



unesco

World Heritage in the
United Kingdom



**World
Heritage UK**

INTRODUCING WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN THE UK



WHAT IS WORLD HERITAGE?

World Heritage is the designation for places that are of ‘**Outstanding Universal Value**’ and have been inscribed onto UNESCO’s World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. The cultural or natural significance of these Sites is so exceptional that it transcends national boundaries and is of common importance for global humanity.

World Heritage Sites are special places for all to visit, explore and enjoy.

The United Kingdom Government, as a signatory to UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention, pledged to conserve and protect its World Heritage Sites inscribed on the World Heritage List.

As of 2024, there are 35 World Heritage Sites in the UK and the British Overseas Territories. The types of Sites include cultural heritage, natural heritage and a mix of both. UK places have been inscribed on the World Heritage List since the mid 1980’s.

World Heritage Sites in the UK are owned, planned, and managed by a range of organisations and partnerships including central government agencies, local councils

There are over 1200 World Heritage Sites in 168 countries worldwide and these include a wide variety of very significant historic features and monuments of all ages, exceptional landscapes and townscapes, and valuable ecosystems and natural phenomena. In many cases the Sites form part of living, working places, where the balance of conservation and every day activities and land uses, is the key to their future protection and sustainability.

WORLD HERITAGE IN THE UK

and charitable trusts. All of these follow UNESCO’s guidance on Site management. The Sites are also integrated into the UK’s national and local planning policy framework.

In accordance with World Heritage Convention guidance, the UK Government can nominate additional candidate World Heritage Sites for inclusion on the List. A Site is selected from the UK’s ‘Tentative List’ or short list of Sites previously assessed and agreed - see bit.ly/tentativelistuk. The assessment process prescribed by UNESCO for the Site to reach Inscription on the World Heritage List may take a minimum of 2-3 years.

WORLD HERITAGE UK

OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

‘Supporting the UK Sites of outstanding global importance’

World Heritage UK (WHUK) is a charity focused entirely on raising the profile and securing the sustainable future of UK World Heritage Sites by advocating for support and resources, and promoting the importance of the values of the Sites. It also facilitates networking and training, and ensuring the sharing of good practice in World Heritage Site planning and management across the UK.

WHUK represents all of the UK’s Sites and the network of Coordinators who manage the World Heritage Sites at a local level. WHUK works closely with national governmental and other organisations and agencies, who have, as part of wider remits, some involvement in World Heritage. WHUK aims to establish a coherent approach to UK World Heritage Sites which will be better known, understood, and supported through sustainable funding. The **Outstanding Universal Values** of the Sites can provide inspiration, learning and enjoyment for society and future generations.

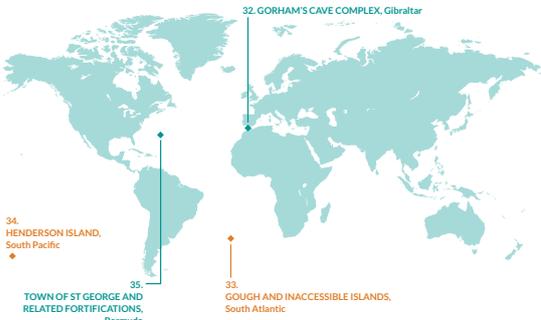


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UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES



UK OVERSEAS WORLD HERITAGE SITES

KEY TO SITE TYPE

- Cultural
- Natural
- Mixed

CENTRAL MAP SCALE BAR

0 50 100 km

32. GORHAM'S CAVE COMPLEX, Gibraltar

34. HENDERSON ISLAND, South Pacific

35. TOWN OF ST GEORGE AND RELATED FORTIFICATIONS, Bermuda

33. GOUGH AND INACCESSIBLE ISLANDS, South Atlantic

11. THE FLOW COUNTRY, Scotland

12. THE FORTH BRIDGE, Scotland

13. HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY, Scotland

16. FRONTIERS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, HADRIAN'S WALL, Northern England

17. FRONTIERS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, THE ANTONINE WALL, Scotland

22. OLD AND NEW TOWNS OF EDINBURGH, Scotland

26. ST KILDA, Hebrides, Scotland

20. MORAVIAN CHURCH SETTLEMENTS GRACEHILL, Northern Ireland

21. NEW LANARK, Scotland

09. DURHAM CASTLE AND CATHEDRAL, Northern England

10. THE ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT, Northwest England

27. SALTAIRE, West Yorkshire

30. STUDLEY ROYAL PARK AND THE RUINS OF FOUNTAINS ABBEY, Yorkshire

18. JODRELL BANK OBSERVATORY, Central West England

04. GWYNEDD CASTLES AND TOWN WALLS OF KING EDWARD, Wales

07. IRONBRIDGE GORGE, Central West England

08. DORSET AND EAST DEVON COAST, South West England

06. THE SLATE LANDSCAPE OF NORTHWEST WALES, Wales

05. BLAENAVON INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE, Wales

01. BLENHEIM PALACE, Oxford

02. PONTYCYLLTE AQUEDUCT AND CANAL, North East Wales

03. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL AND RELATED SITES, Kent

