

WORLD HERITAGE

2014-2015



In the Upper Middle Rhine Valley, Germany, the fabled river winds for 65 km past enchanting medieval villages, steep stone cliffs and terraced hillside vineyards. Stone toll gates and the remains of dozens of castles and fortresses stand guard on the meanders. For centuries, the Rhine has served as an essential trade route between northern and southern Europe and as an inspiration for artists and poets.

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The Earthen Architecture Conservation Programme works toward conserving and revitalizing earthen architecture, which is threatened by natural disasters and industrialization. Currently, some one hundred properties on the World Heritage List are partially or totally built with earth.

World Heritage sites are inscribed on the List on the basis of their merits as forming a significant contribution to the cultural and natural heritage of the world. Their outstanding universal value is considered to go beyond national boundaries and to be of importance for future generations.

Conserving the diversity of life on Earth is critical to global human welfare. With the support of the World Heritage Convention, the most important biodiversity sites receive international recognition as well as technical and financial assistance to deal with threats such as agricultural encroachment, alien species and poaching.

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE, ADOPTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION, AT ITS GENERAL CONFERENCE, PARIS, 16 NOVEMBER 1972.

... parts of the cultural or natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of humankind as a whole.

... [with] the magnitude and gravity of the new dangers threatening... [the world's heritage], it is incumbent on the international community as a whole to participate in the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value...



The Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System includes colourful, diverse coral formations, stolls, mangrove forests and coastal lagoons rich in marine life. The second largest reef complex in the world, the site is home to 500 species of fish. Many endangered species, including West Indian manatees, hawksbill turtles and American crocodiles find shelter here.



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Forest elephants still roam swamplands to dig for salt, drink and play in Senegal's Niakhar. Deep in the rainforest along the borders of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Congo, Sangha is a refuge for gorillas, chimpanzees and other endangered wildlife.



The Great Mosque of Agadez features the highest mud-brick minaret in the world. Built in the 15th century, Agadez lies at a caravan crossroads in northern Niger. Some 20,000 people still live in this desert gateway, carrying on traditions of cultural and economic exchange.



Portugal's University of Coimbra - Arts and Sofas evolved from a small 13th-century academy to a grand centre of learning for Portugal and its colonies by the 16th century. A jewel among the university's buildings, the Joazeiro Library's 18th-century baroque design features gilded wooden shelves and arches.



From the 8th century BC, beneath the ancient cities of Marassa and DeCanto in Israel's Galilee, inhabitants dug hundreds of interconnected caves in soft chalk and limestone rock. Used as storerooms, dwellings, olive and grape presses, as well as burial chambers, some of the caves are decorated with elaborate paintings and inscriptions.



Nature and people both carved their history into the desert on Jordan's southern border at Dead Ram. Sandstone mountains and broad, treeless valleys glow orange and red beneath an unrelenting sun. Thousands of petroglyphs and rock carvings reveal 12 millennia of human life here.



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On New Zealand's South Island, beech forest conifers form a dramatic mountain wilderness of deep lakes, rugged peaks and meadow gardens. In temperate green rainforests, flightless kiwi and takahē wander a habitat that resembles the ancient supercontinent of Gondwana.



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