

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the premier institution in India for archaeological research. It is an organization frequently seen in the news for its various activities and discoveries. In this article, you can learn about the major activities, functions and role of the ASI, and also about the ASI circles in India. This is important for the IAS exam art and culture portion, as also for the [IAS Prelims](#) exam government departments and ministries segment.

What is the Archaeological Survey of India?

The Archaeological Survey of India or ASI is an attached agency of the Ministry of Culture of the Government of India.

- It engages in archaeological research and conservation, and protection and preservation of ancient monuments and archaeological sites in the country.
- ASI regulates all archaeological activities conducted in the country through the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act), 1958.
- It also regulates the Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.
- It was founded in 1861 by a British Army engineer who took a keen interest in archaeology in India, James Cunningham.
 - Archaeological pursuits started much earlier, in the 18th century, when Sir William Jones formed the Asiatic Society in 1784 together with a group of antiquarians.
 - Alexander Cunningham is also known as the 'Father of Indian Archaeology'.
- It is a **statutory body** after independence, under the AMASR Act, 1958.
- The ASI is headed by a Director-General and is headquartered in New Delhi.
- ASI has more than 3500 protected monuments and archaeology sites of National Importance that it protects and preserves.
- ASI publications:
 - Ancient India
 - Epigraphia Indica
 - Indian Archaeology: A Review

Archaeological Survey of India Activities

The ASI performs and regulates all activities related to archaeological research and excavation in India. It also preserves and maintains historical monuments and sites.

- It conducts archaeological excavations and explorations.
- It maintains, conserves and preserves protected monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance.
- It engages in the chemical protection of monuments and antiquarian remains.
- It performs the architectural survey of monuments.
- It conducts epigraphical and numismatic studies.
- It sets up site museums.
- It gives training in archaeology.
- It publishes material in archaeology.
- It also conducts archaeological expeditions outside India.

- It engages in horticultural operations in and around archaeological sites.
- It regulates the AMASR Act and the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972, among others.

The ASI has specialised wings for its activities such as excavation branches, prehistory branch, building survey project, epigraphy branches, temple survey projects, science branch and an underwater archaeology wing. A dedicated Museums Branch maintains about 50 museums spread across the country.

ASI Circles

The ASI has about 30 circles into which it has divided the whole country for the maintenance of monuments and carrying out archaeological work. The list of ASI circles (as of April 2021) are given in the table below.

Agra	Aizawl	Amravati
Aurangabad	Bangalore	Bhopal
Bhubaneswar	Chandigarh	Chennai
Dehradun	Delhi	Dharwad
Goa	Guwahati	Hampi
Hyderabad	Jabalpur	Jaipur
Jhansi	Jodhpur	Kolkata
Lucknow	Mumbai	Meerut
Nagpur	Patna	Raipur
Rajganj	Rajkot	Ranchi
Sarnath	Shimla	Srinagar
Thiruchirapalli	Thrissur	Vadodara

There is a mini circle at Leh, Ladakh.
