

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

There are 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India. Santiniketan, established by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, becomes the 41st site to be declared a world heritage site in India in September 2023. The UNESCO also included the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas in Karnataka in the list in September 2023. This takes the total number of UNESCO World Heritage sites in India to 42.

Latest Update about UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India:

- In September 2023, 12th-century Hoysala Temples of Karnataka were included in the list by UNESCO.
- In September 2023, Santiniketan, West Bengal, was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO.
- 27th July 2021 - [Dholavira, Harappan City in the Rann of Kutchh](#), becomes India's 40th UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- 25th July 2021 - UNESCO has inscribed the [Rudreswara Temple \(Ramappa Temple\) at Palampet, Warangal, Telangana](#) on the List of World Heritage Sites.

Note: There are 50 sites of India on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List.

Important for the static portion of the [IAS Exam](#), UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India should be known to UPSC aspirants.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

UNESCO World Heritage Site is a place that is recognized by the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) as of distinctive cultural or physical importance which is considered of outstanding value to humanity. UNESCO strives to encourage the conservation, identification, and maintenance of natural and cultural heritage around the world. This is exemplified by the Convention regarding the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, accepted by UNESCO in 1972.

The World Heritage sites come under static GK in the UPSC exam. Candidates preparing for the UPSC exam or any other competitive exam can check more articles on [Static Gk topics](#) on the linked page.

UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites

UNESCO Natural World Heritage sites are those sites with distinctive cultural facets such as geological formations, physical, biological, and cultural landscapes.

The list of UNESCO Natural World Heritage sites in India is given below:

Natural World Heritage Site	State	Year of Notification
Kaziranga National Park	Assam	1985
Keoladeo Ghana National Park	Rajasthan	1985
Manas Wildlife Sanctuary	Assam	1985
Nanda Devi National Park and Valley of Flowers	Uttarakhand	1988, 2005
Sundarbans National Park	West Bengal	1987
Western Ghats	Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala	2012
Great Himalayan National Park	Himachal Pradesh	2014

UNESCO also maintains a list of [World Heritage Sites in Danger](#). For more on the same, click on the link.

UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites

UNESCO Cultural World Heritage sites are those sites with unique cultural facets such as Paintings, monuments, architecture, etc.

The list of UNESCO Cultural World Heritage sites in India is given below:

Cultural World Heritage Site	State	Year of Notification
Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas	Karnataka	2023
Santiniketan	West Bengal	2023
Dholavira	Gujarat	2021

Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple	Telangana	2021
The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement	Chandigarh	2016
Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai	Maharashtra	2018
Historic City of Ahmedabad	Gujarat	2017
Jaipur City	Rajasthan	2020
Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda University)	Bihar	2016
Rani-Ki-Van	Gujarat	2014
Hill Forts of Rajasthan	Rajasthan	2013
The Jantar Mantar	Rajasthan	2010
Red Fort Complex	Delhi	2007
Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park	Gujarat	2004
Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus	Maharashtra	2004
Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka	Madhya Pradesh	2003
Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya	Bihar	2002
Mountain Railways of India	Tamil Nadu	1999
Humayun's Tomb, Delhi	Delhi	1993
Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi	Delhi	1993
Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi	Madhya Pradesh	1989
Elephanta Caves	Maharashtra	1987
Great Living Chola Temples	Tamil Nadu	1987
Group of Monuments at Pattadakal	Karnataka	1987

Churches and Convents of Goa	Goa	1986
Fatehpur Sikri	Uttar Pradesh	1986
Group of Monuments at Hampi	Karnataka	1986
Khajuraho Group of Monuments	Madhya Pradesh	1986
Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram	Tamil Nadu	1984
Sun Temple, Konarak	Orissa	1984
Agra Fort	Uttar Pradesh	1983
Ajanta Caves	Maharashtra	1983
Ellora Caves	Maharashtra	1983
Taj Mahal	Uttar Pradesh	1983

UNESCO Mixed World Heritage Sites

A mixed site comprises components of both natural and cultural importance:

Mixed World Heritage Site	State	Year of Notification
Khangchendzonga National Park	Sikkim	2016

Important Facts about UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

1. Agra Fort
 - It is the 16th Century Mughal Monument called the Red Fort of Agra.
 - Jahangir Palace and the Khas Mahal built by [Shah Jahan](#) are part of Agra Fort.
2. Ajanta Caves
 - These are rock-cut caves.
 - There are a total of 29 caves.
3. Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda
 - Nalanda is the most ancient university in India.
 - The archaeological remains of a monastic and scholastic institution dating from the 3rd century BCE to the 13th century CE are found here.
4. Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi
 - Monolithic pillars, palaces, temples and monasteries are part of it.

