



World Heritage Day

For Prelims: [International Council on Monuments and Sites \(ICOMOS\)](#), [World Heritage Day](#), [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#), [Khangchendzonga National Park](#), [Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage \(INTACH\)](#), [Geographic Information System](#), [Remote Sensing](#)

For Mains: Status of Heritage Sites in India, Heritage Influence on India's Cultural Identity, Issues Related to Heritage Management in India.

Why in News?

The [International Council on Monuments and Sites \(ICOMOS\)](#) declared April 18th as the **International Day for Monuments and Sites**, also known as [World Heritage Day](#), in 1982.

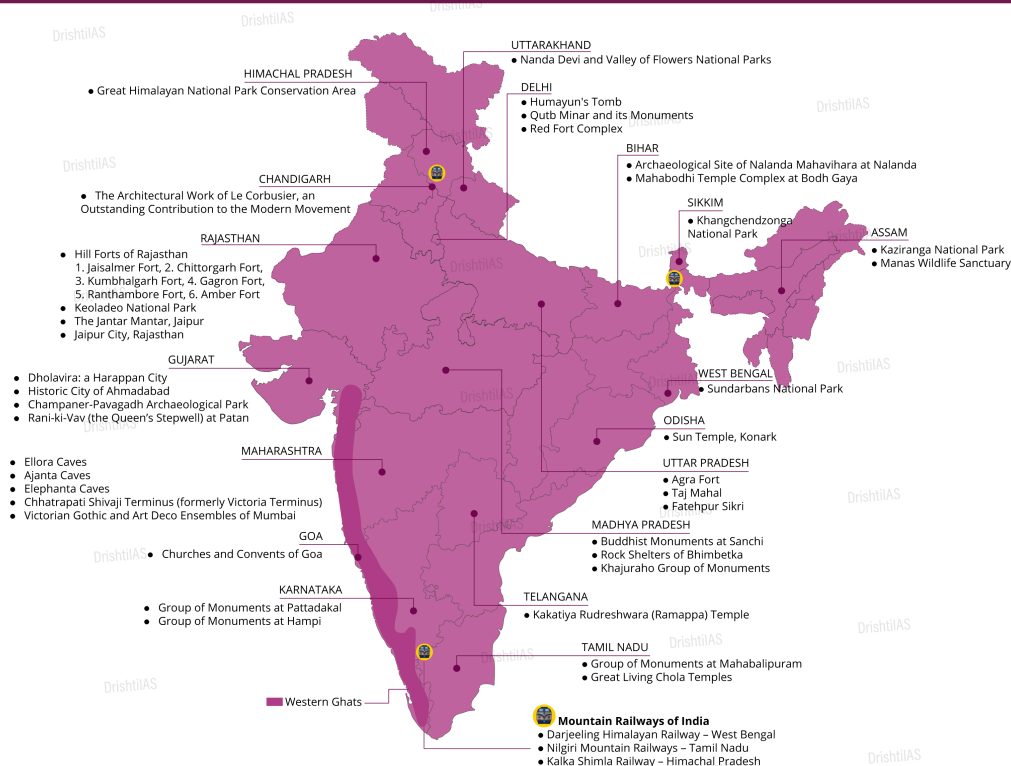
- The **theme for this year is "Heritage Changes,"** which focuses on the role of **cultural heritage in climate action** and its importance in protecting vulnerable communities.

What is the Status of Heritage Sites in India?

- **About:**
 - India is currently home to **40 [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#)**, making it the country with the sixth-largest number of sites in the world.
 - Out of these, **32 are cultural sites, 7 are natural sites, and one is a mixed-type site, the Khangchendzonga National Park.**
 - The cultural heritage sites in India include **ancient temples, forts, palaces, mosques, and archaeological sites that reflect the rich history and diversity of the country.**
 - The **natural heritage sites in India include [national parks](#), wildlife reserves, and natural landscapes** that showcase the country's unique biodiversity and ecological significance.
 - The mixed-type site in India, the [Khangchendzonga National Park](#), is known for its **cultural significance as well as its biodiversity**, as it is home to several rare and endangered species.

