

CAUSSES & CÉVENNES

PORTRAIT OF a unesco WORLD HERITAGE SITE



FOREWORD

On 28 June 2011, the World Heritage Committee approved the addition of the Causses and Cévennes on the UNESCO World Heritage List, as an evolving and living cultural landscape of Mediterranean agropastoralism. The area's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) lies in illustrating the strong links between mankind and nature for thousands of years. The international recognition of these landscapes, shaped by man and livestock, constitutes a legacy for which we collectively bear responsibility.

Upon reading this document, which describes the addition of the Causses and Cévennes as World Heritage site, we invite you to share our commitment to preserving our territory and to discover the many assets of its unique landscapes.



Boissets Domain, Causse de Sauveterre
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UNESCO

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”. Constitution of the UNESCO.

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation, a dedicated agency of the United Nations, established in 1945.

Its mission is to contribute to peacebuilding, poverty eradication, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication, and information, without distinction as to gender, language, or religion.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNESCO

1942: In the midst of World War II, the governments of the European countries fighting Nazi Germany and its allies met in England at the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME). The war was far from over, yet countries were already considering how they would rebuild their education systems once peace had been restored. Very quickly, this project gained momentum and took on a universal dimension.

From 1 to 6 November 1945: At the suggestion of the CAME, a United Nations Conference for the Establishment of an Educational and Cultural Organization (ECO/CONF) is held in London, just after the end of the war. It brings together representatives from 37 states, who decide to create an organisation dedicated to establishing a true culture of peace. In their view, this new organization should establish the “intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity” and thus prevent the outbreak of another world war.

November 4, 1946: After ratification by 20 signatory countries, including France, the UNESCO Constitution enters into force.

1958: Inauguration of UNESCO's permanent headquarters in Paris, built on land donated by France.

1972: The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage is adopted. It is one of many programs implemented by UNESCO to promote its values and achieve its objectives. It defends the idea of a heritage shared by all and that this universal heritage is one of the possible supports for the intercultural dialogue necessary for maintaining peace.



1976: Creation of the **World Heritage Committee**.

1978: Inclusion of the first sites on the **World Heritage List**.

1992: The World Heritage Convention becomes the first international legal instrument to recognize and protect **cultural landscapes**.

October 17, 2003: The 32nd session of the UNESCO General Conference, meeting in Paris, adopts the **Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)**.



The main former organisations of UNESCO were:

- the International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC) from 1926 to 1946,
- the International Bureau of Education (IBE) from 1925 to 1968, which became part of UNESCO in 1969, keeping its special status.

UNESCO has 195 Member States at the date of publication of this book.

<https://www.unesco.org/en>



UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
© Michel Ravassara



Find out more:



ABFPM's brief illustrated guide



1942 Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) in London

1945 (1-16 nov)

United Nations conference in London. Decision to create UNESCO

1946 (4 nov)

The UNESCO constitution enters into force

1958

Inauguration of UNESCO's permanent headquarters in Paris

1972

Adoption of the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

1976

Creation of the World Heritage Committee

1978

Inclusion of the first sites on the World Heritage List

1992

Recognition and protection of cultural landscapes

2003 (17 oct)

Adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Excerpt from the UNESCO Constitution:

“The governments of the States Parties to this Convention, on behalf of their peoples, declare: (...)”

“That, since human dignity requires the dissemination of culture and education for all in the interests of justice, freedom, and peace, there are sacred duties to be fulfilled by all nations in a spirit of mutual assistance;”

“That a peace based solely on economic and political agreements between governments cannot secure the unanimous, lasting, and sincere support of peoples, and that, therefore, such a peace must be established on the foundation of the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.”

“For these reasons, the signatory States of this Convention, determined to ensure full and equal access to education for all, the free pursuit of objective truth, and the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, decide to develop and multiply relations between their peoples with a view to better understanding each other and acquiring a more accurate and true knowledge of their respective customs.”

“They hereby establish the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to achieve, through the cooperation of the nations of the world in the fields of education, science and culture, the goals of international peace and the common welfare of mankind for which the United Nations was established and which its Charter proclaims.”



Conference at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, 2013

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UNESCO's objectives

- Ensuring high-quality education for all and lifelong learning;
- Mobilising scientific knowledge and policy for sustainable development;
- Addressing new social and ethical challenges;
- Promoting cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and a culture of peace;
- Building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication;
- Serving as a laboratory of ideas, a standard-setting body, an information-exchange centre, a capacity-building agency, and a catalyst for international cooperation.



The hallmark of World Heritage

It combines cultural and natural heritage. The central square is a man-made shape, while the circle represents nature. The emblem is round like the planet, but it also symbolises protection.

Sites included on the World Heritage List are given an official logo bearing the UNESCO temple and the World Heritage emblem. Its use complies with the World Heritage Centre's Guidelines and is reserved for signage and institutional promotion of sites and monuments within the World Heritage perimeter.

THE 1972 CONVENTION, CORNERSTONE OF WORLD HERITAGE

The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its meeting in Paris on 16 November 1972.

The most unique feature of the 1972 Convention is that it combines the concepts of nature and cultural protection in a single document. The Convention acknowledges the interaction between mankind and nature, and the fundamental need to maintain a balance between the two.

By signing the Convention, each country commits to ensuring the proper conservation of the World Heritage sites within its territory as well as to protecting its national heritage.

