



India Adds 7 Natural Sites to UNESCO Tentative List

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Why in News?

India has added seven natural sites to [UNESCO's](#) Tentative List of [World Heritage Sites \(WHS\)](#), taking its total to **69 (49 cultural, 17 natural, and 3 mixed properties)**. This highlights the country's commitment to preserving its rich natural and cultural heritage.

What is UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites?

- **About:** It is the first step toward **UNESCO World Heritage nomination**. Countries identify cultural or natural sites of outstanding universal value and submit them to UNESCO at least a year before nomination.
 - Only sites on the **Tentative List can be considered for full inscription**. In India, the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) compiles and submits these nominations.
- **India's Newly Added Sites:**
 - **Deccan Traps at Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra :** Home to some of the best-preserved and studied lava flows in the world, these sites form part of the [massive Deccan Traps](#) and are located within the [Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary](#) (already a UNESCO World Heritage Site).
 - **Geological Heritage of St. Mary's Island Cluster, Karnataka:** Known for its **rare columnar basaltic rock formations**, this island cluster dates back to the **Late Cretaceous period (101 to 66 million years ago)**.
 - **Meghalayan Age Caves, Meghalaya:** The stunning cave systems of Meghalaya, particularly the **Mawmluh Cave**, serve as the global reference point for the [Meghalayan Age in the Holocene Epoch](#) (last 11,000 years of the Earth's history till date), reflecting significant climate and geological transitions.
 - **Naga Hill Ophiolite, Nagaland:** A rare exposure to **ophiolite rocks** of , these hills represent **oceanic crust uplifted onto continental plates** (offering deep insights into tectonic processes and mid-ocean ridge dynamics).
 - **Erra Matti Dibbalu (Red Sand Hills), Andhra Pradesh:** Red sand formations near Visakhapatnam showcase unique **paleo-climatic and coastal geomorphological features** that reveal Earth's climatic history and dynamic evolution.
 - Erra Matti Dibbalu was declared a GeoHeritage Monument by Geological Survey of India (GSI) in 2016.
 - **Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills, Andhra Pradesh:** Featuring the **Eparchaeon Unconformity and the iconic Silathoranam (Natural Arch)**, this site holds immense geological significance, representing over 1.5 billion years of Earth's history.
 - They are part of **Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve and Venkateswara National Park**.
 - **Varkala Cliffs, Kerala:** Cliff along **Kerala's coastline expose the Warkalli Formation of the Mio-Pliocene age**, along with natural springs and striking erosional landforms, offering both scientific and touristic value.

World Heritage Sites

- WHS are places of outstanding universal value, recognized for protection and preservation for future generations. They can be cultural, natural, or mixed and are safeguarded under the **1972 World Heritage Convention**, adopted by UNESCO member countries.
- The **UNESCO World Heritage Committee** maintains the list through the **World Heritage Programme**. India ratified the Convention in 1977.
- **WHS in India:** As of September 2025, India has 44 World Heritage Sites recognized by UNESCO, with the [Maratha Military Landscapes](#) of India being inscribed as the 44th site.



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following properties included in the World Heritage List released by UNESCO: (

2024)

1. Shantiniketan
2. Rani-ki-Vav
3. Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas
4. Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodhgaya

How many of the above properties were included in 2023?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q.1 Safeguarding the Indian Art Heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss. **(2018)**

Q.2 Indian Philosophy and tradition played a significant role in conceiving and shaping the monuments and their art in India. Discuss. **(2020)**

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