

What is World Heritage?

Qu'est-ce que le Patrimoine Mondial ?



Shirakami-Sanchi (Aomori, Akita)
Area: Approx. 17,000ha
Inscription: 1993

Shiretoko (Hokkaido)
Area: Approx. 71,100ha
Inscription: 2005



Ogasawara Islands (Tokyo)
Area: Approx. 7,900ha
Inscription: 2011



Yakushima (Kagoshima)
Area: Approx. 10,700ha
Inscription: 1993



Origin of the World Heritage Convention

In the 1960s, as part of a plan to rescue historical monuments from the flooding produced by the construction of the Aswan High Dam on the Nile River, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) initiated an international safeguarding campaign to preserve the Nubian Monuments by dismantling and reassembling them. This action prompted the idea of protecting world cultural assets through international cooperation. In 1965, the United States of America suggested an international framework to support listing and protection of the world's superb natural and scenic areas and historic sites.

In the wake of such movements, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention) was adopted at a UNESCO General Conference in November 1972. Japan became a party to the Convention in 1992.



The Abu Simbel temples

Outline of the World Heritage Convention

Official name	Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
Objectives	The World Heritage Convention aims to identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit to future generations cultural and natural areas around the world considered to be of outstanding value. The Convention also supports to establish systems for international cooperation.
Secretariat	UNESCO World Heritage Centre (Paris)
What is World Heritage?	World Heritage properties are the sites of Outstanding Universal Value (i.e. of particularly important value for all humankind) that are evaluated by the World Heritage Committee* as assets to be inscribed on the World Heritage List and be conserved into the future. There are natural properties, cultural properties, and mixed properties that have both natural and cultural values.

* An intergovernmental body established under UNESCO, consisting of representatives of 21 countries elected from the State Parties. A Committee term is limited to a maximum of 6 years (some countries voluntarily shorten their terms to 4 years)

State Parties: 191 countries	(as of Mar 2016)
Number of the World Heritage properties	
Total	1031 (19)
Natural heritage	197 (4)
Cultural heritage	802 (15)
Mixed heritage	32 (0)
* Figures in parentheses are numbers for Japan.	

Treasures that should be passed down to future generations as irreplaceable assets shared by all humankind

Requirements for Inscription on the World Heritage List as a Natural Property

The Outstanding Universal Value of the property is evaluated in accordance with the following three conditions:

- 1 The property must meet more than one of the four evaluation criteria (see table below)
- 2 The property must fulfill the condition of integrity (e.g. include all the elements necessary to demonstrate outstanding universal value; contain adequate areas; show little influence of development; and maintain its primary natural value).
- 3 The property must be adequately protected and managed in order to maintain its outstanding universal value over the long term.

Those properties that fulfill the above conditions can be inscribed on the World Heritage List, as they are the only places in the world that have such significant value.

Criteria for Natural Heritage

To be inscribed on the World Heritage List as a natural heritage, the property must meet one or more of the four criteria: natural beauty; geology and geomorphology; ecosystem; and biodiversity.

(vii) natural beauty	contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance (Yakushima)
(viii) geology and geomorphology	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) ecosystem	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 (Shiretoko, Shirakami-Sanchi, Ogasawara Islands and Yakushima)
(X) biodiversity	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. (Shiretoko)

Protection and Management of World Natural Heritage Properties in Japan

World Natural Heritage properties must be appropriately protected and managed to maintain their values into the future. For this reason, protection and management measures in accordance with the national laws and systems are taken on those properties, through the status of National Parks, Nature Conservation Areas, Forest Ecosystem Reserves, and/or Natural Monuments for which the government has the management responsibility.

Framework for Protection and Management of World Natural Heritage Properties in Japan

On the World Natural Heritage properties, appropriate protection and management is necessary to be implemented on the basis of scientific knowledge and with close cooperation among relevant parties, including local organizations, academic experts, and government bodies that have jurisdiction over protection and management of the natural environment. For each World Heritage property, a Regional Liaison Committee and Scientific Committee are established and operate to develop a Management Plan and advance protection and management efforts for that property.

Structures pour la protection et la gestion des sites du Patrimoine naturel mondial

Sur les sites du Patrimoine naturel mondial, une protection et une gestion adéquates doivent être mises en oeuvre sur la base des connaissances scientifiques les plus récentes et dans le cadre d'une coopération étroite entre les différentes parties concernées (administrations ayant compétence sur la protection et la gestion des environnements naturels, organisations locales, experts académiques, etc.). Pour cela, un Comité de liaison régional et un Comité scientifique sont mis en place et gérés sur chaque site du patrimoine mondial afin d'élaborer le plan de gestion et de promouvoir les efforts de protection et de gestion du site.

Regional Liaison Committee	The Regional Liaison Committee is comprised of the Ministry of the Environment, Forestry Agency, local governments and other relevant parties. The committee serves as a vehicle for liaison and coordination and consensus building for management of the World Heritage property.
Scientific Committee	The Scientific Committee is composed of experts in the natural and social sciences. On the basis of scientific knowledge, the committee provides the advice for appropriate protection and management of the property.
Management Plan	The Management Plan clearly lays out policies and structures promoting the application of various schemes for protection and management. The appropriate protection and management programs are promoted through close cooperation and consultation among relevant stakeholders.

Process for the inscription of the properties on the World Heritage List