States Parties are encouraged to mainstream the protection of cultural and natural heritage into regional planning programmes, implement staff and services at their sites, undertake scientific and technical conservation studies, and take measures to give this heritage a role in the daily lives of citizens.

Being a party to the Convention and having sites included on the World Heritage List confers prestige that often plays a catalytic role in raising awareness of heritage preservation.

THE FOUNDING EVENT

“Today, for the first time, all nations (...) are called upon to save together the works of a civilization that belong to none of them.” A. Malraux, March 8, 1960

The event that particularly raised international awareness was the decision to build the Aswan Dam in Egypt, which would have flooded the valley of the Abu Simbel temples, treasures of ancient Egyptian civilization. In 1959, under

the leadership of the «Great Lady of the Nile», French Egyptologist Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt (1913-2011), UNESCO decided to launch an international campaign following an appeal from the Egyptian and Sudanese governments.

The temples of Abu Simbel and Philae were dismantled, relocated, and reassembled. The campaign cost approximately 80 million dollars, half of which came from donations from some

fifty countries, demonstrating the importance of shared responsibility between countries in preserving exceptional cultural sites.

The success of this campaign inspired the drafting and adoption of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, and the inclusion of sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, to which the Nubian monuments from Abu Simbel to Philae were added in 1979.

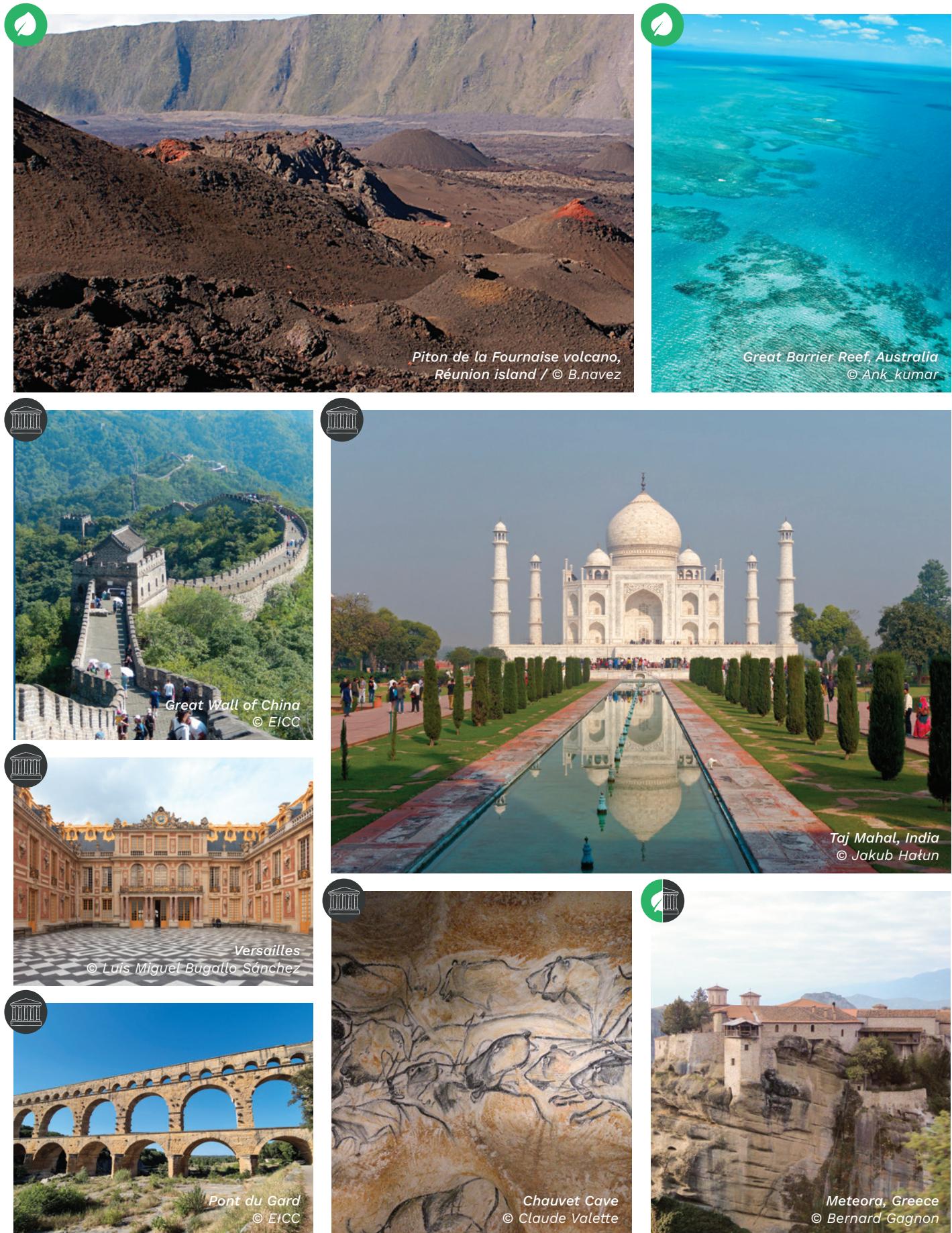
In 2025, there were 1,223 sites included in the World Heritage List worldwide, of which 53 in France. These sites are grouped within the French Association of World Heritage Properties (ABFPM).

