



# Petäjävesi

## Old Church

*a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Finland*

2023





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<b>Page 5</b>	The Church
<b>Page 6 &amp; 7</b>	Church Timeline
<b>Page 8 &amp; 9</b>	The Church Grounds & Village
<b>Page 10 -13</b>	UNESCO Old Church Biography
<b>Page 14 -17</b>	Gallery

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<b>Page 18</b>	UNESCO
<b>Page 20 &amp; 21</b>	UNESCO Mission Statement
<b>Page 22 - 25</b>	UNESCO History
<b>Page 27 - 29</b>	Selection Criteria & Nomination
<b>Page 30 - 34</b>	World Heratige sites in Danger
<b>Page 35</b>	Success Stories & Finding Solutions
<b>Page 35 - 37</b>	Successful Restorations



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## Part 1: The Church

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## Part 2: UNESCO







# Part 1: The Church

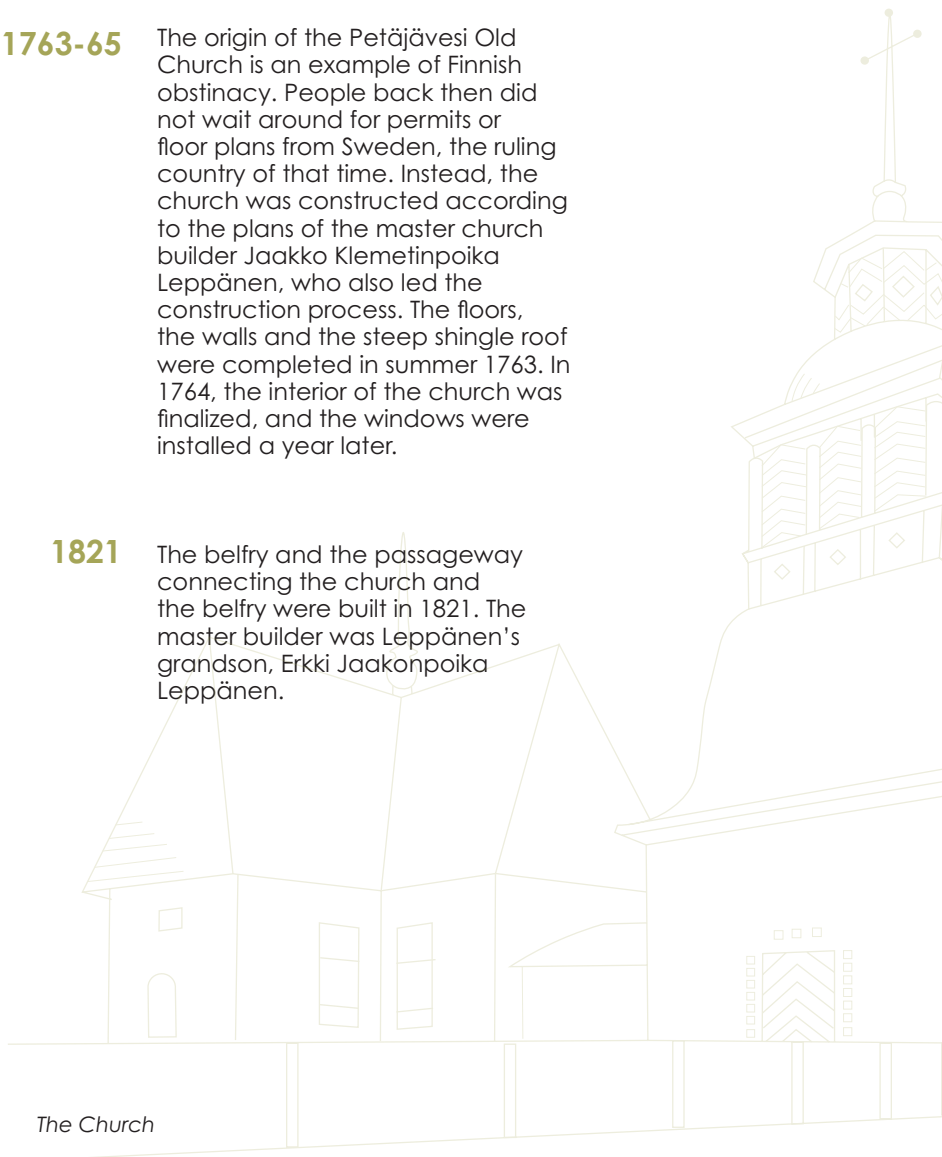
[www.mailmanperinto.fi](http://www.mailmanperinto.fi)  
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Anne Kalliola

