

World Heritage Sites in Nepal

World Heritage Sites are areas that belong to everyone on the planet, according to the UN governing organization UNESCO. There are a number of monuments in Nepal that are listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

These world heritage sites in Nepal are incredible accomplishments of human creativity. Some of these date back more than 2500 years.

You may visit several of these sites inside the Kathmandu Valley in a single day because of their close proximity. Only three of the sites classified as UNESCO World Heritage Sites are outside of the capital city Kathmandu.

How Many World Heritage Sites Are There in Nepal?

Nepal features a total of 4 major World Heritage Sites:

The Kathmandu Valley and Lumbini Province (Cultural Heritage); Chitwan National Park and Sagarmatha National Park (falling under Natural Heritage/Conservation Areas), respectively.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has several criteria for selection on its World Heritage List. These requirements establish on many cultural and natural factors. Every site must possess an 'outstanding universal value as a prerequisite for the list.

An understanding of the history and roots of every Nepalese sub-culture and tribe is crucial, along with the religions that connect to them. The sites described below demonstrate cultural and natural wonders that prove to be timelessly valuable heritage.

(I) The Kathmandu Valley-World Heritage Sites in Nepal-

The Kathmandu Valley Heritage Site received the earliest mention on the UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979. The area comprises various uniquely remarkable locations within itself, and the list below provides brief descriptions of each site:

» Bhaktapur Durbar Square:



This ancient royal Palace is in Bhaktapur (a.k.a. Khwopa). The Kshatriya Dynasty (Malla Dynasty), which ruled until the late 17th century, had established a royal residence here.

Post-subjugation of this compound by the Gorkhali forces, and due to earthquakes that came afterward, the Palace lost most of its original structures. Finally, it succumbed to the buildings that now remain.

The remaining structures are a fine example of Nepalese architecture – more precisely, the Sikhara style. The 55-window Palace, courtyards, sandstone temples, statues of kings, mythical creatures and animals, fountains, and pagodas are all exemplary works of architecture.

The most notable Temple within the Bhaktapur Durbar Square is the Taumadhi Square, which hosts the tallest pagoda-style Temple, the Nyatapola Temple (also called the Panch Talee Mandir). Public entry inside this Temple is prohibited since it houses a tantric incarnation of a

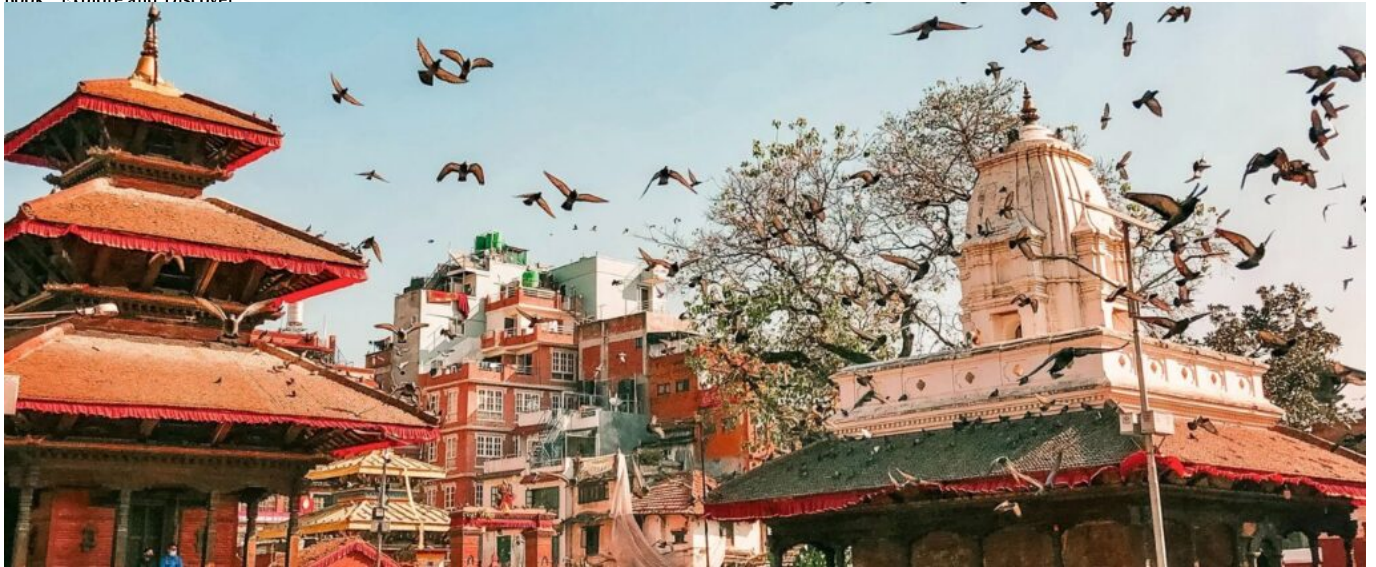
» Patan Durbar Square:



This historical site is in Lalitpur, the southern part of the Kathmandu valley. This was another residence of the royal kings of the Malla Dynasty. The structures are composed predominantly of red bricks in the style of Newari Architecture (Indigenous people of the Kathmandu Valley).

This area has 136 courtyards and 55 temples, and some feature intricate erotic carvings on their roofs. The temples closely resemble other Shiva temples in the Indian subcontinent.

» Kathmandu Durbar Square:



Located in the anterior of the former royal Palace is yet another extravagant showcase of traditional historical Newari architecture: The Kathmandu Durbar Square. Its origin dates back to the 3rd century of the Licchavi dynasty and acts as a central royal palace for many prominent rulers. (like the pre-eminent Prithvi Narayan Shah)

The site hosts the famous Hanuman Dhoka Complex across five acres of land occupying the central region of the Kathmandu Valley.

» **Boudhanath:**



Boudhanath, the biggest stupa in Nepal, was built upon the remains of the Kassapa Buddha. Kassapa Buddha was the predecessor of a renowned figure in Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama. Kassapa was a giant being (about 10 meters in height, according to legends) and lived to a prosperous age of 2000.

After the 2015 earthquake, the stupa's spire was subject to severe damage, and the entire structure above the dome had to undergo renovation. Donations from various Buddhist groups and volunteers facilitated the repairs of this ancient structure. Rumors are that the funds have amounted to a gross total of over 2 million US dollars.

The Prime Minister of Nepal during that time, Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, facilitated the inauguration of this monument.

» **Swayambhunath Temple:**



In the western part of the Kathmandu Valley lies a sacred Buddhist Pilgrimage Site known as Swayambhu (colloquial) or simply the Monkey Temple. The rich diversity of trees on this hill gives it the name Phags.Pa Shing.Kun (Tibetan transliteration), meaning 'Sublime Trees.' The site houses several temples, stupas, and shrines that date back to the Licchavi Era.

The main stupa has Buddha's eyes painted on its central axis and a number '1' (Devanagari) in between, resembling a nose. A tall stretch of stairs that run up to the face of the Temple characterizes this monument. A motorable road rises around the back hill and ends a few staircases below the back of the stupa. A small pond with a wishing fountain and several souvenir shops can be found where this motorable road ends.

From this hilltop, you can witness a cinematic view of the Valley and the urban agglomeration that foils the city.

» **Changunarayan Temple:**



It is on a hill north of Bhaktapur, populated by a dense forest of Champak trees. Consecrated to Lord Vishnu (The Preserver of cosmic order), this pagoda is the oldest Temple in the history of Nepal. You can observe many elaborate carvings of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Laxmi, and Garuda on this structure.

King Haridatta Barma built the Temple in the 4th century of the Licchavi era. The trees bloom intensely fragrant flowers from June through September. Jean Patou's 'Joy,' the second best-selling perfume in the world, derives its ingredients from the essential oils of Champaca flowers. The tree associates itself with Buddhist enlightenment in the Theravedana (doctrine of the elders). The Theravedana considers itself to be the oldest of the Buddhist Scriptures.