Find out more about ABFPM:
<https://www.assofrance-patrimoine mondial.org/>

There are three main categories of sites:

NATURAL **CULTURAL** **MIXED**

NATURAL, CULTURAL AND MIXED PROPERTIES IN THE WORLD AND IN FRANCE



Natural properties



Cultural properties



Mixed properties

WHAT IS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE?

In 1992, the World Heritage Convention became the first international legal tool to recognize and protect cultural landscapes. What does this term cover?

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

According to the guidelines that led to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, cultural landscapes represent the **“combined works of nature and man”**. They illustrate the evolution of society and human settlements over time, influenced by the constraints and/or advantages presented by their natural environment and successive internal and external social, economic, and cultural forces.

By becoming a subcategory of cultural property, the cultural landscape draws attention not only to the historical grandeur of monuments and sites, but also to the **living dynamic that exists between man and his environment**, which has been rooted for millennia and continues to this day.



Valley of Orcia,
agricultural hinterland
of Siena, Italy
© Digitalsignal

Cultural landscapes are divided into three major categories:

- The most easily identifiable is the clearly defined landscape, **designed and intentionally created by man**, which includes garden and park landscapes created for aesthetic reasons that are often (but not always) associated with religious buildings or complexes.

- The second category is the **organically evolving landscape**. It results from an initial social, economic, administrative and/or religious imperative and has reached its current form by association and in response to its natural environment. These landscapes reflect this evolutionary process in their form and composition. They are subdivided into two categories:

Cultural landscapes often reflect **specific sustainable land-use techniques**, taking into account the characteristics and limitations of the natural environment in which they are established, as well as a specific spiritual relationship with nature.

For the World Heritage Committee, cultural landscapes bear witness to human creative genius, social evolution, and the spiritual and imaginative dynamism of humanity. They are part of our collective identity.



Agropastoral landscape, Causses and Cévennes
© EICC

- A **relict (or fossil) landscape** is a landscape that has undergone an evolutionary process that came to an end, either abruptly or over a period of time, at some point in the past. Its essential features however remain materially visible;

- A **living landscape** is one that maintains an active social role in contemporary society, is closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process continues. At the same time, it shows clear evidence of its evolution over time.

- The last category is the **associative cultural landscape**. The addition of these landscapes on the World Heritage List is justified by the strength of association of the religious, artistic or cultural phenomena of the natural element rather than by material cultural traces, which may be insignificant or even non-existent.



Landscape of climats (parcels) of Burgundy
© Jérôme Genee



Irrigation system for crops dating back several millennia, Oman
© Mélanie Maya



Heritage of agricultural activity on the island of Saint Kilda, Scotland
© claffra

THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE CAUSSES AND THE CÉVENNES

Today, thanks to the dynamism of agropastoral activity and local stakeholders, the Causses and Cévennes area is included in the category of **evolving and living cultural landscapes**.

The addition of this territory on the World Heritage List is not about freezing it or “putting it under a glass dome.” Through this development, it is truly

about building on this heritage and promoting it as a source of pride. Traditional agropastoral activity also provides answers to many current challenges: quality industries and products, respect for animal welfare, maintenance of landscapes and associated biodiversity, energy efficiency, and the fight against closing environments in a context of climate change leading to an increased risk of droughts and fires. This addition fosters the emergence of a territorial project, attentive to the bond between agropastoral production and

landscape, and create leverage for cultural, social, and economic development.

In short:

A cultural landscape: combined works of man and nature

Evolving: An area formed through successive stages/phases

Living: An inhabited area, where the practices that shaped it are still ongoing and evolving

THE GENESIS OF THE INCLUSION OF THE CAUSSES AND CÉVENNES SITE ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

The application process was very long. Below are the main stakeholders and key dates.

The application process was initiated in 1984 by the Cévennes National Park, at the request of the Ministry of Environment, to promote this exceptional natural site. However, given the cultural richness of the area, local stakeholders decided to wait until the UNESCO World Heritage Centre recognized cultural landscapes likewise monuments and natural spaces. At the same time, other local stakeholders decided to highlight the local heritage of the Templar and Hospitaller Knights.

The initial discussions date back to before the 2000s. They were conducted simultaneously by different stakeholders, who were aware of the exceptional nature of this area, and focused on various themes (natural heritage, Templar and Hospitaller heritage, Protestant heritage, etc.) and on geographically close or even overlapping territories.

Over the course of successive intermediate files, the various applicants were led to join forces and present a merged file and a single application.



Commemorative plaque at Mas Camargues
© EICC



What is agropastoralism?

Agropastoralism is a form of pastoralism that combines livestock farming on grazing land with complementary cultivated areas for feeding animals or humans.

Data:

- Over **10 years** of legal proceedings
- **7 cases** filed
- **3 official files** successively brought by AVECC
- **1 inclusion !**



2002: Inclusion of the Causses and Cévennes on the French **indicative list** (= list of sites whose application to World Heritage has been validated by the State Party)

2005: Creation of the **Association for the Promotion of the Causses and Cévennes Area** (AVECC) to submit the first official application for world heritage status.

2006: The French State supports the application and submits an **official application file** to the World Heritage Centre. It covered an area twice as large as the one ultimately selected and addressed broader themes: exceptional biodiversity, the agricultural landscape of the Cévennes (water management and terraces, chestnut cultivation and sericulture) and the Causses (water collection, farms, sheep farming), cultural heritage dating back to the Neolithic period (menhirs, dolmens, Greco-Roman mausoleum, Templar and Hospitaller Knights orders, site of Protestant resistance, of the Resistance during the Second World War, etc.). ICOMOS, UNESCO's advisory body for cultural sites, questions the overall coherence of the application and recommends that the State Party reconsider the characteristics of the candidate site and the values that constitute geographical consensus.