**1763-65**

The origin of the Petäjavesi Old Church is an example of Finnish obstinacy. People back then did not wait around for permits or floor plans from Sweden, the ruling country of that time. Instead, the church was constructed according to the plans of the master church builder Jaakko Klemetinpoika Leppänen, who also led the construction process. The floors, the walls and the steep shingle roof were completed in summer 1763. In 1764, the interior of the church was finalized, and the windows were installed a year later.

**1821**

The belfry and the passageway connecting the church and the belfry were built in 1821. The master builder was Leppänen's grandson, Erkki Jaakonpoika Leppänen.





**1879** The church was abandoned in 1879 when a new church was built on the opposite shore of the Kirkkolahti bay. In spite of these plans, the Old Church was never decommissioned. The bells remained in the belfry and the graveyard was still used. Since the 1920s, the Old Church has been maintained as a monument. The Finnish Heritage Agency adopted the responsibility for directing the renovation and maintenance of the church in the 1950s. The surroundings of the church have been under restoration since the 1990s.

**1994** The Petäjävesi Old Church was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994 as a unique example of the tradition of Nordic wooden church architecture and log construction. The church's appearance has remained nearly unchanged.

The church has retained its original purpose, and it is actively used, especially in the summer, for holding concerts, weddings, christenings and services.

## The Church Grounds

In addition to the church, the Petäjävesi Old Church World Heritage Site also includes a cemetery and the Lemettilä farm. If you study the Petäjävesi Old Church cemetery closely, you might notice dates from a variety of eras that were difficult for the Finnish folk. Approximately 9,400 people were buried in the cemetery between 1729 and 2009.

The Lemettilä farm next to the church has been inhabited since the 17th century. The Petäjävesi Old Church was constructed on land purchased from the Lemettilä farm by the local parish. The enclosed courtyard formed by the buildings of the Lemettilä farm provides an example of traditional Finnish construction design.

Ten Finnsheep graze on the pastures of the Old Church in the summer, helping preserve the traditional biotope of the church's surroundings.

## The Village

A rural village at heart, Petäjävesi is home to captivating nature sites, the Petäjävesi Old Church and approximately 4,000 residents. The trip from Jyväskylä to Petäjävesi takes less than 30 minutes.

Stay the night in a more than one hundred year-old farmer's hut of a vicarage and pet some sheep while enjoying the rural settings surrounding the country suites, or you can rent a summer cottage of your own. In Petäjävesi, you can enjoy life. Known for its close sense of community, artisanal skills and locally produced food, the 150-year-old Petäjävesi has deep roots in Finnish soil.







## Petäjävesi Old Church Biography by UNESCO

Built for a small Lutheran parish in central Finland, Petäjävesi Old Church is located on a peninsula at Lake Solikkojärvi and is surrounded by an agricultural landscape with lakes and forests, typical of the region. Construction of this wooden church was led by a local master builder, Jaakko Leppänen. The bell tower was added to the western part of the church in 1821 by the master's grandson, Erkki Leppänen. Petäjävesi Old Church is representative of the architectural tradition of wooden churches in northern Europe.

The Old Church is a unique example of traditional log construction techniques applied by the local peasant population in northern coniferous forest areas. European architectural trends, which have influenced the external form and layout of the church, have been masterfully applied to traditional log construction.

The adaption of forms and techniques of varied provenance makes this church a multi-layered landmark and an outstanding example of Nordic church architecture.

The church is built entirely of pine wood, worked in a constructive and economical manner. The

layout and interior of the church, with intricate perspectives, vaulting and a central cupola, combines the influences of Renaissance, Baroque and Gothic styles with the Finnish vernacular tradition of log construction.

The steepness of the pitched roof recalls the Gothic tradition. The interior's hand-carved log surfaces with their silky patina and the silvery sheen on the seasoned walls lend the hall its unique atmosphere, which is further enhanced by the slightly irregular placement of the floor beams and pews. The distinctive features of the interior are the elaborately carved pulpit, pews, chandeliers, and galleries with balustrades, which are entirely the work of local craftsmen and artists.

