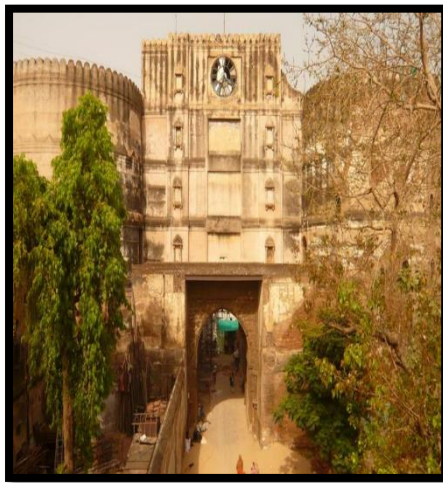
20. Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus): The Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) is located in Mumbai on the Western Part of India touching the shores of the Arabian Sea. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004.

21. The Red Fort Complex: In 1638, Shahjahan transferred his capital from Agra to Delhi and laid the foundations of Shahjahanabad, the seventh city of Delhi. It is enclosed by a rubble stone wall, with bastions, gates and wickets at intervals. Red Fort has fourteen gates, with Lahori Gate as its main gate. Its construction started on 13 May 1638 in the sacred month of Muharam and was completed in the next nine years. Its construction was supervised by Shahjahan himself. It is tagged the world heritage site by the UNESCO in 2007.

22. The Jantar Mantar, Jaipur: The Jantar Mantar, in Jaipur, is an astronomical observation site built in the early 18th century. It includes a set of some 20 main fixed instruments. Designed for the observation of astronomical positions with the naked eye, they embody

several architectural and instrumental innovations. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010.

23. Hill forts of Rajasthan: The serial site, situated in the state of Rajasthan, includes six majestic forts in Chittorgarh; Kumbhalgarh; SawaiMadhopur; Jhalawar; Jaipur, and Jaisalmer. The eclectic architecture of the forts, some up to 20 kilometres in circumference, bears testimony to the power of the Rajput princely states that flourished in the region from the 8th to the 18th centuries. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2013.



24. Rani-ki-Vav (the Queen's Stepwell) at Patan, Gujarat: Rani-ki-Vav, on the banks of the Saraswati River, was initially built as a memorial to a king in the 11th century AD. Stepwells are a distinctive form of subterranean water resource and storage systems on the Indian subcontinent, and have been constructed since the 3rd millennium BC. They evolved over time from what was basically a pit in sandy soil towards elaborate multi-storey works of art and architecture. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014.

25. Historic City of Ahmadabad: The walled city of Ahmadabad, founded by Sultan Ahmad Shah in the 15th century, on the eastern bank of the Sabarmati river, presents a rich architectural heritage from the sultanate period, notably the Bhadra citadel, the walls and gates of the Fort city and numerous mosques and tombs as well as important Hindu and Jain temples of later periods. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2017.

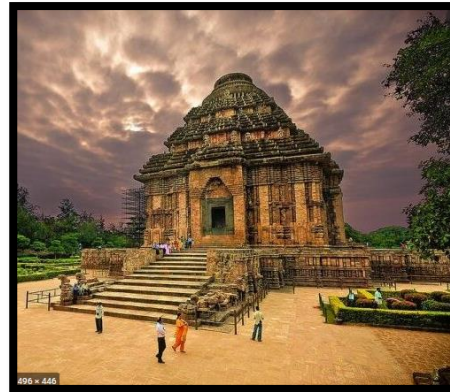
26. Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai: Having become a global trading centre, the city of Mumbai implemented an ambitious urban planning project in the second half of the 19th century. It led to the construction of ensembles of public buildings bordering the Oval Maidan open space, first in the Victorian Neo-Gothic style and then, in the early 20th century, in the Art Deco idiom. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018.



27. Jaipur City, Rajasthan: The walled city of Jaipur, in India's north-western state of Rajasthan was founded in 1727 by Sawai Jai Singh II. Unlike other cities in the region located in hilly terrain, Jaipur was established on the plain and built according to a grid plan interpreted in the light of Vedic architecture. The streets feature continuous colonnaded businesses that intersect in the centre, creating large public squares called chaupars. Markets, shops, residences and temples built along the main streets have uniform facades. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2019.

28. Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple, Telangana: Rudreshwara, popularly known as Ramappa Temple, is located in the village of Palampet approximately 200 km north-east of Hyderabad, in the State of Telangana. It is the main Shiva temple in a walled complex built during the Kakatiyan period (1123–1323 CE) under rulers Rudradeva and Recherla Rudra. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2021.