2009: Submission of the amended file for a second nomination, covering the same area. The emphasis is placed on the region's agropastoral culture, which is representative of countries around the Mediterranean. However, the history of the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller, followed by the Reformation and Protestantism in the Cévennes, is not overlooked.



Presentation of UNESCO plaques to government representatives and elected officials who supported the application

Paris, 2012
© EICC

ICOMOS wanted the application to focus on agropastoralism, which it considered exceptional in the Causses and Cévennes. It therefore requested a more detailed inventory of the candidate site's attributes relating to agropastoralism.

31 January 2011: Third submission of the application, based on the current scope and content.

28 June 2011: The Causses and Cévennes UNESCO site is **added to the World Heritage List** as a Mediterranean agropastoral cultural landscape.

11 April 2012: Establishment of the **Interdepartmental Agreement for the Causses and Cévennes**, the site's management structure, by the general councils of Aveyron, Gard, Hérault and Lozère.



THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE CAUSSES AND CÉVENNES SITE

MAJOR GEOMORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES

The boundaries of the territory are defined by landscape criteria based on geomorphology and cultural elements:

- The **Causses** are large open areas maintained by extensive use as rangelands. The most iconic are the Causse Méjean, the Causse de Sauveterre, the Causse du Larzac, the Causse de Blandas and the Causse Noir. These limestone plateaus, at an altitude of 750 to 1,200 metres, constitute one of the largest karst formations in Western Europe. The vast steppe-like areas are kept open by grazing livestock, mainly sheep. The dolines, circular depressions with deeper soil, are used for crops. These Causses are cleft by the Tarn, Jonte, Dourbie and Vis river canyons.



The Causses and Cévennes area in figures:

- **3,023 km²** of surface area for the registered territory and 3,000 km² for the buffer zone
- **1 region** : Occitanie
- **4 départements** : Aveyron, Gard, Hérault, Lozère
- **121 municipalities** in the registered area (213 taking into account the buffer zone)
- **5 gateway towns** : Alès, Ganges, Lodève, Mende, Millau
- **22,000 inhabitants** in the registered area, 170,000 in the buffer zone



- The **schistose Cévennes**, between 400 and 900 metres above sea level, are formed by a series of narrow ridges, locally known as serres, and deep valleys, also called valats. The villages are located along the roads at the bottom of the valleys. On the slopes, isolated dwellings (mas), their outbuildings and terraced croplands open up clearings on slopes mainly covered with deciduous forests. Chestnut groves, in particular, have long been an essential food source for humans, as well as their herds of sheep and goats.

- The **mountains** consist of the granite massifs of the Mont Lozère (1,699 m), Mont Aigoual (1,567 m) and Bougès (1,421 m), whose bare summits are used as summer pastures for migrating cattle and sheep herds.

2 LANDSCAPES, 1 CULTURE !

Causses and Cévennes, two names that refer to distinct geographical entities, are here unified in the same cultural landscape of agropastoralism. Two neighbouring entities but with distinct geological identities: the Cévennes, with its schist and granite, dominated by omnipresent slopes, a complex hydrographic network and forests, seems to naturally contrast with the great causses, bare and arid limestone mountain plateaus.

Nevertheless, these two geographical areas share difficult natural conditions: topographical constraints source of their isolation, a harsh climate with periods of intense and devastating rainfall, hot, dry summers influenced by the Mediterranean, harsh winters in the mountains and high plateaus, difficulties in accessing water, and poor, underdeveloped soil. These constraints have led to difficult living conditions that have required significant efforts to adapt, giving rise to a common agropastoral culture, the only one capable of taking advantage of the resources of a territory that is “too poor to support cities, too rich to be abandoned”.