07. DERWENT VALLEY MILLS, Central England

24. THE GREAT SPA TOWNS OF EUROPE, Bath and 10 other towns in six more countries

28. MINING LANDSCAPE OF CORNWALL AND WEST DEVON, South West England

29. PALACE OF WESTMINSTER AND RELATED SITES, London

25. ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW, London

23. CITY OF BATH, South West England

02. STONEHENGE, AVEBURY AND ASSOCIATED SITES, Southern England

03. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL AND RELATED SITES, Kent

01. MARITIME GREENWICH, London

02. TOWER OF LONDON

Further Information:



bit.ly/ukwhslist

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World Heritage Sites are recognised by UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) as places of international significance cultural or natural heritage, whose Outstanding Universal Value is considered to transcend national boundaries and to be of importance for future generations.

Being placed on the World Heritage List is a high accolade and demonstrates international recognition of the Site's significance. Countries with World Heritage Sites give an undertaking to UNESCO to manage them to ensure that their Outstanding Universal Value is sustained into the future.



A SNAPSHOT OF UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

01.

BLAENAVON INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE, Wales

The area around Blaenavon is evidence of the pre-eminence of South Wales as the world's major producer of iron and coal in the 19th Century. All the necessary elements can still be seen - coal and ore mines, quarries, a primitive railway system, furnaces, workers' homes, and the social infrastructure of their community.

- ♦ visitblaenavon.co.uk
- ♦ bit.ly/unescoblaenavon

02.

BLenheim PALACE, Oxford

The Palace stands in a romantic park created by the landscape gardener 'Capability' Brown. It was given to John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, for his victory in 1704 over French and Bavarian troops. Built between 1705 and 1722 and characterised by an eclectic style and a return to national roots, it is a perfect example of an 18th Century princely dwelling.

- ♦ blenheimpalace.com
- ♦ bit.ly/unescoblenheim

03.

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL AND RELATED SITES, Kent

Canterbury, in Kent, has been the seat of the spiritual head of the Church of England for nearly five centuries. Related monuments are the Church of St Martin, the oldest church in England; the ruins of the Abbey of St Augustine, and Christ Church Cathedral, a breathtaking mixture of Romanesque and Perpendicular Gothic architecture.

- ♦ bit.ly/canterburycatwhs
- ♦ bit.ly/unescocanterbury

04.

GWYNEDD CASTLES AND TOWN WALLS OF KING EDWARD, Wales

The castles of Beaumaris and Harlech and the fortified complexes of Caernarfon and Conwy are extremely well-preserved monuments and are examples of the colonisation and defence works carried out in Wales throughout the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) and the military architecture of the time.

- ♦ bit.ly/gwyneddcastles
- ♦ bit.ly/unescogwynedd

05.

CITY OF BATH, South West England

A well-preserved Roman spa survives at Britain's only hot springs. The City was totally remodelled in the 18th Century with elegant neoclassical Palladian buildings laid out in terraces and crescents, built in harmony with the surrounding countryside. This Georgian spa has a second inscription as a component part of the trans-national 'Great Spa Towns of Europe' inscription.

- ♦ bathworldheritage.org.uk
- ♦ bit.ly/unescobath

06.

MINING LANDSCAPE OF CORNWALL AND WEST DEVON, South West England

Radical reshaping of the region's landscape during the 18th and 19th Centuries resulted from rapid growth of copper and tin mining. An extensive legacy of mines, engine houses, ports, canals, railways, industries and settlement remain. These reflect the rapidly developed mining innovation that was exported around the world.

- ♦ cornishmining.org.uk
- ♦ bit.ly/unescomining

KEY TO SITE TYPE

 Cultural

 Mixed

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A SNAPSHOT OF UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

07.

DERWENT VALLEY MILLS, Central England

The Valley contains a series of 18th and 19th Century intact cotton mills and associated historic industrial landscapes and settlements. Modern factory technology owes its origins to the water driven spinning mills at Cromford, where Richard Arkwright's inventions resulted in the birth of industrial-scale production.

- ◆ derwentvalleymills.org
- ◆ bit.ly/unescoderwent

08.

