

Guidelines for icomos desk reviews

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1. GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED PROPERTY

Overall impressions or comments, if any.

2. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

(See the *Operational Guidelines*, paragraphs 49-53 and 77-78. See also *Preparing World Heritage Nominations*, 2nd edition, 2011, pp. 34-40.)

The World Heritage List is a list of properties identified by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee as having "Outstanding Universal Value."

The World Heritage Committee is a 21-member decision-making body elected by States Parties that have ratified the 1972 *World Heritage Convention*. The *Convention* is a property-based convention – properties themselves are inscribed on the List, not ideas or people as such, however great their global influence. Listed properties are required to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value through their **physical attributes**.

Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance that is so **exceptional** as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. In other words, the notion of Outstanding Universal Value can be interpreted as an outstanding response to issues of universal nature common to or addressed by all human cultures. Outstanding Universal Value is not about uniqueness – in principle, each property could be considered unique, but not necessarily outstanding. Neither is it about first examples, unless that property exhibits a particular significance and has had a durable and/or outstanding impact on subsequent similar properties.

Outstanding Universal Value is substantiated when the World Heritage Committee determines that one or more of the **World Heritage criteria** have been met. These criteria, with brief commentaries added, are appended to these guidelines for reference.

General questions related to the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the property:

- From your point of view, what makes this property outstanding within the context of the theme(s) proposed by the State Party?
- What is the relevant historic and/or cultural context or phenomenon in which the property should be placed in order to understand its significance?
 - Could this property be considered outstanding in the context of a different or additional theme(s) or perspective(s) than the one presented by the State(s) Party(ies)?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of this property as an illustration (outstanding or not) of a particular theme or themes?
- If in your view the property has the potential to justify Outstanding Universal Value, what are the attributes that convey the Outstanding Universal Value?
- **Attributes may include** form or design; materials; dynamic functions or relationships; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; intangible heritage such as spirit and feeling; or artistic, historic, social and scientific dimensions – whatever is needed to convey the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

(See the *Operational Guidelines, Annex 5 – Format for the Nomination, section 3.2. See also Preparing World Heritage Nominations, 2nd edition, 2011, pp. 32, 67-73.*)

The comparative analysis should explain the importance or significance of the proposed property in its international context. In order to do this, comparisons should be drawn with other properties that express the same or a similar combination of Outstanding Universal Value and attributes as the proposed property and are situated within the same geo-cultural area, which can be regional or global depending on the potential Outstanding Universal Value. The comparative properties may already be on the World Heritage List, on other States Parties' Tentative Lists, or on neither. The comparisons should outline the similarities of the proposed property has with other properties, and the reasons that demonstrate why the proposed property has no precise comparators.

General questions related to the comparative analysis for the property:

- What is the most appropriate comparative geo-cultural area, according to the potential Outstanding Universal Value expressed by the property? This geo-cultural area can be defined as a particular region of the world, or worldwide.
- Based on your knowledge, which comparators absolutely must be considered in any comparative analysis concerning the proposed property?
- What distinguishes or sets apart each of these other properties? That is, what makes the proposed property outstanding within the group of comparatives?

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Please address this section by responding to the following questions:

- In your expert opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of a potential nomination of the property to the World Heritage List, on the basis of the requirements of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* – referring in particular to its potential Outstanding Universal Value, its integrity, and its authenticity?
- In your expert opinion, is the property likely to be considered outstanding among its comparators in its relevant geo-cultural context?

APPENDIX: THE WORLD HERITAGE CRITERIA FOR CULTURAL PROPERTIES

A cultural property having Outstanding Universal Value shall:

- (i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.

This criterion relates to an outstanding example (perhaps the peak or a landmark example) of a style evolved within a culture, having a high intellectual or symbolic endowment and a high level of artistic, technical or technological skills.

and/or

- (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.

In this criterion an interchange of human ideas or influences needs to have prompted a response, which can be said to be outstanding in terms of the influence it had at the time and/or subsequently on people or society.

and/or

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

This criterion considers processes – cultural traditions that have, normally over a long period of time, defined a way of life or civilization in a geo-cultural region. The testimony is the evidence of this cultural tradition or civilization.

and/or

- (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.

This criterion relates to the outstanding nature of the typology of a property, in the context of the defined typology illustrating a defining moment or moments, or significant stage(s) in human history. The historical moment needs to be deemed to be of outstanding importance, as do its repercussions.

and/or

- (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.

The key aspect of this criterion is that the property must represent a particular culture or cultures, and this representativeness needs to be outstanding in some way. There must be some reasonably long period of time associated with the settlement or use in order for it to be considered traditional.

and/or

- (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. (This criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria.)

This criterion relates to associations that may not have a tangible impact within the property, but nevertheless can be clearly and directly demonstrated. For instance, a mountain or landscape may be sacred or inspirational. A property must be an outstanding example of direct or tangible associations.

The brief commentary added to each criterion above is based on a more complete explanation, with examples, found in Preparing World Heritage Nominations, 2nd edition, 2011, pp. 34-40.

RESOURCES

Primary resources:

Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO, World Heritage Centre, 8 July 2015, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>

Preparing World Heritage Nominations, World Heritage Resource Manual, 2nd edition (Paris: UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, IUCN, 2011), <http://whc.unesco.org/en/preparing-world-heritage-nominations/>

Other resources:

Jokilehto, Jukka, et al., ***The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future***, in *Monuments and Sites XII* (Paris: ICOMOS, 2005, <http://whc.unesco.org/document/102409>

The ICOMOS procedure for evaluating nominations to the World Heritage List:

<http://www.icomos.org/en/what-we-do/image-what-we-do/646-the-icomos-procedure-for-evaluating-nominations-to-the-world-heritage-list>.