Mas and terraces in the Cévennes
© EICC



Finials, Mont Lozère
© EICC



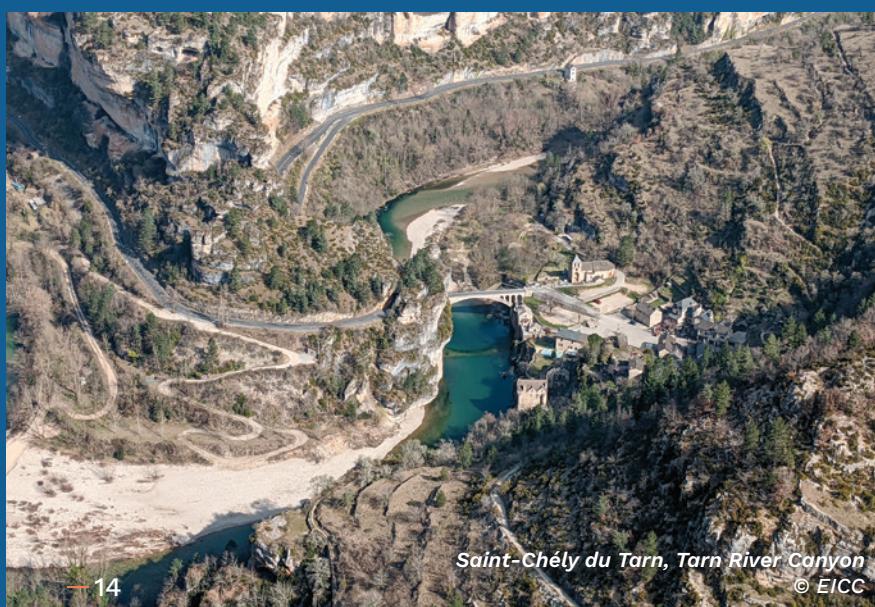
Causse du Larzac
© EICC



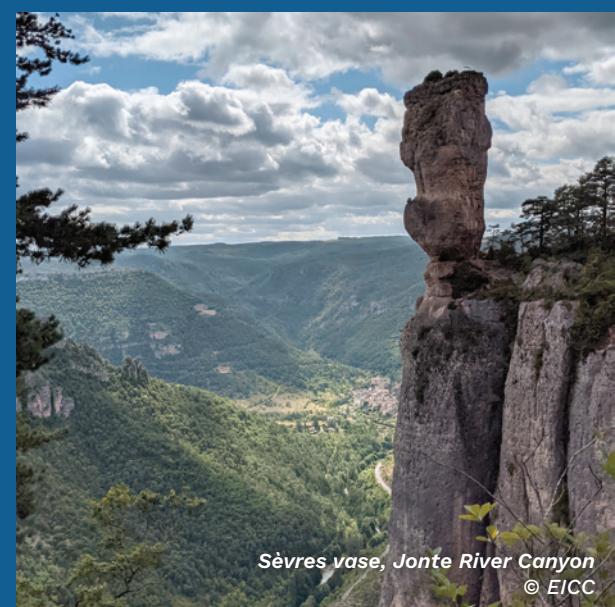
Mont Aigoual
© EICC



Navacelles Circus, Causse de Blandas
© EICC



Saint-Chély du Tarn, Tarn River Canyon
© EICC



Sèvres vase, Jonte River Canyon
© EICC

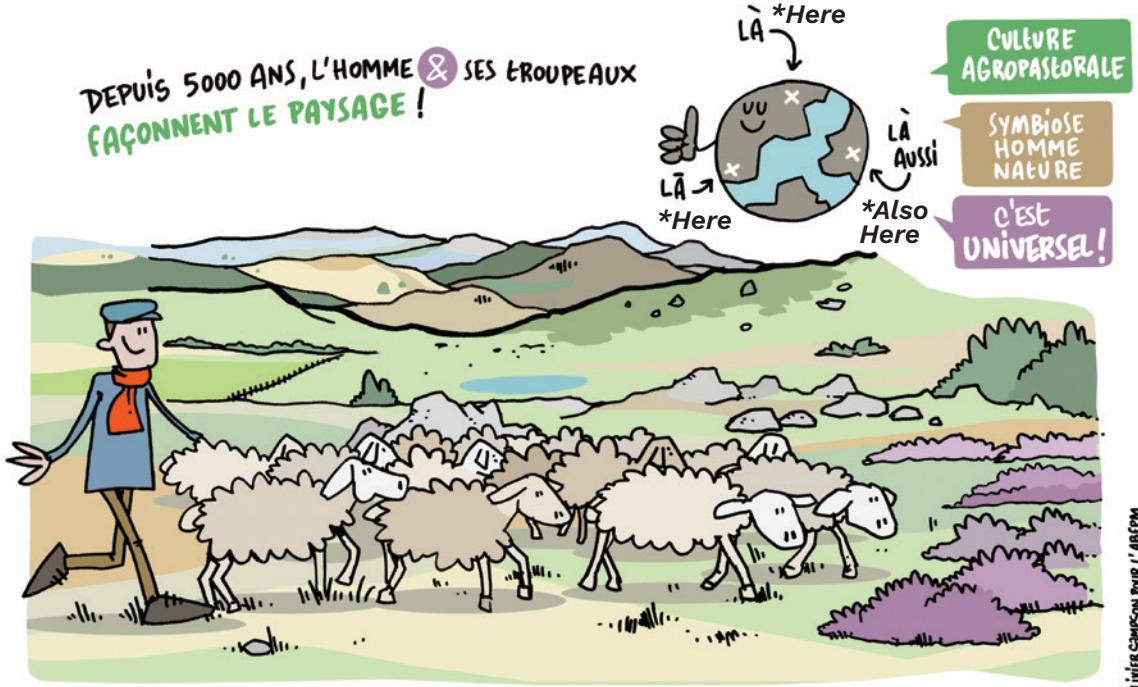
THE CAUSSES AND CÉVENNES: A LANDSCAPE OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

The Causses and Cévennes are listed as a World Heritage Site as a living and evolving cultural landscape of Mediterranean agropastoralism. What are the grounds for this listing, in terms of the criteria defined by UNESCO?

Spectacular, diverse and particularly vast, this area in the south of the Massif Central, composed of mountains, valleys, limestone mountain plateaus and canyons, bears exceptional witness to a thousand-year-old and still vibrant relationship between humans and their environment: agropastoral culture. The **Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)** of the Causses and the Cévennes is shown in the shaping of this landscape by agropastoral activity.

All types of pastoral organisation around the Mediterranean (sheep, goats, cattle, sedentary, migrating) are present in the Causses and Cévennes. The exceptional nature of the site also stems from 5,000 years of uninterrupted agropastoral activity. This landscape is characterised by vast open spaces, remarkable biodiversity and an ingenious architectural heritage.