» **Pashupatinath Temple:**



This Hindu Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, 'The Destroyer,' is among the 275 most significant Shiva temples on the continent. (The Thevara Sthalam). Pashupati is the god of animals—an incarnation of Lord Shiva. It is also the National Deity of Nepal.

The two-level-roofed pagoda style of architecture consists of copper and gold coverings, and the doors are silver sheets.

Mahashivratri and Teej are the two most prominent festivals celebrated in the Temple. In 2014, anticipating over seven lakhs of devotees for the festival of Shivratri, two popular banks set up ATM vending machines and counters inside the Temple. This demonstrates the sheer volume of devotees this World Heritage Site draws during its major religious festivals.

(II) Lumbini Province-World Heritage Sites in Nepal-



This site is accredited as the birthplace of the Lord Buddha himself. The holy site of Lumbini is devoid of any commercial institutions.

The Theravada monasteries lie on the east section of the site. Alternately, the Mahayana and Vajrayana monasteries lie to the west. A long water canal separates these two sections, providing motorboat tours along this canal. Nipponzan Myohoji built the peace pagoda here in 2001.

In 1896, a monolithic pillar was discovered that is said to have marked the visit of Ashoka the Great. This occurrence substantiates that Buddha was born under the Bodhi Tree here. A temple honoring Buddha's mother—the Maya Devi Temple (adjoining the sacred pool – Puskarni), also stands within the premises of the Lumbini Heritage Site.

Hindus believe Lord Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu, so this is also a Hindu Pilgrimage

Site for many people. In April and May, countless Hindus flock to this site to worship Rupa Devi/Maya Devi, the Mother Goddess of Lumbini.

(III) Chitwan National Park-World Heritage Sites in Nepal-



Established in 1973, this was the first national park in Nepal. It falls under category two of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. (IUCN)

The park area is maintained parallel to tourism goals, encouraging visitors without disrupting the animal habitat. Under the strict supervision of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, it aims to conserve all flora and fauna. In addition, this department also collects regular censuses on Endangered Species.

However, It is within the subtropical central terai of Nepal, with parts of it along the river valleys



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of the Sivalik Hills. The swamps, grasslands, and forests here were a hunting ground for the aristocracies during winters. Big game hunting was a common sport for centuries, and targets were chiefly sloth bears, elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, and leopards.

(IV) Sagarmatha National Park-World Heritage Sites in Nepal-



Sagarmatha means 'the Peak of Heaven' in Nepali, although many are inclined to translate the words directly—meaning Sagar = Sky and Matha = Head. This area in the Himalayas of eastern Nepal (Solukhumbu District) also falls under category II of the IUCN, designating it as a national park. The elevation of this area ranges from 2,845 meters to 8,848 meters.

It shares an international border with Tibet to its North, and southwards gives birth to the highest river (elevation-wise)—the Dudh Koshi. This river is the highest navigable white water, drawing the attention of several adrenaline junkies.



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Sharing a considerable portion of the Sacred Himalayan Landscape, this area is tormented by the constant threat of climate change. The ramifications are grievously unjust—especially for the self-sustaining community of the Sherpa people.

Moreover, there are already two distinct species near endangerment—the red panda and the snow leopard. Climate change is a collective blunder caused by human ignorance, industrialization, and apathy.

Which is the First World Heritage Site in Nepal?

The Sagarmatha National Park and the Kathmandu Valley were the first places in Nepal to be included on the World Heritage Site list; both were added in 1979.

Conclusion

However, all conclusive efforts to preserve the World Heritage Sites in Nepal were initiated a little behind schedule. In other words, what remains now holds more extreme significance than ever before. We hope we will make more enthusiastic efforts to preserve our cultural heritage. About a dozen areas in Nepal are still on the tentative list of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. Some examples are the Bharti Temple Complex of Dailekh, Sinja Valley, Ram Janaki Temple, and Nuwakot Palace Complex.

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