



Maratha Military Landscapes Added to UNESCO World Heritage List

Why in News?

At the **47th Session** of the **World Heritage Committee**, India's official nomination for the 2024-25 cycle, '[Maratha Military Landscapes of India](#),' was inscribed on the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#), making it **India's 44th World Heritage Site**.

- It followed the 2024 inscription of the [Moidams of Charaideo, Assam](#).



Lohagad fort



Raigad Fort

Key Points

About Maratha Military Landscape

- **About:** The Maratha Military Landscapes of India include **12 major forts**, mostly in Maharashtra and one in Tamil Nadu, built or expanded between the late 17th and early 19th centuries.
 - Strategically located in coastal and hilly areas, the forts formed a strong defence system that supported Maratha military power, trade, and territorial control.
- **12 Major Forts:**
 - **Maharashtra:** Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Khanderi, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg
 - **Tamil Nadu:** Gingee Fort
- **Classification by Terrain:**
 - **Hill Forts:** Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Raigad, Rajgad, Gingee.
 - **Hill-Forest Fort:** Pratapgad.
 - **Hill-Plateau Fort:** Panhala.
 - **Coastal Fort:** Vijaydurg.
 - **Island Forts:** Khanderi, Suvarnadurg, Sindhudurg.
- **Protection:** 8 forts (Shivneri, Lohgad, Raigad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg, and Gingee) are protected by the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#).
 - 4 forts (Salher, Rajgad, Khanderi, and Pratapgad) are under the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Maharashtra.
- **World Heritage Site Recognition:** The Maratha Military Landscape was nominated under **UNESCO criteria (iv) and (vi)** for its architectural, technological, and cultural significance,

as well as its links to historic events.

- Such inscriptions aim to protect and promote heritage with **Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)** across 196 countries.

About UNESCO World Heritage Selection Criteria

- **Criteria for Selection:** To be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a place must have OUV and meet at least **one of the ten selection criteria**. These are outlined in the Operational Guidelines, which serve as the main reference for implementing the World Heritage Convention.
 - Originally, there were **six cultural and four natural criteria**, but since 2005, a single unified set of ten criteria is used. The guidelines are updated regularly to reflect changes in how heritage is understood and protected.
 - After selecting a site from the Tentative List, the State submits a detailed nomination file. The World Heritage Centre reviews it before sending it for evaluation.
- **Evaluation:** A nominated property is independently evaluated by Advisory Bodies mandated by the **World Heritage Convention**: [**ICOMOS \(International Council on Monuments and Sites\)**](#), [**IUCN \(International Union for Conservation of Nature\)**](#).
 - ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), an intergovernmental organization that provides the Committee with expert advice on cultural site conservation and training activities.
- **Inscription:** After evaluation, the [**World Heritage Committee**](#) meets annually to decide on site inscriptions. It may also defer decisions and seek more information from States Parties.
 - **India became a member of the World Heritage Committee from 2021-25.**



Selection criteria

(i)

to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

(ii)

to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

(iii)

to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

(iv)

to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

(v)

to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

(vi)

to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);

(vii)

to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;

(viii)

to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;

(ix)

to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;

(x)

to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Operational Guidelines (year)	Cultural criteria						Natural criteria			
2002	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
2005	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(viii)	(ix)	(vii)	(x)



Note: UNESCO, through the **1972 World Heritage Convention**, helps countries identify and protect cultural and natural heritage sites. India joined the Convention in 1977 (a total of 196 countries have ratified the 1972 World Heritage Convention).

- Every year, each State Party may propose just one site for consideration of the World Heritage Committee for inscription to the World Heritage List.
- India ranks **6th globally and 2nd in the Asia-Pacific for the highest number of World Heritage Sites**. With 62 sites on its **Tentative List of the World Heritage**, which is a mandatory threshold for any site to be considered as a World Heritage property in the future.