- It is considered the oldest Buddhist Sanctuary in existence.
- 5. Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park
 - Unexcavated archaeological, historic and living cultural heritage properties are a part of it.
 - Structures built between the 8th and 14th centuries like fortifications, palaces, religious buildings, residential precincts, agricultural structures and water installations; are found here.
- 6. Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus
 - The former name of CST was Victoria Terminus.
 - It represents the Victorian Gothic Revival architecture in India.
 - British architect F. W. Stevens built and designed it.
- 7. Churches and Convents of Goa
 - The churches of the city which was the Portuguese capital signifies the evangelization of Asia.
- 8. Elephanta Caves
 - Gharapuri Caves is the local name of Elephanta Caves.
 - There are seven caves.
- 9. Ellora Caves
 - There are 34 monasteries and temples.
- 10. Fatehpur Sikri
 - [Mughal Emperor Akbar](#) built it.
 - It had been a Mughal capital for 10 years.
 - Jama Masjid is a part of it.
- 11. Great Living Chola Temples
 - It includes temples like the the Brihadisvara Temple at Thanjavur, the Brihadisvara Temple at Gangaikondacholisvaram and the Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram.
- 12. Group of Monuments at Hampi
 - Hampi has served as the last capital of the [Vijayanagar Empire](#).
- 13. Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram
 - The group is best known for Rathas, Mandapas, Giant open-air reliefs, etc.
- 14. Group of Monuments at Pattadakal
 - The monuments represent the Chalukyan art.
 - Hindu temples and Jain sanctuary are a part of it.
- 15. Hill Forts of Rajasthan
 - Chittorgarh fort; Kumbhalgarh fort; Sawai Madhopur fort; Jhalawar fort; Jaipur fort, and Jaisalmer fort are part of these hill forts.
- 16. Historic City of Ahmadabad
 - Sultan Ahmad Shah founded the walled city in the 15th Century.
- 17. Humayun's Tomb
 - It was built in 1570.

- It stands as the first garden-tomb in the Indian subcontinent.
18. Jaipur City
- Sawai Jai Singh-II founded the city in 1727.
19. Khajuraho Group of Monuments
- It contains Chandely Dynasty-built temples.
 - Hinduism and Jainism are two religions to which temples are dedicated.
20. Mahabodhi Temple Complex
- It is one of the four holy sites related to the Buddha's life.
21. Mountain Railways of India
- Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Nilgiri Mountain Railway, and Kalka Shimla Railway are three railways included in this site.
22. Qutb Minar and its Monuments
- Qutb Minar was built in the 13th century.
 - It is the highest tower in India.
23. Rani-ki-Vav (the Queen's Stepwell)
- It stands on the banks of Saraswati River.
 - It is built in Maru-Gurjara architectural style.
24. Red Fort Complex
- It was built as the palace fort of Shah Jahan's capital Shah Jahanabad.
 - Salimgarh Fort is a part of this complex.
25. Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka
- Dr V. S. Wakankar had discovered the Bhimbetka Caves in 1958.
26. Sun Temple
- King Narasimhadeva I built this in the 13th Century.
 - It represents the Kalinga architecture.
27. Taj Mahal
- Mughal Emperor built Taj Mahal.
 - It stands on the Yamuna river banks.
28. The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement
- There are 17 sites on three continents.
 - Complexe du Capitole in Chandigarh, India is a part of this.
29. The Jantar Mantar
- Rajput king Sawai Jai Singh II built the astronomical observation site.
30. Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai
- Victorian Neo-Gothic public buildings and Art Deco in Mumbai buildings are part of this collection.
31. Great Himalayan National Park-Conservation Area
- High alpine peaks, alpine meadows and riverine forests in this conservation area in Himachal Pradesh.
32. Kaziranga National Park

