

## World Heritage Day (April 18)

### *Making India a Hub of Heritage Tourism* (Ministry of Culture)

April 19, 2023

*“The country has taken pride in its heritage and has called for freedom from the slave mentality in the ‘Amrit Kaal’ of independence.”*

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi

World Heritage Day or International Day for Monuments and Sites (IDMS) is celebrated every year on 18<sup>th</sup> April to preserve human heritage and to recognize all the efforts of relevant organisations. It was established by the [International Council on Monuments and Sites \(ICOMOS\)](#) in 1982. Later in 1983 during the 22<sup>nd</sup> the General Conference, it was adopted by UNESCO.<sup>1</sup>

Each year, on this occasion, ICOMOS proposes a theme for activities to be organized by its members, ICOMOS National and International Scientific Committees, Working Groups and partners, and anyone who wants to join in marking the Day.<sup>2</sup>

### Theme for 2023 World Heritage Day

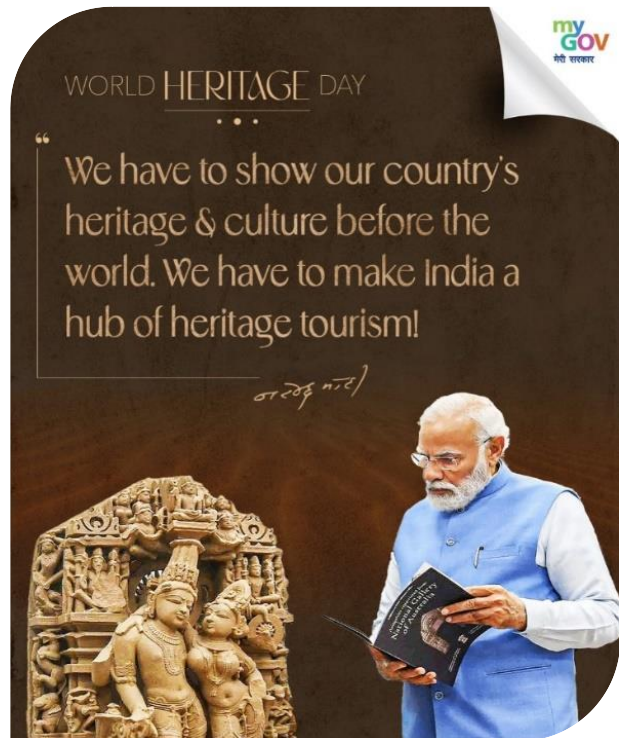
In 2023, the day is celebrated under the theme, **“Heritage Changes”**.<sup>3</sup> The theme ‘offers the opportunity to respond to questions regarding learning about traditional ways of knowing and knowledge systems in relation to climate action, and how to use a cultural heritage focus to support equitable protection of vulnerable communities through climate action, while responding to the UN Decade of Action.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1917669>

<sup>2</sup> [World Heritage Day – Geneva Environment Network](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.icomos.org/en/focus/18-april-international-day-for-monuments-and-sites/123025-idms-2023-events>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1917669>



## Aim of World Heritage Day<sup>5</sup>

- To encourage local communities and individuals throughout the world to consider the importance of cultural heritage to their lives, identities and communities.
- To promote awareness of its diversity and vulnerability and the efforts required to protect and conserve it.

## World Heritage Sites

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 (OUV)”.

As of April 2023, a total of 1,157 World Heritage Sites (900 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).<sup>6</sup>

## World Heritage Sites in India



India has been working in close co-operation with other International agencies like ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) and ICCROM (International Centre for the

<sup>5</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1164/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/world-heritage-day/>

study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) since 1977.<sup>7</sup> In July, 2022, India was voted into UNESCO's prestigious Inter-Governmental Committee on ICH, which has 24 members (out of 180 Member States).<sup>8</sup>

India is a land of **40 world heritage sites**, out of which 32 are cultural, 7 are natural sites and 1 mixed category.<sup>9</sup> Out of these, 24 monuments and archaeological sites are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India.<sup>10</sup>

Out of 40 World Heritage Inscriptions, **10 have been done in the last 9 years** with a wide range of diversity from across India. **India's Tentative List has increased by 37**, from 15 in 2014 to 52 in 2022.<sup>11</sup>

The first site listed as a World Heritage site in India was **Agra Fort** (1983). The same year, **Taj Mahal** (1983), **Ellora Caves** (1983) and **Ajanta Caves** (1983) were inscribed on the list by the **World Heritage Committee**.

