



# Three Sites in Tentative List of World Heritage Sites

## Why in News?

Recently, three sites- **Gujarat's [Vadnagar town](#)** and the iconic **[Sun Temple at Modhera](#)**, and the **Rock-cut Sculptures of Unakoti in Tripura** have been added to the **[tentative list of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\) World Heritage Sites](#)**.

## What are the Key Facts about Three Sites?

### ▪ Vadnagar:

- It is located in the **Mehsana district in Gujarat is a city with deep historical roots.**
  - Also called Chamatkarpur, Anandpur, Snehpur and Vimalpur, the city of Vadnagar was **mentioned in the Puranas as well.**
- Home to many archaeological treasures, Vadnagar is **famous for its torans, a pair of 12<sup>th</sup> century Solanki-era columns**, 40 feet tall and built in red and yellow sandstone to celebrate a war victory.
- In 640 AD, Chinese Buddhist traveller, **Hiuen Tsang visited the city, and is said to have mentioned it in his travelogue.**
- During excavations in 2008-09, **ruins of a Buddhist monastery were also unearthed in Vadnagar.**
- Vadnagar is home to **Tanariri Performing Arts College**, named so to honour the valour of two sisters, Tana and Riri, who had sacrificed their lives when asked by Akbar to sing in his court, which was against their custom.

### ▪ Modhera Sun Temple:

- The Sun Temple at **Modhera is located on the left bank of the river Pushpavati**, a tributary of river Rupan in Becharaji taluka of Mehsana district.
- The temple description states that it is built in **Maru-gurjara architectural style**, consists of the **main temple shrine (garbhagriha)**, a **hall (gadhamandapa)**, an **outer hall or assembly hall (Sabhamandapa or rangamandapa)** and a **sacred pool (Surya Kunda)**, which is now called Ramakunda.
  - **Ramakunda** is a massive rectangular stepped tank perhaps the **grandest temple tank in India.**
- Every year, at the **time of the equinoxes**, the **sun shines directly into this central shrine** of the temple.

### ▪ Rock-cut Sculptures of Unakoti:

- It is **Shaivite pilgrimage** and dates back to 7<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century if not earlier.
- **Unakoti means one less than a crore** and it is said that **these many rock cut**
- As per Hindu mythology, when **Lord Shiva was going to Kashi along with one crore gods and goddesses, he made a night halt** at this location.
  - He **asked all the gods and goddesses to wake up before sun rise** and proceed for Kashi.
  - It is said that **in the morning, except Shiva himself, no one else could get up** so Lord Shiva set out for Kashi himself **cursing the others to become stone images.**
  - As a result, we have **one less than a crore stone images and carvings at**

### Unakoti.

- The images found at Unakoti are of **two types, namely rock-carved figures and stone images.**
  - Among the **rock cut carvings, the central Shiva head and gigantic Ganesha figures deserve special mention.**
    - The **central Shiva head is known as 'Unakotiswara Kal Bhairava'.**
    - On each side of the head-dress of the central Shiva, **there are two full size female figures - one of Durga standing on a lion and another female figure on the other side.**
    - In addition, **three enormous images of Nandi Bull are found half buried in the ground.**
- Every year a **big fair popularly known as 'Ashokastami Mela' is held in the month of April** which is visited by thousands of pilgrims.

### What is UNESCO's Tentative List?

- UNESCO's tentative list is an **inventory of properties which each state party intends to consider for nomination.**
  - As per Operational Guidelines, 2019 of [UNESCO](#), it is **mandatory to put any monument/site on the tentative list for one year before it is considered** for the final nomination dossier.
  - Once the nomination is done, it is **sent to the World Heritage Centre (WHC).**
- **India now has now 52 sites** on the tentative list.

### What is World Heritage Site?

- **World Heritage Site** refers to any of various **areas or objects inscribed on the UNESCO's World Heritage List.**
- The sites are designated as having **"outstanding universal value" under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972.**
- It provides a **framework for international cooperation** in preserving and protecting cultural treasures and natural areas throughout the world.
- **There are three types of sites:** Cultural, Natural, and Mixed.
  - **Cultural heritage sites** include hundreds of historic buildings and town sites, important archaeological sites, and **works of monumental sculpture or painting.**
  - **Natural heritage sites** are restricted to those natural areas that have excellent ecological and evolutionary processes, unique natural phenomena, habitats of rare or endangered species etc.
  - **Mixed heritage sites** contain elements of both natural and cultural significance.
- **India has 40 world heritage sites**, including 32 cultural properties, 7 natural properties and 1 mixed site. The **latest one** included are [Harappan city of Dholavira](#) and [Kakatiya Rudreshwara \(Ramappa\) Temple.](#)

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q1. Which one of the following statements is correct? (2021)**

- (a) Ajanta Caves lie in the gorge of Waghora river.
- (b) Sanchi Stupa lies in the gorge of Chambal river.
- (c) Pandu-lena Cave Shrines lie in the gorge of Narmada river.
- (d) Amaravati Stupa lies in the gorge of Godavari river.

**Ans: (a)**

**Exp:**

- Ajanta is a series of rock-cut caves in the Sahyadri ranges (Western Ghats) on Waghora river near Aurangabad in Maharashtra. There are a total of 29 caves (all Buddhist) of which 25 were used as Viharas or residential caves while 4 were used as Chaitya or prayer halls. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is a collection of paintings, sculptures and temples of Buddhist art, constructed from 200 BC to 500 AD. India's best-preserved group of Buddhist monuments, known as Sanchi Stupa, is located in west-central Madhya Pradesh. It lies in an upland plateau region, just west of the Betwa River and about 5 miles (8 km) southwest of Vidisha. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1989.
- The Buddhist monument Pandavleni Caves, also known by the name Pandu Lena caves and Trirashmi caves are a group of 24 rock-cut caves. They are located on the north face of Trivashmi hill of Nasik city. Nasik city is situated on the banks of river Godavari.
- Amravati Stupa illustrates Lord Buddha in a human form, subduing an elephant. The stupa is taller than the Sanchi stupa and has high platforms, extending in the four cardinal directions, along with a huge circular dome. Amravati Stupa is situated near river Krishna.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

**Q2. Consider the following pairs: (2019)**

|    | <b>Famous Place</b> | <b>River</b> |
|----|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. | Pandharpur          | Chandrabhaga |
| 2. | Tiruchirappalli     | Cauvery      |
| 3. | Hampi               | Malaprabha   |

**Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (a)**

**Exp:**

- Pandharpur is a holy place of Shri Vitthal and Shri Rukmini. It is also known as the Southern Kashi of India and Kuldaivat of Maharashtra State. The Chandrabhaga (Bhima) river flows through the city. **Hence, pair 1 is correctly matched.**
- Tiruchirappalli, situated on the banks of the river Cauvery, is the fourth largest city in Tamil Nadu. It was a citadel of the early Cholas which later fell to the Pallavas. **Hence, pair 2 is correctly matched.**
- Hampi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in India located near Hospet town in the Karnataka State. It is situated on the southern bank of the Tungabhadra River. **Hence, pair 3 is not correctly matched.**
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

**Source: TH**