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UNESCO World Heritage Sites



FACTS

- Total Number of World Heritage Sites in India: 40
- Total Cultural Heritage Sites: 32
- Total Natural Sites: 7 (Kaziranga National Park, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, Sundarbans National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Keoladeo National Park)
- Mixed Site: 1 (Khangchendzonga National Park)
- World Heritage Sites Listed First: Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves (all in 1983)
- Latest Addition (2021): Harappan city of Dholavira (40th site), Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple (39th site)
- Countries With the Most UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Italy (58), China (56), Germany (51), France (49), Spain (49)
- India is 6th in number of World Heritage Sites in the World



Constitutional and Legislative Provisions Related to Indian Heritage:

- **Directive Principles of State Policy: Article 49** puts obligation on the State to **protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest**, declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance.
- **Fundamental Duty: Article 51A of Constitution** states that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our culture.
- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act) 1958:** It is an act of the Parliament of India that provides for the **preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance**, for the regulation of archaeological excavations and for the protection of sculptures, carvings and other like objects.

Heritage Influence on India's Cultural Identity:

- **StoryTellers of India's Glory:** Heritage is the **legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of society** that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and preserved for the benefit of future generations.
- **Reflection of Unity in Diversity:** India is a museum of **different types, communities, customs, traditions, religions, cultures, beliefs, languages, castes and social system**.
 - But even after having so much external diversity, in Indian culture there is Unity in Diversity.
- **Tolerating Nature:** Indian society gave every culture the opportunity of prospering that is reflected in its diverse heritage. It does not try to **suppress diversity in favour of**

uniformity.

▪ **Issues Related to Heritage Management in India:**

- **Lack of Centralised Database for Heritage Sites:** India lacks a complete national level database with state wise distribution of heritage structure.
 - [Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage \(INTACH\)](#) has inventoried about **60,000 buildings in around 150 cities** which is still only the tip of the iceberg as there are estimated more than 4000 heritage towns and cities in the country.
 - **Outdated Mechanism of Excavation and Exploration:** Due to the prevalence of outdated mechanisms, [Geographic Information System](#) and [Remote Sensing](#) are rarely used in exploration.
 - Also, local bodies involved in urban heritage projects are often not equipped enough to handle heritage conservation.
 - **Environmental Degradation and Natural Disasters:** Heritage sites in India are vulnerable to environmental degradation and natural disasters, such as **pollution, erosion, flooding, and earthquakes, which can cause irreversible damage** to their physical structures and cultural significance.
 - For example, the **Taj Mahal in Uttar Pradesh, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an iconic symbol of India's cultural heritage**, has faced challenges due to air pollution, which has caused **yellowing and deterioration of its marble**.
 - **Unsustainable Tourism:** Popular heritage sites in India **often face high tourism pressure**, which can result in issues such as **overcrowding, unregulated visitor activities, and inadequate visitor management**.
 - Uncontrolled tourism can cause damage to **heritage structures, impact the local environment, and disrupt the local community's way of life**.
- **Recent Government Initiatives Related to Heritage Conservation:**
- [Adopt a Heritage Programme](#)
 - [Project Mausam](#)

Way Forward

- **Sustainable Funding Models:** Exploring and implementing **innovative funding models for heritage conservation**, such as **public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships, crowdfunding, and community-based funding**.
 - This can help generate additional financial resources for heritage sites and ensure their sustainable conservation and maintenance.
 - Example: Encouraging corporate sponsorships for specific conservation projects, where **companies can contribute funds and resources in exchange for brand recognition and promotional opportunities**.
- **Technology-enabled Conservation:** Leveraging advanced technologies such as **remote sensing, 3D scanning, virtual reality, and data analytics** for documentation, monitoring, and conservation of heritage sites.
 - This can enable more efficient and effective heritage management practices, including condition assessment, preventive conservation, and virtual tourism experiences.
 - **Example:** Using 3D scanning and virtual reality to **create digital replicas of heritage structures**, which can be used for virtual tours, educational purposes, and as a reference for restoration and conservation work.
- **Innovative Measures to Increase Engagement:** Monuments that **do not attract a large number of visitors** and those which have no associated cultural/religious sensitivity should be used as **venues for cultural programmes with the twin objectives:**
 - Promoting the associated intangible heritage
 - Increasing visitor numbers to such sites.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

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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