- It is located in Golaghat and Nagaon, in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam in northeast India.
 - Read more about the [Kaziranga National Park](#) in the linked article.
33. Keoladeo National Park
- Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary was the former name of this National Park.
 - Siberian Crane is one of those aquatic birds that make this park a wintering area.
34. Manas Wildlife Sanctuary
- It is the first reserve included in the network of tiger reserves under [Project Tiger](#) in 1973.
 - It is also a biosphere reserve.
35. Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks
- Nanda Devi West is the second-highest mountain in India.
36. Sundarbans National Park
- It forms the part of the Gangetic Delta.
37. Western Ghats
- These are one of the biodiversity hotspots.
 - Get comprehensive notes on [Western Ghats](#) in the linked article.
38. Khangchendzonga National Park
- Mount Khangchendzonga is the world's third-highest peak.
39. Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple
- Built in the 13th century CE, the temple is a Kakatiyan marvel made of sandstone.
 - The structure has decorated beams and pillars of carved granite and dolerite with a distinctive and pyramidal Vimana made of lightweight porous bricks, so-called 'floating bricks', which reduced the weight of the roof structures.
40. Dholavira
- Discovered by archaeologist Jagat Pati Joshi in 1968, Dholavira gets its name from the village in Kutch district of Gujarat.
 - In ancient India, it has remained a commercial and manufacturing hub for about 1,500 years till its decline by 1500 BC.
 - It was Indus Valley Civilization's fifth-largest metropolis after Mohen-jo-Daro, Ganweriwala, Harappa and Rakhigarhi.
41. Santiniketan
- Located in West Bengal's Birbhum district, Santiniketan, meaning "abode of peace," began its development in 1901 and is where Rabindranath Tagore laid the foundation for Visva-Bharati University.
 - It was established by Rabindranath Tagore.
 - Santiniketan has immense significance in human values, architectural and technological developments, monumental arts, town planning, and landscape design.
 - Efforts to get Santiniketan listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site date back to 2010, with the latest nomination proposal initiated in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has been involved in restoring various structures in Santiniketan in recent years.
42. Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas
- The temples are located in Belur, Halebidu and Somanathapura in the Hassan and Mysuru districts of Karnataka.
 - The temples, often described as ‘poetry carved in stone’ were recommended to the list by India’s Culture Ministry in 2022-23.
 - The temples included in the ensemble are:
 - Channakeshava Temple, Belur, Hassan district (Commissioned by King Vishnuvardhana, dedicated to God Vishnu)
 - Hoysalesvara Temple, Halebidu, Hassan district (Commissioned by King Vishnuvardhana, dedicated to God Shiva)
 - Kesava Temple, Somanathapura, Mysuru district (Consecrated by Somanatha Dandanayaka, a general of the Hoysala King Narasimha III, dedicated to God Vishnu)

Frequently Asked Questions related to UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

Q. Which city of India has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site recently?

Dholavira of Gujarat, the first site of ancient [Indus Valley Civilization](#) is the latest addition to the list from India, it was inscribed in July 2021.

Q. How many World Heritage Sites are there in India in 2023?

There are 42 World Heritage Sites located in India. These include 34 cultural sites, 7 natural sites, and 1 mixed-criteria site.

Q. How many intangible cultural heritage are there in India?

The National ICH List has more than 100 elements. It also includes the 13 elements of India that have already been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. National ICH List is an attempt to recognize the diversity of Indian culture embedded in its intangible heritage. Following UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, this list has been classified into five broad domains in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested.

Q. Which is the first world heritage site in India?

Agra Fort, also known as “Laal 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 far from the Taj Mahal.

Q. Which country has the highest World Heritage sites?

China and Italy have the highest number of World Heritage Sites, both with 55 entries.

Q. Which state in India has the highest UNESCO World Heritage sites?

Currently, Maharashtra has a total of five UNESCO World Heritage Sites and this number is highest among all states and UTs in India. The sites include Ajanta Caves, Ellora Caves, Elephanta Caves, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, and the Victorian Gothic and Art Deco buildings of South Mumbai.