Therefore the **humble and discreet human ingenuity associated with agropastoral activity** is present throughout the territory in the form of small-scale built heritage (migration paths, shelters for people and their herds... see Page 22), which bear precious witness to the slow, patient but tenacious construction of this landscape over thousands of years. Monumental heritage elements, such as abbeys and commanderies, show the influence of religious and military orders on the organisation of the territory and agropastoralism in the Middle Ages. The inclusion on the World Heritage List recognises the work of the people who built this cultural landscape. The dynamism of contemporary agricultural activity keeps it alive and evolving.



- For 5000 years, landscapes have been shaped by men and livestock
- agropastoral culture
- man/nature symbiosis
- It's universal!



Universality/Exceptionality:

Being **universal** means that a site contributes to one or more aspects of the history of humanity and/or the planet and that it has common links with other similar sites around the world, regardless of culture, language, religion or country.

At the same time, it must be **exceptional**, i.e. it must offer a different and complementary expression of heritage to that which is already listed.



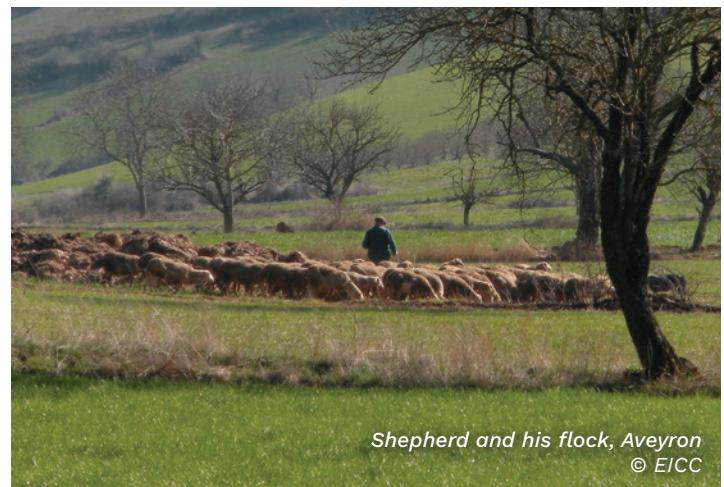
Cazelle and clapas (piled stones), Causse de Campestre
© EICC

Criteria:

The reasons for the Outstanding Universal Value of the Causses and the Cévennes and their inclusion on the World Heritage List are based on two of the criteria defined by UNESCO: criteria iii and v.

Criterion iii: The Causses and the Cévennes are an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition of a living civilisation: Mediterranean agropastoralism.

Criterion v: The Causses and the Cévennes are an example of traditional human settlement, land use representative of a culture and human interaction with the environment.



Shepherd and his flock, Aveyron
© EICC



Lavogne (man-made watering point) in Nîmes-le-Vieux, Causse Méjean / © EICC


The history of shepherds and farmers meets the history of kings!

The sites included on the List tell the every story of human history, from pharaohs, kings and emperors to shepherds! Now joining the ranks of the world's great heritage icons, the Causses and Cévennes sit alongside the Pyramids of Giza (Egypt), the Great Wall of China (China), the Statue of Liberty (United States of America), the Great Barrier Reef (Australia) and many others...



THE CAUSSES AND CÉVENNES THROUGHOUT THE AGES

5,000 years of agricultural and pastoral history have shaped the landscapes of the Causses and Cévennes. The main stages are as follows.

TIMELESS WITNESSES TO HUMAN LAND USE SINCE THE NEOLITHIC PERIOD

Fiercely standing up against the ravages of time, numerous megaliths (dolmens, menhirs, cromlechs) erected in the area since the Neolithic period (3,000 years ago) bear witness to the existence of agropastoral culture.



Menhirs on the Cham des Bondons
© EICC

THE MIDDLE AGES: A KEY PERIOD IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGROPASTORALISM

The abbeys scattered throughout the area, such as the Benedictine Abbey of Gellone (Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert), followed by the Templar and Hospitaller commanderies, bear witness to the major role played by monastic and military orders in the development of the territory. These orders structured the agropastoral economy on the Causses and in the mountains.



Templar city of La Couvertoirade, Causse du Larzac
© EICC

Archives dating from the 11th to the 13th century enable us to trace the developments of agropastoralism promoted by religious orders: as livestock numbers grew, new agricultural structures were built, stabilising the surrounding populations and fostering the construction of churches.

On the Larzac plateau, the Knights Templar, followed by the Knights Hospitaller, organised the cultivation of arable land, reserving non-ploughable land for grazing their herds of cows, sheep and horses.

This exploitation of land required land use planning, characterised by plots marked out by boundary stones, dotted with isolated sheepfolds (known as jasses) and ponds (known as lavognes). At the same time, the military orders exploited the cattle by developing the production of wool, leather (for parchment in particular) and milk, generating substantial revenues, which were invested in the maintenance of fleets and troops on their way to the Holy Land.