DORSET AND EAST DEVON COAST, South West England

The cliff exposures along the Dorset and East Devon coast provide an almost continuous sequence of rock formations spanning the Mesozoic Era, or some 185 million years of the earth's history. Also known as the 'Jurassic Coast', the area's important fossil sites and classic coastal geomorphologic features have contributed to the study of earth sciences for over 300 years.

- ◆ jurassiccoast.org
- ◆ bit.ly/unescodorset

09.

DURHAM CASTLE AND CATHEDRAL, Northern England

The Cathedral was built in the late 11th and early 12th Centuries to house the relics of St Cuthbert and the Venerable Bede. It attests to the importance of the early Benedictine monastic community. Foreshadowing Gothic architecture, it is the largest and finest example of Norman architecture in England. The adjacent, ancient Norman castle was the residence of the prince-bishops of Durham.

- ◆ bit.ly/durhamwhs
- ◆ bit.ly/unescodurham

10.

THE ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT, North West England

An extensive and self contained mountainous lakeland modelled by glaciers and shaped by particular agro-pastoral landuse systems. The harmony and drama of the landscapes inspired the 18th Century literature and paintings of the Picturesque and late Romantic movements. Awareness of landscape beauty inspired and triggered early preservation efforts.

- ◆ lakesworldheritage.co.uk
- ◆ bit.ly/unescolakes

11.

THE FLOW COUNTRY, Scotland

The world's most intact, extensive blanket bog system. Stretching across Caithness and Sutherland in the far north of Scotland this vast expanse of blanket bog comprises complex interlinked pool systems and micro features that host an eye-catching flora and fauna and play a vital role in our defence against the effects of climate change. From above the mottled colours of peat and pools shift like an opal. But look closer and you'll find a world of amazing plants, rare birds, and inspiration in the peaceful space.

- ◆ theflowcountry.org.uk
- ◆ bit.ly/unescoflow

12.

THE FORTH BRIDGE, Scotland

Opened in 1890 and crossing the Forth estuary, the railway bridge had the world's longest spans (541 m). It remains one of the greatest cantilever trussed bridges, marking an important milestone in bridge design and continues to carry rail traffic today. Its innovative style and distinctive industrial aesthetic is the result of a forthright and unadorned display of its structural components.

- ◆ theforthbridges.org
- ◆ bit.ly/unescoforth

KEY TO SITE TYPE

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A SNAPSHOT OF UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

13.

FRONTIERS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, Northern England; Scotland

The Northern border line of the Roman Empire stretched from Britain through Europe to the Red Sea. In the UK, Hadrians' Wall, built c.AD122 (118km in length) is a striking example of the organisation of a Roman military zone. The Antonine Wall/earthworks across Scotland was started in AD142 (60km in length) as defence against the 'barbarians' of the north.

- ◆ hadrianswallcountry.co.uk
- ◆ antoninewall.org
- ◆ bit.ly/unescofrontiers

14.

GIANT'S CAUSEWAY, Northern Ireland

A spectacular area of geological importance on the sea coast of the Antrim plateau. The most characteristic and unique feature is the exposure of 40,000 massive regularly shaped black basalt columns created 50-60 million years ago and now forming cliffs and a pavement sticking out from the sea. Studies of these formations over the last 300 years greatly contributed to the development of the earth sciences.

- ◆ bit.ly/ntgiants
- ◆ bit.ly/unescogiants

15.

THE GREAT SPA TOWNS OF EUROPE, Bath and 10 other towns in six more countries

Representing the heyday of the European spa phenomenon, 11 towns from 7 countries demonstrate the special urban development forms of these settlements which attracted a prestigious clientele. All use natural springs for curative and leisure purposes, complemented by beautiful landscape settings. Bath is the UK component Site, joining towns from Austria, Belgium, Czechia, France, Germany and Italy.

- ◆ greatspatownsofeurope.eu
- ◆ bit.ly/unescopatowns

16.

HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY, Scotland

The group of monuments consists of a chambered tomb (Maes Howe), two ceremonial stone circles (the Stones of Stenness/ the Ring of Brodgar) and a settlement (Skara Brae), together with a number of unexcavated burial, ceremonial and settlement sites. This prehistoric cultural landscape is clear evidence of life in this remote, northern archipelago 5,000 years ago.

- ◆ bit.ly/hsorkney
- ◆ bit.ly/unescoorkney

17.

IRONBRIDGE GORGE, Central West England

Well known as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution, Ironbridge contains all the elements of progress that contributed to the rapid development of this 18th Century industrial region. The bridge, the world's first constructed of iron, had a considerable influence on developments in the fields of technology and architecture. The blast furnace of Coalbrookdale (1708), is a reminder of the discovery of coke.