Recently, in the list of World Heritage of 2021, the beautiful architectural marvel "**Ramappa Temple**" built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Kakatiya style, and the ancient Harappan city of Dholavira (Gujarat) were included.

Apart from India, only Italy, Spain, Germany, China and France have 40 or more World Heritage sites.<sup>12</sup> This provides huge potential to India to attract a large number of foreign travellers to India. Considering that **52** more sites are on India's World Heritage Tentative list, India's heritage monuments will be a game changer in the tourism sector.

### **Government's Initiatives to promote India's Rich Cultural Heritage**

The Government of India has taken several steps to preserve ancient civilisational ethos, protect cultural and spiritual heritage and propagate Indian Knowledge systems and traditions across the world.

#### **Recovery of Stolen Antiquities**

- Bearing testament to the government's steadfast commitment in promoting Indian culture and heritage, more than 230 antiquities have been repatriated. Of the total 244 invaluable antiquities of Indian origin that have been brought back to India from abroad, **231 have been brought back after 2014**. Close to



<sup>7</sup> <https://asi.nic.in/world-heritage-sites/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1883396>

<sup>9</sup> <https://asi.nic.in/world-heritage-sites/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseSelfframePage.aspx?PRID=1817893#:~:text=The%20theme%20for%20World%20Heritage,is%20%E2%80%9Cheritage%20and%20Climate%E2%80%9D.>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1917669>

<sup>12</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1739513>

72 antiquities are in the process of being repatriated from various countries including the USA, UK, Singapore and Australia.<sup>13</sup>



### Preserving the past for the future with ‘Adopt a Heritage’ Scheme

- **Adopt a Heritage** scheme is aimed at upgrading amenities at the sites. Public or Private sector companies can put forth a proposal for adopting sites. Such companies are called Monument Mitras. As of now, 27 MoUs have been signed with Ministry of Tourism, ASI and Monument Mitras for active collaboration in upgrading and developing amenities at tourist heritage sites.

### Preserving Himalayan and Buddhist Cultural Heritage<sup>14</sup>

- The ‘**Scheme of Financial Assistance for the Preservation and Development of Cultural Heritage of the Himalayas**’ provides 10 lakh per year to schools or colleges to study and research on Himalayan cultural heritage. The scheme also supports preservation of old manuscripts, literature, art and crafts; and documentation of music and dance of the region.
- Another scheme called ‘**Scheme of Financial Assistance for the Development of Buddhist/ Tibetan Culture and Art**’ provides financial assistance to the voluntary Buddhist or Tibetan organisations engaged in the propagation and scientific development of Buddhist or Tibetan culture, tradition and research in related fields.
- The government is also developing Buddhist Circuits with world-class infrastructure to ensure a wholesome spiritual experience for devotees. In November 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **Kushinagar International Airport in Uttar Pradesh** to facilitate easy access to the Mahaparinirvana Temple, where Lord Buddha attained nirvana. The Ministry of Tourism is also developing the Buddhist circuit around Kushinagar Sravasti and Kapilvastu as a part of the **SWADESH Darshan scheme**. Overall, several projects for the development of Buddhist circuits in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh are already nearing completion<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1917669>