In 1879, a new church was built on the other side of the strait and the Old Church went out of use. Repairs, restoration and conservation works started in the 1920s when the historical and architectural value of the Old Church was recognized. Today, the churchyard is still in use, while the church is used only in the summer.



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*Criterion (iv):*

*Petäjävesi Old Church is an outstanding example of the architectural tradition of wooden churches in northern Europe.*



## Integrity

Petäjävesi Old Church includes all key elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value, such as the graveyard surrounded by a fence and the nearby landscape setting, fields and lakeside. The integrity of the wider agricultural landscape was affected by the construction of a highway to the south of the church in the 1960s. The buffer zone of Petäjävesi Old Church includes the entire agricultural landscape surrounding the church as well as the lakeside. Climate change might threaten the integrity of the property.

## Authenticity

In terms of form, construction and materials, Petäjävesi Old Church truthfully expresses the essence and spirit of the wooden church building traditions of northern Europe. The church is well preserved due to the fact that it was abandoned in the late 19th century, as the new parish church was built, and did not suffer from major alterations such as the installation of heating systems. The church is therefore used only during the summer season.

Traditional techniques and materials have been used in previous and recent conservation works, and interventions have been kept to a minimum in order to preserve the tangible values and the spirit of the church. The graveyard surrounding the church, which dates back to the 18th century, is still in use. The property and its buffer zone are legally protected under national legislation and are managed by



## Protection & Management Requirements

a management board headed by the Petäjävesi Old Church Trust. The church is owned by the local parish. Long and short term operations are guided by a Management Plan. Conservation works are carried out using traditional materials and craftsmanship.

A specific forest has been designated to guarantee the supply of high-quality wood. The conservation philosophy is to do minimum intervention and only when necessary. Climate change causing increasingly warm and humid autumns and winters, might threaten the property's wooden constructions on a long term basis. As part of the overall management system, special attention is paid to documentation and follow-up of

the alterations caused by weather conditions. Fire safety measures have been taken by installing a fire alarm, a pump station, as well as an automatic extinguishing system. Wear to the wooden floors, caused by increased numbers of visitors, has been addressed by the use of slippers during visits.

World of Wonders  
UNESCO Collector Coins  
Credit to [CIT.li/coins](http://CIT.li/coins)

Wooden Church  
Petajavesi, Post Card  
Photo by Jyri Myllynen,  
Printed in Finland, 2012





Credit to Shutterstock



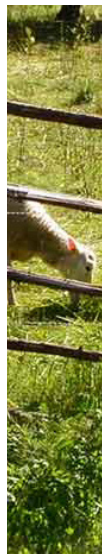
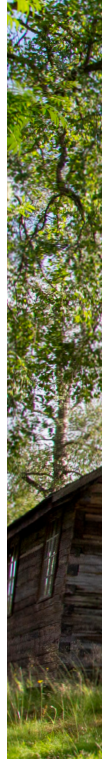
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Opening of the first General Conference of  
the United Nations Educational, Scientific  
and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at the  
Sorbonne, Paris, November 20, 1946.  
© UNESCO/Eclair Mondial

## Part 2: UNESCO

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## UNESCO Mission Statement

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNSECO in 1972. Cultural heritage refers to monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value. Natural heritage refers to outstanding physical, biological and geological formations, habitats of threatened species of animals and plants and areas with scientific, conservation or aesthetic value.

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## UNESCO's World Heritage mission is to:

- encourage countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage;
- encourage States Parties to the Convention to nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the World Heritage List;
- encourage States Parties to establish management plans and set up reporting systems on the state of conservation of their World Heritage sites;
- assist States Parties in safeguarding World Heritage sites by providing technical assistance and professional training;
- provide emergency assistance for World Heritage sites in immediate danger;
- support States Parties' public awareness-building activities for World Heritage conservation;
- encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage;
- encourage international cooperation in the conservation of our world's cultural and natural heritage.