- ◆ ironbridgegorgewhs.co.uk
- ◆ bit.ly/unescoironbridge

18.

JODRELL BANK OBSERVATORY, Central West England

One of the world's leading radio astronomy observatories. This observatory, still in operation, is an exceptional technological ensemble including several radio telescopes and working buildings, illustrating the transition from traditional optical astronomy to radio astronomy (1940s to 1960s) which led to radical changes in the understanding of the universe.

- ◆ jodrellbank.net
- ◆ bit.ly/unescojodrell

A SNAPSHOT OF UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

19.

MARITIME GREENWICH, London

The ensemble of buildings at Greenwich, and their setting, symbolise English artistic and scientific endeavour in the 17th and 18th Centuries. The Queen's House (by Inigo Jones) was the first Palladian building in England, while the complex that was until recently the Royal Naval College was designed by Christopher Wren. The park, based on an original design by André Le Nôtre, contains the Old Royal Observatory.

- ◆ greenwichworldheritage.org
- ◆ bit.ly/unescogreenwich

20.

MORAVIAN CHURCH SETTLEMENTS GRACEHILL, Northern Ireland and 3 other towns in three more countries

'Moravian Church Settlements' includes Gracehill, Bethlehem (USA), Herrnhut (Germany) and Christiansfeld (Denmark). They represent early town planning with values of education, equality, industry, tolerance, and spirituality. Constructed in a grid plan, Gracehill is typically Moravian having a Church, central Square, and God's Acre (burial ground). It is renowned for its international links and religious and political tolerance.

- ◆ gracehillvillage.org
- ◆ bit.ly/unescomoravian

21.

NEW LANARK, Scotland

New Lanark is a small 18th Century village set in a sublime landscape where the philanthropist and Utopian idealist Robert Owen moulded a model industrial community in the early 19th Century. The imposing cotton mill buildings, the spacious and well-designed workers' housing, and the dignified educational institute and school still testify to Owen's humanism.

- ◆ bit.ly/newlanarkscotwhs
- ◆ bit.ly/unesconewlanark

22.

OLD AND NEW TOWNS OF EDINBURGH, Scotland

The City has been the Scottish capital since the 15th Century. It has two distinct areas: the Old Town, dominated by a medieval fortress; and the neoclassical New Town, whose development from the 18th Century onwards had a far-reaching influence on European urban planning. The harmonious juxtaposition of these two contrasting historic areas, each with many important buildings, gives the city its unique character.

- ◆ ewh.org.uk
- ◆ bit.ly/unescoedinburgh

23.

PALACE OF WESTMINSTER AND RELATED SITES, London

Westminster Palace, rebuilt from the year 1840 on the site of important medieval remains, is a fine example of neo-Gothic architecture. The Site - which also comprises the small medieval Church of Saint Margaret, built in Perpendicular Gothic style, and Westminster Abbey, where all the sovereigns since the 11th Century have been crowned - is of great historic and symbolic significance.

- ◆ westminster-abbey.org
- ◆ bit.ly/unescowestminster

24.

PONTCYSYLLTE AQUEDUCT AND CANAL, North East Wales

The 18 kilometre long aqueduct and canal is a feat of civil engineering of the Industrial Revolution, completed early in the 19th Century. Challenging topography required bold design solutions. The monumental and elegant aqueduct is a pioneering masterpiece of engineering and metal architecture, conceived by the celebrated civil engineer Thomas Telford.

- ◆ pontcysyllte-aqueduct.co.uk
- ◆ bit.ly/unescopontcysyllte

A SNAPSHOT OF UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

25.

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW, London

The historic landscape gardens and features illustrate significant periods of the art of gardens from the 18th to the 20th Centuries. The botanic collections (conserved plants, living plants and documents) have been considerably enriched through the centuries. Since their creation in 1759, the gardens have made a significant and uninterrupted contribution to the study of plant diversity and economic botany globally.

- ◆ bit.ly/kewwhs
- ◆ bit.ly/unescokew

26.

ST KILDA, Hebrides, Scotland

The spectacular landscapes of the volcanic archipelago comprise the islands of Hirta, Dun, Soay and Boreray. Including some of Europe's highest cliffs and large colonies of rare and endangered birds, the archipelago has been uninhabited since 1930. They bear evidence of over 2000 years of human occupation adapted to the extreme and exposed conditions of the Hebrides.

- ◆ bit.ly/stkildawhs
- ◆ bit.ly/unescokilda

27.