29. The Nalanda Mahavihara: The Nalanda Mahavihara site is in the State of Bihar, in north-eastern India. It comprises the archaeological remains of a monastic and scholastic institution dating from the 3rd century BCE to the 13th century CE. It includes stupas, shrines, viharas (residential and educational buildings) and important art works in stucco, stone and metal. Nalanda stands out as the most ancient university of the Indian Subcontinent. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016.



30. Sun Temple: On the shores of the Bay of Bengal, bathed in the rays of the rising sun, the temple at Konarak is a monumental representation of the sun god Surya's chariot; its 24 wheels are decorated with symbolic designs and it is led by a team of six horses. Built in the 13th century, it is one of India's most famous Brahman sanctuaries. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984.

31. The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier: Chosen from the work of Le Corbusier, the 17 sites comprising this transnational serial property are spread over seven countries and are a testimonial to the invention of a new architectural language that made a break with the past. They were built over a period of a half-century, in the course of what Le Corbusier described as “patient research”. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016.

32. Dholavira: a Harappan City - The ancient city of Dholavira, the southern centre of the Harappan Civilization, is sited on the arid island of Khadir in the State of Gujarat. Occupied between ca. 3000-1500 BCE, the archaeological site, one of the best preserved urban settlements from the period in Southeast Asia, comprises a fortified city and a cemetery. India got Dholavira inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List in the year 2021.

Natural Sites (Seven)

33. Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area: It is located in the Kullu District of Himachal Pradesh, India. GHNP was formally declared a National Park in 1999. The Great Himalayan National Park is a habitat to numerous flora and more than 376 fauna species, including approximately 32 mammals, 180 birds, three reptiles, 10 amphibians, 12 annelids, 18 mollusks and 126 insects. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014.

34. Kaziranga National Park: Kaziranga is located within two districts in Assam -the Kaliabor subdivision of Nagaon district and the Bokakhat subdivision of Golaghat district. Kaziranga covers an area of 378 km² and hosts two-thirds of the world's Great One-horned rhinoceros population. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.



35. Keoladeo National Park: Formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, the Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan lies between two of India's most historic cities, Agra and Jaipur. The park is home to over 370 species of birds and animals such as the basking python, painted storks, deer, nilgai and more. It was declared a national park in 1982 and later tagged as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985.

36. Manas Wildlife Sanctuary: It is located at the base of foothills of the **Bhutan-Himalayas** in the state of Assam. It is famous for unique biodiversity and landscape. Manas is the first reserve included in the network of tiger reserve under Project tiger in 1973. The Manas Wildlife Sanctuary was tagged as World Heritage Site in 1985. In 1989, Manas acquired the status of a Biosphere reserve. It extends over an area of 2837 Sq. Km from Sankosh River in the west to Dhansiri River in the east. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.

37. Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Park: The Nanda Devi National Park, established in 1982, is situated around the peak of Nanda Devi (7816 m) in the state of Uttarakhand. It was inscribed a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988. The Park was established as Sanjay Gandhi National Park by Notification in 1982 but was later renamed Nanda Devi National Park. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988.



38. Sundarbans National Park: Sundarban, the largest delta in the world, consists of 10,200 sq km of Mangrove Forest, spread over India and Bangladesh. The part of the forest within Indian Territory is called Sundarbans National Park and is in the southern part of West Bengal. The Sundarbans cover an area of 38,500 sq km, of which about one-third is covered by water/marsh. The forest has a large number of Sundari trees. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

39. Western Ghats: The Western Ghats is spread across an area from the mouth of the river Tapi to the cape of Kanyakumari for a distance of 1600 kms. Its average height is 1200 metres. It is a rift side in the peninsular plateau. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012.

Mixed Sites (1)

40. Khangchendzonga National Park: The park is also known as Kanchenjunga Biosphere Reserve. It is a national park and a biosphere reserve located in Sikkim. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list in July 2016, becoming the first "Mixed Heritage" site of India. It was included in the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme. It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006.

References:

- <https://www.icomos.org/en/focus/18-april-international-day-for-monuments-and-sites>
- <https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?23251/Recognition+of+Indias+world+heritage+Inscription+of+our+sites+on+the+World+Heritage+list>
- <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/32-world-heritage-sites-in-india-identified-by-unesco-1461932607-1>
- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1739513>
- <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/&order=country#alpha>
- <https://whc.unesco.org/>
- <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

Further Readings:

- <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2020-06/Improving-HeritageManagement-in-India.pdf>
- <https://www.indiaculture.nic.in/world-heritage>
- <https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/191900>
- <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2366/>
- https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/World_Heritage_Site

AG/HP/RC/KM/AK