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## A Brief History

- 1959** UNESCO launches an international campaign and collects US \$80 million to save the Abu Simbel temples in the Nile valley. A draft of the convention on the protection of cultural heritage is prepared.
- 1962** UNESCO presents its Recommendation on the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites. This recommendation covers the preservation and the restoration of the aspect of natural, rural and urban landscapes and sites, whether natural or man-made, which have a cultural or aesthetic interest or form typical natural surroundings.
- 1965** A White House Conference in Washington, D.C., in 1965 called for a 'World Heritage Trust' to protect 'natural and scenic areas and historic sites.'
- 1966** UNESCO spearheads an international campaign to save Venice after disastrous floods threatened the city.
- 1968** IUCN develops a proposal similar to the 'World Heritage Trust' for its members.

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- 1972** Following a United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972 and the work of expert groups involving IUCN, ICOMOS and UNESCO, all the proposals came together in the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris on 16, November 1972.
- 1978** First twelve sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- 1992** Marks the 20th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, the creation of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and the adoption of the cultural landscapes category by the World Heritage Committee, making the World Heritage Convention the first international legal instrument to recognize and protect cultural landscapes.
- 1994** The Global Strategy for a Balanced and Representative World Heritage List is adopted by the World Heritage Committee with the goal of achieving better regional balance and greater thematic diversity in the World Heritage List. It encourages the nomination of sites in underrepresented parts of the world and especially in categories

which are not yet fully represented on the List.

UNESCO launches the Young People's participation in World Heritage Preservation and Promotion Project with the aim to develop new educational approaches to mobilize young people in becoming involved in the protection and promotion of heritage.

**2002** The United Nations proclaims 2002 the International Year for Cultural Heritage.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO, with the help of the Italian Government, organizes in Venice the International Congress

World Heritage: Shared Legacy, Common Responsibility, with the objective to assess the past 30 years of implementation of the World Heritage Convention and to strengthen partnerships for World Heritage conservation.



© UNESCO/Nenadovic.  
Dismantling Abu Simbel.



## The Nomination Process

Only countries that have signed the World Heritage Convention, pledging to protect their natural and cultural heritage, can submit nomination proposals for properties on their territory to be considered for inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List.

## The criteria for selection

To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria. These criteria are explained in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention which, besides the text of the Convention, is the main working tool on World Heritage. The criteria are regularly revised by the Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself.

Until the end of 2004, World Heritage sites were selected on the basis of six cultural and four natural criteria.

With the adoption of the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, only one set of ten criteria exists.





## Selection 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, townplanning, 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)

**(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.





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UNESCO Headquarters  
© UNESCO

The protection, management, authenticity and integrity of properties are also important considerations.

Since 1992 significant interactions between people and the natural environment have been recognized as cultural landscapes.

## List of World Heritage sites in Danger

Armed conflict and war, earthquakes and other natural disasters, pollution, poaching, uncontrolled urbanization and unchecked tourist development pose major problems to World Heritage sites. These can threaten the very characteristics for which a site was originally inscribed on the World Heritage List. Dangers can be 'ascertained', referring to specific and proven imminent threats, or 'potential', when a property is faced with threats which could have negative effects on its World Heritage values.

Some illustrative cases of sites inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger City of Bam in the Islamic Republic of Iran The ancient Citadel and surrounding cultural landscape of the Iranian city of Bam, where 26,000 people lost their lives in the earthquake of December 2003, was simultaneously inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2004. Important international efforts are mobilized to salvage the cultural heritage of this devastated city.

**Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan.** This cultural landscape was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2003 simultaneously with its inscription on the World Heritage List. The property is in a fragile state of conservation considering that it has suffered from abandonment, military action and dynamite explosions. Parts of the site are inaccessible due to the presence of anti personnel mines. UNESCO, at the request of the Afghan Government, coordinates all international efforts to safeguard and enhance Afghanistan's cultural heritage, notably in Bamiyan.

Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan by  
Torsten Pursche





The golden temple in Patan, unique Buddhist monastery in north of Durbar Square, Kathmandu of Nepal.



### **Kathmandu Valley in Nepal.**

The exceptional urban and architectural heritage of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur has been severely affected by uncontrolled urban development. The property, is composed of seven Monument Zones, which, since the time of inscription in 1979, have unfortunately been seriously altered, resulting in a general loss of authenticity and integrity of the property as a whole. For these reasons the site was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger In 2003.

UNESCO is working with the Nepalese authorities to help them develop a long-term management plan to conserve the remaining World Heritage value of the property and adopt corrective measures to address illegal building activities.