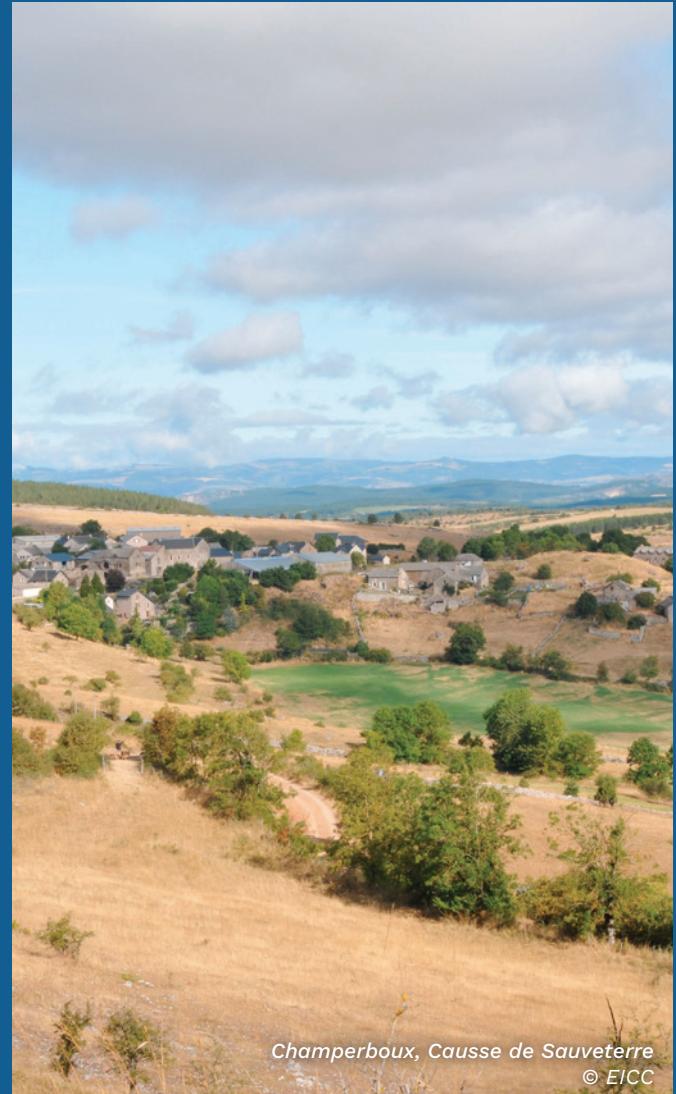
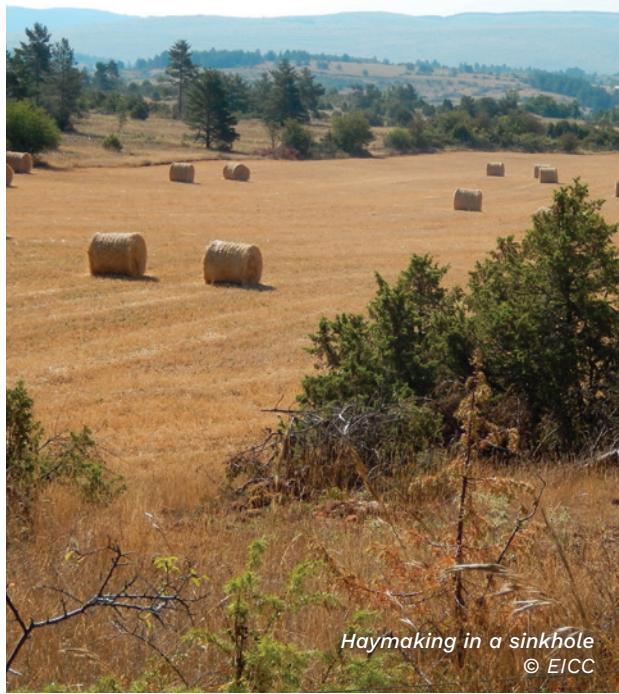
The history of the Causses and Cévennes has always been shaped by the socio-economic complementarity between the highlands and the Mediterranean plains.

THE AGROPASTORAL EXCEPTION AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD'S INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

From mid-17th century until the 20th century, agricultural and pastoral activity was characterised by crop and mowing cycles lasting six to seven years. The land was then returned to grazing for long periods of 20 to 50 years. This contributed greatly to keeping the openness of the vast spaces of the Causses plateaus.

In the Cévennes, the modern era began with three centuries of prosperity. Starting in the 16th century, the typical Cévennes landscape emerged with the development of terraces linked to the growth of chestnut farming. In the 18th century, the planting of mulberry trees for silkworm breeding further amplified this phenomenon.

The Causses and Cévennes areas experienced a demographic boom, particularly between 1750 and 1850, which, together with the abolition of privileges, enabled everyone to become prospering landowners. From 1820 onwards, fodder crops and artificial grasslands were experimented on the causses, and sheep farming developed rapidly.



Champerboux, Causse de Sauveterre
© EICC

This prosperous period of agropastoralism came to an end with outbreaks of silkworm and chestnut tree epidemics. The countryside further depopulated during the First World War, when many men died and farms were consequently abandoned.

In the second half of the 20th century, the Common Agricultural Policy encouraged farmers to increase their production to compensate for plummeting milk and meat prices. This led to an increase in herd sizes and the intensification of agriculture associated with livestock farming (use of fertilisers, new crops to build up fodder stocks for winter feeding of sheep, extension and modernisation of farm buildings, etc.). This intensification led to an increase in cultivated land close to farms and suitable for mechanisation, and a decline in less productive or more remote areas. These recent developments have significantly transformed the landscapes of the Causses and Cévennes.

The history of agropastoralism, which is non-linear and marked by crises and renewals, testifies to the evolving nature of the Causses and Cévennes landscapes.

