



World Heritage Sites

A Quick Guide for Preserving Native American Cultural Resources

What is a World Heritage Site?

A World Heritage Site is a natural or cultural site that demonstrates influence or significance in a global context, has Outstanding Universal Value, and is inscribed on the World Heritage List by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee.

What is meant by the term Outstanding Universal Value?

As defined by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, Outstanding Universal Value means that a site has cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional that it transcends national boundaries and is of importance to present and future generations of all humanity.

Who maintains the World Heritage List?

The list is maintained by the World Heritage Programme administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. The Committee is made up of representatives of 21 of the current 189 countries that have signed and ratified The World Heritage Convention. These countries are referred to as State Parties.

Are there any restrictions or regulations that apply to World Heritage Sites?

Being inscribed on the World Heritage List does not place any restrictions or regulations on private property or private property owners. Direct authority over individual sites remains with the national, state, tribal, or local government or private organization that owns and manages the site. National authorities routinely report to the World Heritage Committee on issues affecting their sites.

How is a site inscribed on the World Heritage List?

A site must meet one or more of the ten World Heritage Committee selection criteria, be on a State Party's Tentative List, and go through a nomination process before being considered for inscription on the World Heritage List. A site can be proposed for inscription only by the country in which the property is located.

What is the Tentative List?

The Tentative List is an inventory of natural and cultural heritage sites, which a country believes meet the World Heritage Committee selection criteria and from which it intends to nominate sites within 10 years. In order for a site to be nominated to the World Heritage List, it must be included on its country's Tentative List. The List may be updated at any time, but a site must be included on the Tentative List for at least one year to be considered for nomination.

Who chooses the sites for the U.S. Tentative List?

The Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service Office of International Affairs (NPS-OIA), is responsible for identifying sites for the United States (U.S.) Tentative List and nominating sites to the World Heritage List. Only sites already designated as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) or National Natural Landmarks (NNLs) or otherwise officially recognized as being nationally significant (such as National Parks) are eligible for the U.S. Tentative List.

Can sites be added or recommended to the U.S. Tentative List?

The Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, acting on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, can add sites to the U.S. Tentative List. NPS-OIA usually accepts site recommendations from the public; however, at this time they are developing new forms and procedures for updating the current List and are not accepting new recommendations until they are complete. An updated U.S. Tentative List will be published in 2016.



What are the World Heritage Committee selection criteria?

The selection criteria allow the Committee to evaluate Outstanding Universal Value of a site in order to determine if it should be inscribed on the World Heritage List. A site must meet at least one of the ten selection criteria in order to be nominated. Sites may have multiple criteria and may be mixed (both cultural and natural). The criteria are regularly revised by the Committee.

Cultural Criteria

- I. represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.
- II. 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. bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization, which is living, or which has disappeared.
- IV. 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. 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. 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).

Natural Criteria

- VII. contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.
- VIII. 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. 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. 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.

- Cultural criteria do not support nominations for associative value alone, i.e. for places associated with important people or historical events.
- Significant interactions between people and the natural environment are recognized as *cultural landscapes*.
- The *protection, management, authenticity, and integrity* of sites are also important considerations when determining eligibility for the World Heritage List.



What is the site nomination process?

Under U.S. law, the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks makes decisions on nominating sites from the U.S. Tentative List to the World Heritage List. The Assistant Secretary is advised by the National Park Service Office of International Affairs (NPS-OIA) and by the Federal Interagency Panel on World Heritage, which represents other Federal agencies.

Nomination File: select site from Tentative List, prepare nomination, nomination reviewed by NPS-OIA and Federal Interagency Panel, additional research, peer review, drafts, and public outreach prepared as needed, submit nomination to World Heritage Centre for technical review, completed nomination sent to the appropriate Advisory Bodies for evaluation.

Advisory Bodies (evaluation): nomination independently evaluated by two Advisory Bodies to verify that proposed site meets one of the ten criteria, if nomination is for cultural site, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) provides advice on conservation and training, Advisory Bodies provide World Heritage Committee with evaluations of the nomination.

World Heritage Committee (inscription): receives evaluations of the nomination; makes final decision on site inscription, Committee can defer inscription and request further information on site from a State Party, Committee meets once a year to decide on inscription of nominated sites.

Who prepares a site nomination?

The primary property owner is responsible for preparing the nomination. All owners within a site's boundaries must consent to the nomination and be willing to agree to protective measures for the property. NPS-OIA provides advice and assistance on preparing a site.

What is the time frame for site inscription?

Because of U.S. and international (UNESCO) requirements, the process for site inscription, from selection of the site to being inscribed on the World Heritage List, is several years at a minimum.

What are some examples of World Heritage Sites in the U.S.?

There are currently 21 sites in the U.S. inscribed on the World Heritage List. Among them are:

- Cahokia Mounds State Historic Park, Illinois: inscribed in 1982 under criteria III and IV
- Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, Hawaii: inscribed in 2010 under criteria II, VI, VIII, IX, and X
- Pueblo de Taos (Taos Pueblo), New Mexico: inscribed in 1992 under criterion IV

More information

For more information about U.S. World Heritage Sites, the Tentative List, and the nomination process visit the Office of International Affairs on the National Park Service's website at:

<http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/worldheritage/worldheritage.htm>

For a more indepth discussion of World Heritage Sites and the inscription process, refer to the *Guide to the U.S. World Heritage Program* on the National Park Service-Office of International Affairs website at:

http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/worldheritage/Guidebook_to_US_WH.doc