### **Walled City of Baku in Azerbaijan**

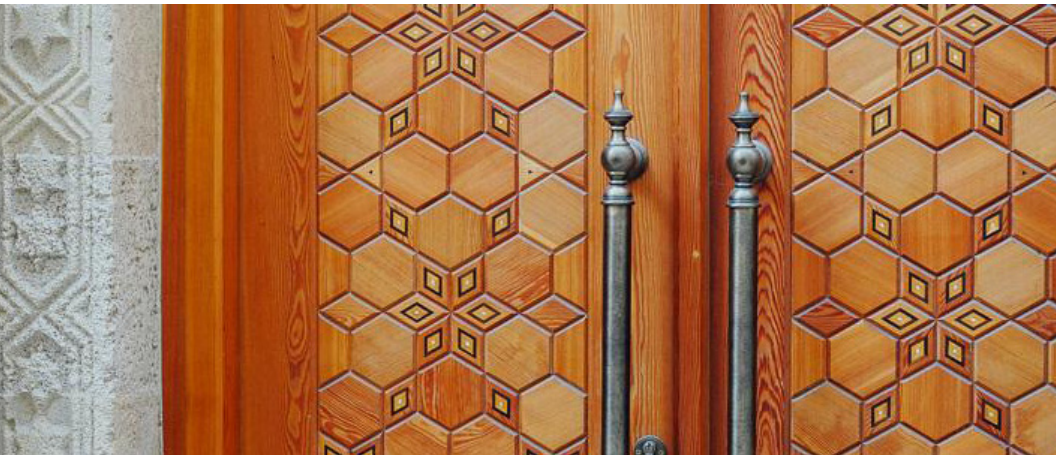
Representing an outstanding and, rare example of medieval architecture at the crossroad of the many different cultures in the region, the Walled City of Baku sustained significant damage during the earthquake of November 2000 and has been increasingly affected by the pressure of urban development, the absence of conservation policies and by questionable restoration efforts. For these reasons it was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2003.

Since then, UNESCO has been working with the State Party and the Advisory Bodies to set up a plan of action to address the conservation issues as well as with stakeholders to coordinate the implementation of safeguarding measures.

### **Historic Town of Zabid in Yemen.**

The outstanding archaeological and historical heritage of Zabid has seriously deteriorated in recent years. Indeed, 40% of its original houses have been replaced by concrete buildings. In 2000 at the request of the State Party, the Historic Town of Zabid was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. UNESCO is helping the local authorities to develop an urban conservation plan and to adopt a strategic approach for the preservation of this World Heritage site.

Decorative world in the walled city of baku in Azerkaijan. Credit to Emily Lush







Author: Véronique Dauge  
Copyright: © UNESCO

**Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve in Honduras.** Commercial and agricultural intrusions into the site threaten the World Heritage values for which it had been inscribed in 1982. The advancing agricultural frontier at the west side of the reserve, pushed by small farmers and cattle ranchers, is already reducing the Reserve's forest area. The southern and western zones of the Reserve are subject to massive extraction of precious wood such as the caoba. The site was thus inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1996.

An eleven-point corrective action plan has been elaborated and the management plan for Rio Platano is being carried out with a World Heritage Fund contribution.

The Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve  
Jaguar. Photo credit: Rhett A. Butler.



**National Parks of Garamba, Kahuzi-Biega, Salonga, Virunga and the Okapi wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.** Since 1994, all five World Heritage sites of the DRC were inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger as a result of the impact of the war and civil conflicts in the Great Lakes region.

In 1999, an international safeguarding campaign was launched by UNESCO together with a number of international conservation NGOs to protect the habitat of endangered species such as the mountain gorilla, the northern white rhino and the okapi.

This resulted in a 4-year US\$3.5 million emergency programme to save the five sites, funded by the United Nations Foundation and the Government of Belgium. In 2004, international, donors, non-governmental organizations and the governments of Belgium and Japan pledged an additional US\$50 million to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo rehabilitate these World Heritage parks.







## Success Stories

The World Heritage Convention is not only 'words on paper' but is above all a useful instrument for concrete action in preserving threatened sites and endangered species. By recognizing the outstanding universal value of a site, States Parties commit to its preservation and strive to find solutions for its protection. If a site is inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the World Heritage Committee can take immediate action to address the situation and this has led to many successful restorations. The World Heritage Convention is also a very powerful tool to rally international attention and actions through international safeguarding campaigns.

