

SOME POPULAR WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN INDIA



Agra Fort (Agra, Uttar Pradesh - 1983) – Built by the Mughal emperor Akbar in the 16th century, the massive Agra fort is located close to world famous Taj Mahal. Also known as the Red Fort of Agra, the fort houses a number of magnificent structures such as Jahangir Palace, Khas Mahal, Diwan-i-Khas and two very beautiful mosques.

Ajanta Caves (Aurangabad, Maharashtra - 1983) – Ajanta Caves, the first Buddhist caves, date back to the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. are one of the world's greatest historical monuments. There are 30 caves at Ajanta, of which 5 are chaityagrihas and the rest are monasteries. Ajanta caves are a masterpiece of mud-plaster paintings in tempera technique, made over centuries since the 2nd century. All paintings show heavy religious influence and centre around Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and incidents from Buddha's life. Today, the sculptures and paintings at Ajanta are considered masterpieces of Buddhist religious art.

Ellora Caves (Aurangabad, Maharashtra - 1983) – Situated close to Ajanta caves, the Ellora complex is home to 34 monasteries and temples dedicated to Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. Built between 5th–11th century, Ellora caves are home to the largest single monolithic structure in the world. Ellora Caves bring the civilization of ancient India to life and are a unique masterpiece of co-existence and amalgamation of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist religions.

Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh - 1989) – Sanchi is located approx 60 kms from Bhopal, on a hill overlooking the plains. The site comprises of a group of Buddhist monuments (monolithic pillars, temples and monasteries and stupas), tracing the growth of Buddhist architecture and sculptures from the 3rd century BC to the 12th century AD. Emperor Ashoka built the Stupa at Sanchi, the central chamber of which contains relics of Buddha. The stupas at Sanchi are ornamented by depiction of incidents from the life of Lord Buddha, his previous incarnations and various episodes from Jataka tales. The museum at Sanchi displays a collection of artifacts found at the site, and nearby locations

Champaner – Pavagadh Archaeological Park (Panchmahal, Gujarat - 2004) – This site is dotted with unexcavated archaeological, historic and cultural heritage properties including prehistoric sites, a hill fortress of an early Hindu capital, and remains of the 16th-century capital of the state of Gujarat. The site also houses fortifications, palaces, religious buildings, residential precincts, agricultural structures and water installations, built from the 8th to 14th centuries.

Churches and Convents of Goa (Old Goa -1986) – Once the capital of the Portuguese, Old Goa is home to a number of churches and convents. The heritage sites include the Church of Bom Jesus, which contains the tomb of St Francis-Xavier.

Elephanta Caves (Kolaba, Maharashtra - 1987) – Set on an island close to Mumbai, Elephanta caves are home to 7th century rock-cut temples, featuring delicately carved panels depicting the life of Lord Shiva. The highlight is the main central cave that houses the 'Maheshamurti' - a three-headed sculpture of Lord Shiva resplendent in all his 3 forms i.e. creator, preserver and destroyer of life.

Fatehpur Sikri (Agra, Uttar Pradesh - 1986) – Fatehpur Sikri meaning the 'City of Victory' is red sandstone Mughal palatial complex, a fine example of Indo-Islamic architectural style. Within the complex lies a mosque built by the Mughal Emperor Akbar and dedicated to Sheikh Salim Chisti, a Muslim Sufi Saint who blessed Emperor Akbar with a son. Fatehpur Sikri, perched atop a rocky ridge, 40 km west of Agra, used to be the erstwhile capital of the Mughal Empire, which was abandoned by the Mughals due to water shortage..



Group of Monuments at Hampi (Bellary, Karnataka - 1986) – Hampi was the last capital of the Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagar. It remains one of the most fascinating historical sites in South India and the most beautiful and evocative of all ruins in the state of Karnataka. The Dravidian temples and palaces at Hampi date back to the 14th and 16th centuries and some of the structural ruins still exemplify architectural marvels.

Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (Chingleput, Tamil Nadu - 1984) –, Mahabalipuram, founded by the Pallava Kings, is a town famous for its rocks carvings and monolithic sculptures. The main attractions here include the Shore temple (one of the oldest temples in south India, belonging to the early 8th century AD), Arjuna's penance (the world's largest bas-relief measuring 27m x 9m - this huge rock consists figures of Gods, men, beasts, birds and represents the entire creation), Five Rathas (five monolithic temples, each having its own style - also known as the "Panch Pandav Rathas").

Group of Monuments at Pattadakal (Bijapur, Karnataka - 1987) – Ruled by the Chalukyas in the 7th and 8th centuries, the monuments at Pattadakal are known for their unique architectural forms from northern and southern India. Here one can see an impressive series of nine Hindu temples, and a Jain sanctuary.

