

*Criteria for assessing the
Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)
of World Heritage
Institute Heritage Studies
Series of Lectures 2019/2020*

(i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

Taj Mahal, India
Inscribed: 1983



Criterion (i): Taj Mahal represents the finest architectural and artistic achievement through perfect harmony and excellent craftsmanship in a whole range of Indo-Islamic sepulchral architecture. It is a masterpiece of architectural style in conception, treatment and execution and has unique aesthetic qualities in balance, symmetry and harmonious blending of various elements.

(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

Speyer Cathedral, Germany Inscribed: 1981



Criterion (ii): The Speyer Cathedral has exerted a considerable influence not only on the development of Romanesque architecture in the 11th and 12th centuries, but as well on the evolution of the principles of restoration in Germany, in Europe and in the world from the 18th century to the present.

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

Petroglyphic Complexes of the Mongolian Altai, Mongolia Inscribed: 2011



Criterion (iii): The Petroglyphic Complexes of the Mongolian Altai Mountain provide an exceptional documentation of the pre-historic and early historic communities in the northwestern Altai Mountains, at the intersection of Central and North Asia. The petroglyphic imagery includes animals such as mammoths, rhinoceros, and ostriches, executed in static profile contours. By the end of the Late Pleistocene (ca. 11,000 BP), the dry steppe was gradually being replaced by the forested environment of the Early Holocene (ca. 11,000 – 6,000 BP). This period is reflected in majestic images of elk, aurochs, and ibex, executed in profile silhouettes.

(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

Historic Centre of Kraków, Poland Inscribed: 1978



Criterion (iv): The historic centre of Cracow, the former capital of Poland, is situated at the foot of the Royal Wawel Castle. The 13th-century merchants' town has Europe's largest market square and numerous historical houses, palaces and churches with their magnificent interiors. Further evidence of the town's fascinating history is provided by the remnants of the 14th-century fortifications and the medieval site of Kazimierz with its ancient synagogues in the southern part of town, Jagellonian University and the Gothic cathedral where the kings of Poland were buried.

(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;

Fertő / Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape, Austria/Hungary
Inscribed: 2001



Criterion (v): The Fertő/Neusiedlersee has been the meeting place of different cultures for eight millennia, and this is graphically demonstrated by its varied landscape, the result of an evolutionary and symbiotic process of human interaction with the physical environment.

(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)

Independence Hall, USA Inscribed: 1979



Criterion (vi): The universal principles of the right to revolution and self-government as expressed in the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) and Constitution (1787), which were debated, adopted, and signed in Independence Hall, have profoundly influenced lawmakers and politicians around the world. The fundamental concepts, format, and even substantive elements of the two documents have influenced governmental charters in many nations and even the United Nations Charter.

(vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance

Kilimanjaro National Park, Tanzania Inscribed: 1987



Criterion (vii): At 5,895 m, Kilimanjaro is the highest point in Africa. This volcanic massif stands in splendid isolation above the surrounding plains, with its snowy peak looming over the savannah. The mountain is encircled by mountain forest. Numerous mammals, many of them endangered species, live in the park.

(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

Chengjiang Fossil Site, China

Inscribed: 2012



Criterion (viii): The Chengjiang Fossil Site presents an exceptional record of the rapid diversification of life on Earth during the early Cambrian period, 530 million years before present. In this geologically short interval almost all major groups of animals had their origins. The property is a globally outstanding example of a major stage in the history of life, representing a palaeobiological window of great significance.

(ix) be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals

Surtsey, Iceland Inscribed: 2008



Criterion (ix): Ongoing biological and ecological processes: Surtsey was born as a new volcanic island in 1963-67 and since that time has played a major role in studies of succession and colonisation. It has been the site of one of the few long term studies worldwide on primary succession, providing a unique scientific record of the process of colonisation of land by plants, animals and marine organisms. Not only is it geographically isolated, but it has been legally protected from its birth, providing the world with a pristine natural laboratory, free from human interference.

(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.

Península Valdés, Argentina

Inscribed: 1999



Criterion (x): Peninsula Valdés contains very important and significant natural habitats for the in-situ conservation of several threatened species of outstanding universal value, and specifically its globally important concentration of breeding southern right whales, which is an endangered species. It is also important because of the breeding populations of southern elephant seals and southern sea lions. The area exhibits an exceptional example of adaptation of hunting techniques by the orca to the local coastal conditions.

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