### Finding solutions

Often, the World Heritage Committee and the States Parties, with the assistance of UNESCO experts and other partners, find solutions before a given situation deteriorates to an extent that would damage the site.

**Giza Pyramids in Egypt.** These pyramids were threatened in 1995 by a highway project near Cairo which would have seriously damaged the values of this

archaeological site. Negotiations with the Egyptian Government resulted in a number of alternative solutions which replaced the disputed project.

**Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal.** This Park provides refuge for about 400 greater one-horned rhinoceros characteristic of South Asia. The World Heritage Committee, in the early 1990s, questioned the findings of the environmental impact assessment of the proposed Rapti River Diversion Project. The Asian Development Bank and the Government of Nepal revised the assessment and found that the River Diversion project would threaten riparian habitats critical to the rhino inside Royal Chitwan.

The project was thus abandoned and this World Heritage site was saved for the benefit of future generations.

**Archaeological Site of Delphi in Greece.** At the time of its nomination in 1987, plans were underway to build an aluminium plant nearby the site. The Greek Government was invited to find another location for the plant, which it did, and Delphi took its rightful place on the World

**Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaino in Mexico.** In 1999, the World Heritage community campaigned against a plan for enlarging an existing salt factory to commercial scale in Laguna San Ignacio in El Vizcaino Bay, the last pristine reproduction lagoon for the Pacific grey whale. The World Heritage Committee forewarned the Mexican Government of the threats posed to the marine and terrestrial ecosystems, the grey whales as key species as well as the overall integrity of this World Heritage site by locating saltworks inside the Sanctuary.

As a result, the Mexican Government refused permission for the saltworks in March 2000. Mount Kenya National Park/Natural Forest in Kenya The nomination of this site was first referred back to the State Party on the basis of findings during the evaluation that suggested there were serious threats to the site, primarily illegal logging and marijuana cultivation inside the Park.

The State Party responded with an action plan which included provision of additional vehicles, increased patrols, community

awareness projects, training of forest guards and a review of the policy affecting the adjacent forest reserve. Based on these assurances, the Committee inscribed the site in 1997.

Today, some threats still remain but there has been significant progress in the management of the site.

Angkor Place of  
Worship in Cambodia





## Successful restorations

**Angkor in Cambodia.** One of the most important archaeological sites in South-East Asia, Angkor Archaeological Park contains the magnificent remains of the different capitals of the Khmer Empire, from the 9th to the 15th century. In 1993, UNESCO embarked upon an ambitious plan to safeguard and develop the historical site carried out by the Division of Cultural Heritage in close cooperation with the World Heritage Centre. Illicit excavation, pillaging of archaeological sites and landmines were the main problems.

The World Heritage Committee, having noted that these threats to the site no longer existed and that the numerous conservation and restoration activities coordinated by UNESCO were successful, removed the site from the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2004.

### **Old 'City of Dubrovnik in Croatia.**

The 'pearl of the Adriatic', dotted with beautiful Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque buildings had withstood the passage of centuries and survived several earthquakes. In November and December 1991, when seriously damaged by artillery fire, the city was immediately included on the List of World Heritage in Danger. with UNESCO



providing technical advice and financial assistance, the Croatian Government restored the facades of the Franciscan and Dominican cloisters, repaired roofs and rebuilt palaces. As a result, in December 1998, it became possible to remove the city from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

**Wieliczka Salt Mine in Poland.** This property was inscribed in 1978 as one of the first twelve World Heritage sites. This great mine has been actively worked since the 13th century. Its 300 kilometres of galleries contain famous works of art with altars and statues sculpted in salt, all of which were seriously threatened by humidity due to the introduction of artificial ventilation at the end of the nineteenth century. The site was placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1989. During nine years of joint efforts by both Poland and the international community, an efficient dehumidifying system was installed, and the Committee, at its session in December 1998, had the satisfaction of removing the site from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

**Ngorongoro Conservation Area in the united Republic of Tanzania.**

This huge crater with the largest concentration of wild animals in the world was listed as an endangered site in 1984 because of the overall deterioration of the site due to the lack of management. By 1989, thanks to continuous monitoring and technical cooperation projects, the situation had improved and the site was removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger.













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