Humayun's Tomb Delhi (1993) - Built in 1570, the Humayun's tomb in Delhi is a fine example of early Mughal architecture. The tomb is of particular cultural significance as it was the first garden-tomb of the Indian subcontinent. In fact, the tomb later inspired several major architectural innovations, including the construction of the world famous Taj Mahal. Humayun's tomb is built in the classic Persian char bagh style - a central tomb surrounded by formal gardens. The Emperor along with his wife and other members lay buried here.

Khajuraho group of monuments (Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh - 1986) – Constructed by Chandella rulers between 950 and 1050 A.D, the temples in Khajuraho are known for their erotic sculptures, drawing their inspiration from the ancient art of Kama sutra. Originally, Khajuraho had around 86 temples, but now only 20 temples remain, belonging to Hinduism and Jainism.

Mahabodhi Temple Complex (Bodhgaya, Bihar - 2002) – The Mahabodhi temple complex houses temples and the famous Bo tree where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment. Mahabodhi Temple Complex draws Buddhist tourists from across the globe.

Mountain Railways of India (Darjeeling, Shimla, Nilgiris - 1999) – The heritage site includes the Darjeeling Himalayan railway, Kalka – Shimla railway and Nilgiris Mountain railway. Built by the British, the railways pass through winding treks in mountains and numerous tunnels. Mountain railway was highly significant in facilitating population movement in the British colonial era and till date serves as a convenient mode of transport to hill stations in India.

Qutub Minar and its monuments (Delhi - 1993) – Built in the early 13th century, the Qutub Minar is a fine example of Indo-Islamic architecture and is the world's tallest minaret. The minaret is 72.5m high, tapering from 2.75m in diameter at its peak to 14.32m at its base. The tower is surrounded by structures of archaeological significance such as funerary buildings, notably the magnificent Alai-Darwaza Gate, the masterpiece of Indo-Muslim art (built in 1311), and two mosques, including the Quwwatu'l-Islam.

Red Fort Complex (Delhi - 2007) – Situated in the heart of Old Delhi, the Red Fort Complex was built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, as the palace fort of Shahjahanabad. Named for its massive red sandstone enclosing walls, the fort is home to a number of magnificent structures including the famous Diwan – I – Khas and Diwan – I – Aam.

Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh - 1993) – Set in the foothills of the Vindhyan Mountains, the Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka are five clusters of natural rock shelters, displaying paintings that date from the Mesolithic Period right through to the historical period. The cultural traditions of the inhabitants of the 21 villages adjacent to the site bear a strong resemblance to those represented in the rock paintings.

Sun Temple, Konark (Puri, Orissa - 1984) – Konark, a small coastal town in Orissa is best known for its 13th century architectural wonder, the Sun Temple. This magnificent black granite temple was conceived as an exquisite 12 wheeled chariot of Sun God 'Surya' being pulled by 7 horses and remains an architectural masterpiece to date.



Taj Mahal (Agra, Uttar Pradesh - 1983) – One of the seven wonders of the world, Taj Mahal is a picturesque mausoleum of white marble. Built in the 17th century by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife, the Taj Mahal is the jewel of Muslim art in India. Often referred to as a poem in white marble, Taj Mahal displays the saga of love between Emperor Shah Jahan and his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal

Kaziranga National Park (Assam - 1985) – Situated in the heart of Assam, Kaziranga National Park is one of the few remaining regions of eastern India undisturbed by mankind. Kaziranga is known for the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses, as well as tigers, elephants, panthers and bears, and thousands of native and migratory birds.

Keoladeo Ghana National Park (Bharatpur, Rajasthan - 1985) – Once the duck hunting reserve of the Rajput Maharajas, today Keoladeo Ghana National Park is home to a large number of native and migratory birds, especially aquatic birds. The national park accommodates more than 365 species of birds, including the rare Siberian crane. The national park is also known as Bharatpur National Park.

Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (Assam - 1985) – One of the important wildlife parks of India, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary is known for the good population of one-horned rhinoceros. Manas sanctuary is also home to a great variety of wildlife, including tigers, pygmy hog and Indian elephants.

Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (Uttarakhand - 1988) – Nestled high in Western Himalayas, in the state of Uttarakhand, Valley of Flowers National Park is noted for its meadows of endemic alpine flowers and outstanding natural beauty. This park is also home to rare and endangered wildlife, including the Asiatic black bear, snow leopard, brown bear and blue sheep. Set amidst rugged mountain terrain, Nanda Devi National Park encompasses a unique transition zone between the mountain ranges of the Zaskar and the Great Himalayas.

Sunderbans National Park (West Bengal - 1987) – World's largest delta, the Sunderbans cover 10,000kms of land and water (more than half of it in India, the rest in Bangladesh). Sunderbans is renowned for housing world's largest area of mangrove forests. Here you can spot a number of rare and endangered species including the famous Bengal tigers, aquatic mammals, birds and reptiles. A unique wildlife park, Sunderband National Park is the only one of its kind in India, where you can cruise through the park spotting a variety of flora and fauna.