SALTAIRE, West Yorkshire

A complete and well-preserved industrial village of the second half of the 19th Century. Its harmonious textile mills, public buildings and workers' housing are of high architectural standards and the urban plan survives intact. It is an example of Victorian philanthropic paternalism which had a profound influence on developments in industrial social welfare and urban planning in the UK and beyond.

- ◆ bit.ly/saltairewhs
- ◆ bit.ly/unescosaltaire

28.

THE SLATE LANDSCAPE OF NORTHWEST WALES

This post-industrial landscape holds a special place in the hearts of the people who live here and the cultural and social influence is still significant today. The Site tells the story of evolution from an agricultural society to an area where industry dominated the landscape; where slate quarries, towns and villages appeared, and transport links carved their way through Snowdonia to ports that exported slate to global markets.

- ◆ llechi.cymru
- ◆ bit.ly/unescoslate

29.

STONEHENGE, AVEBURY AND ASSOCIATED SITES, Southern England

Stonehenge is the most architecturally sophisticated prehistoric stone circle in the world, while Avebury is the largest. Together with inter-related monuments, and their associated landscapes, they demonstrate around 2000 continuous years of Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial and mortuary practices, and monument building. These were constructed between circa 3700 and 1600 BC.

- ◆ bit.ly/stonehengewhs
- ◆ bit.ly/unescostonehenge

30.

STUDLEY ROYAL PARK AND THE RUINS OF FOUNTAINS ABBEY, Yorkshire

An elegant 18th Century water garden in the 'English Style' incorporates the ruins of Fountains Abbey, some of the largest Cistercian abbey ruins in Europe. The water gardens and abbey share the landscape with a deer park, Jacobean mansion Fountains Hall and a magnificent Victorian church designed by William Burges.

- ◆ bit.ly/ntstudleywhs
- ◆ bit.ly/unescostudley

A SNAPSHOT OF UK WORLD HERITAGE SITES

31.

TOWER OF LONDON

The massive White Tower, with its strategic position on the River Thames, is a typical example of Norman military architecture, whose influence was felt throughout the kingdom. It was built by William the Conqueror in 1066 to protect London and assert his power. A rare survivor of a continuously developing ensemble of royal buildings, The Tower of London is an imposing fortress with many layers of history and has become one of the symbols of royalty.

- ◆ bit.ly/toweroflondonwhs
- ◆ bit.ly/unescotoweroflondon

World Heritage Sites are recognised by UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) as places of internationally significant cultural or natural heritage, whose **Outstanding Universal Value** is considered to transcend national boundaries and to be of importance for future generations.

To find out more about World Heritage Sites in the UK see here:

UNESCO



bit.ly/ukwhslist

WORLD HERITAGE UK



worldheritageuk.org

UK OVERSEAS WORLD HERITAGE SITES

32.

GORHAM'S CAVE COMPLEX, Gibraltar

Four caves with archaeological and paleontological deposits that provide evidence of Neanderthal occupation over a span of more than 100,000 years.

- ◆ gorhamscave.gi
- ◆ bit.ly/unescogorhams

33.

GOUGH AND INACCESSIBLE ISLANDS, South Atlantic

The Site, located in the south Atlantic, is one of the least-disrupted island and marine ecosystems in the cool temperate zone.

- ◆ bit.ly/goughislands
- ◆ bit.ly/unescogough

34.

HENDERSON ISLAND, South Pacific

One of the few atolls in the world whose ecology has been practically untouched by a human presence.

- ◆ visitpitcairn.pn
- ◆ bit.ly/unescohenderson

35.

TOWN OF ST GEORGE AND RELATED FORTIFICATIONS, Bermuda

Founded in 1612, the town is an outstanding example of the earliest English urban settlement in the New World.

- ◆ sgf.bm
- ◆ bit.ly/unescostgeorge



KEY TO SITE TYPE



Cultural



Mixed



Natural

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MORE INFORMATION FOR VISITORS TO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN THE UK

◆ Where are the UK World Heritage Sites?

As the map overleaf shows, 31 of the 35 Sites are distributed throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. More detailed information on their location and accessibility can be found on the website links in this leaflet. The remaining 4 Sites are located offshore in British Overseas Territories.

◆ What features are included in UK World Heritage Sites?

The UK Sites include a wide range of historic monuments and past industry, landscapes, townscapes, and natural geological and ecological features. These are summarised in this leaflet and more detailed descriptions and suggestions for visitors can be found for each on the website links given.

◆ Why were the UK Sites inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO?

The **Outstanding Universal Value** of each is summarised on the UNESCO website bit.ly/ukwhslist and on the World Heritage UK website worldheritageuk.org