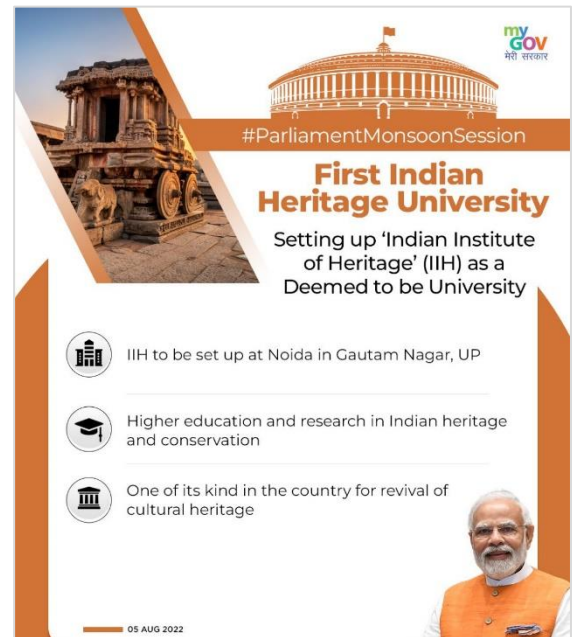
<sup>14</sup> <https://newsonair.com/2022/04/18/world-heritage-day-governments-efforts-to-promote-indias-rich-cultural-heritage/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1917669>

- In May 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for a technologically-advanced **India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage in Lumbini** at a cost of 100 crore at the Lord Buddha's birthplace.<sup>16</sup>

### First Indian Heritage University

- The Government of India decided to set up '**Indian Institute of Heritage**' (IIH) as a Deemed to be University as per UGC (Institutions deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2019 at Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.<sup>17</sup>
- It is expected to be one of its kind in the country providing higher education and research in the fields of Indian heritage and conservation and Government have no plan to create more such institutions in the country.



### Building Monuments of National Importance<sup>18</sup>

- The government of India has built many monuments of national Importance across the country in last couple of years, setting new avenues for Indian heritage and its popularity across the globe. The government built the **National War Memorial in New Delhi**, the **Statue of Unity in Gujarat**, **APJ Abdul Kalam memorial in Rameshwaram**, among others.
- Similarly, the places associated with **Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Shyamji Krishna Varma** have been given grandeur.
- **Adivasi museums** are also being built across the country to bring forth the glorious history of Indian tribal society.

### Revival and Redevelopment of Heritage Sites<sup>19</sup>

- Continuous focus has been given on the revival and redevelopment of heritage sites across India. Numerous such examples are like the **Kashi Vishwanath Corridor** and various other projects in Varanasi which have transformed the by lanes, ghats, and temple complexes in the city. This is the first transformational project in Kashi in close to 250 years since Ahilyabai Holkar in 1777.
- The **900 km Char Dham road project** which will provide seamless all weather road connectivity to the four holy Dhams of Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri and Gangotri.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1917669>

<sup>17</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1848399>

<sup>18</sup> <https://newsonair.com/2022/04/18/world-heritage-day-governments-efforts-to-promote-indias-rich-cultural-heritage/>

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- The **Somnath Temple reconstruction project**, the **Ujjain Mahakal Corridor** and the ongoing **Ram Mandir construction in Ayodhya**, are other examples of redeveloping spiritual heritage

### Must See Portal

- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has created an online portal for Indian Heritage Sites/Monuments called “**Must See portal**”, which features outstanding monuments under its protection. It also launched an e-ticketing facility that relieved ASI personnel from dispensing tickets to concentrate on the security and maintenance of monuments.

On this World Heritage Day, as the world celebrates its efforts to salvage the rich cultural heritage inherited from ancestors, India is also proud of its efforts on that front. The government is taking a ‘Whole of Government’ approach to preserve Indian culture and heritage.

Several central ministries like the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and various initiatives like Namami Gange and Swachh Bharat etc all are converging together for holistic outcomes with respect to protecting Indian heritage.

From added impetus on preservation of monuments to establishing world class institutes that train our citizens on conservation strategies, the government has done a slew of initiatives to maintain our cultural assets.

To know more about the World Heritage Sites located in India, [Click Here](#).

### References

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