LIVESTOCK FARMING IN ALL ITS DIVERSITY

Agropastoralism in the Causses and Cévennes areas has many forms. It is based on traditional Mediterranean systems, founded on extensive grazing, supplemented seasonally by fodder.

In the **southern Cévennes**, agropastoralism is mainly based on sheep and goats. Depending on the season, the herds graze around the villages, on terraces, under chestnut and holm oak trees (taking advantage of their fruit resources), and in meadows and pastures at different altitudes. This small-scale livestock farming is linked to other activities such as arboriculture (chestnuts, AOC labelled Reinette du Vigan apple), market gardening (AOC labelled Rayolette sweet onion), foraging (mushrooms, medicinal plants), beekeeping and green agritourism.

While goat farms for cheese remain sedentary, some sheep herds are gathered together at the beginning of June and handed over to groups of migrating farmers/shepherds. Freed from the task of caring for their sheep, the owners can devote themselves to other farming tasks and harvesting winter fodder for their livestock. The collective migrating flocks spend the summer on the pastures of Mont Aigoual or the southern slopes of Mont Lozère, which they usually reach on foot via the drailles, typical migration paths that follow mountain ridges. The local breeds of sheep, Blanche du Massif Central, Caussenardes des garrigues, Raïoles and Rouges du Roussillon, are particularly well suited to this form of extensive farming, producing high-quality meat.



Sweet onion cultivation in the Cévennes
© EICC

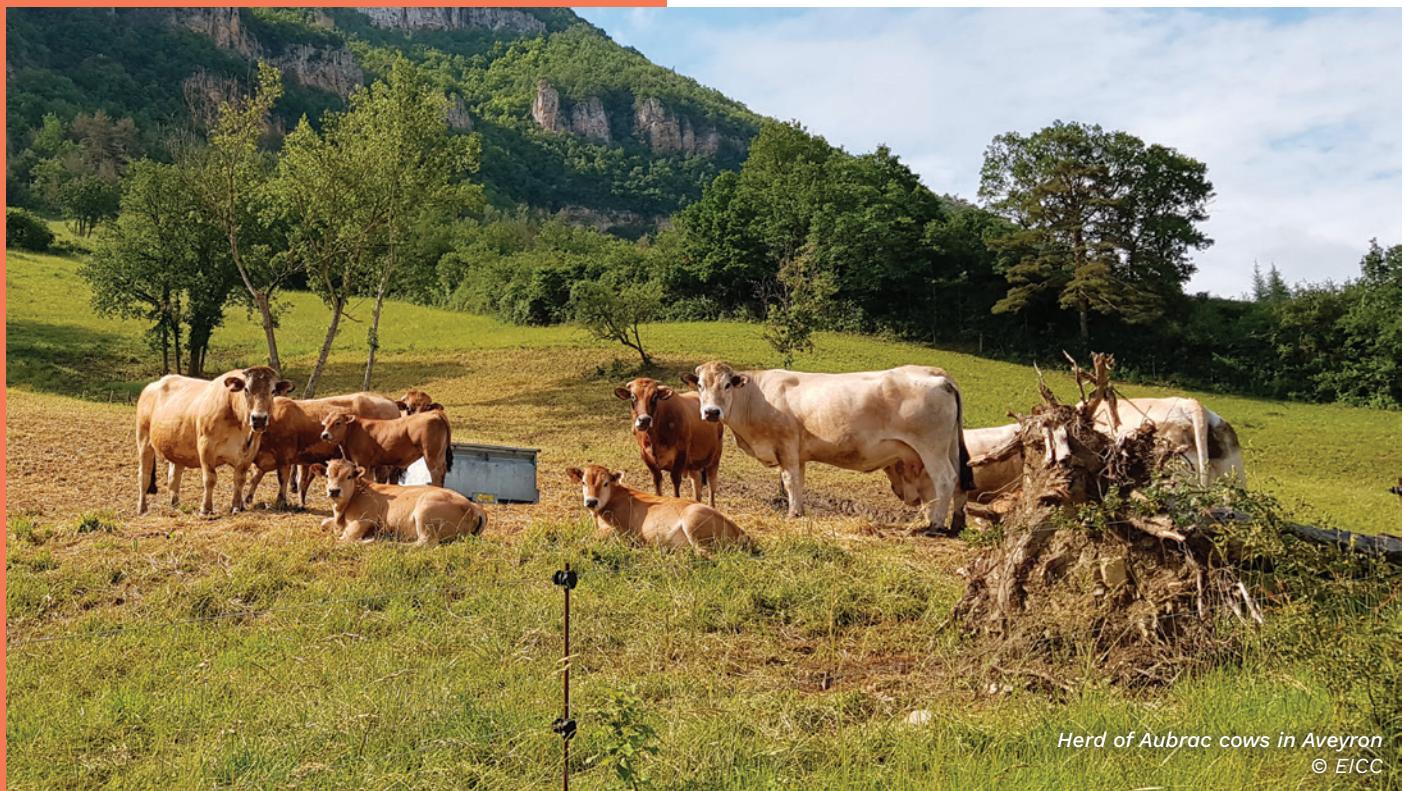
In the highlands, farms practise year-round sedentary sheep and cattle farming, often with Aubrac breeds. All these herds, both local and migrating, play a vital role in maintaining the open mountain spaces which are especially appreciated by hikers.



Transhumance on Mont Lozère
© EICC



Aubrac cows in the stone chaos of Mont Lozère
© EICC



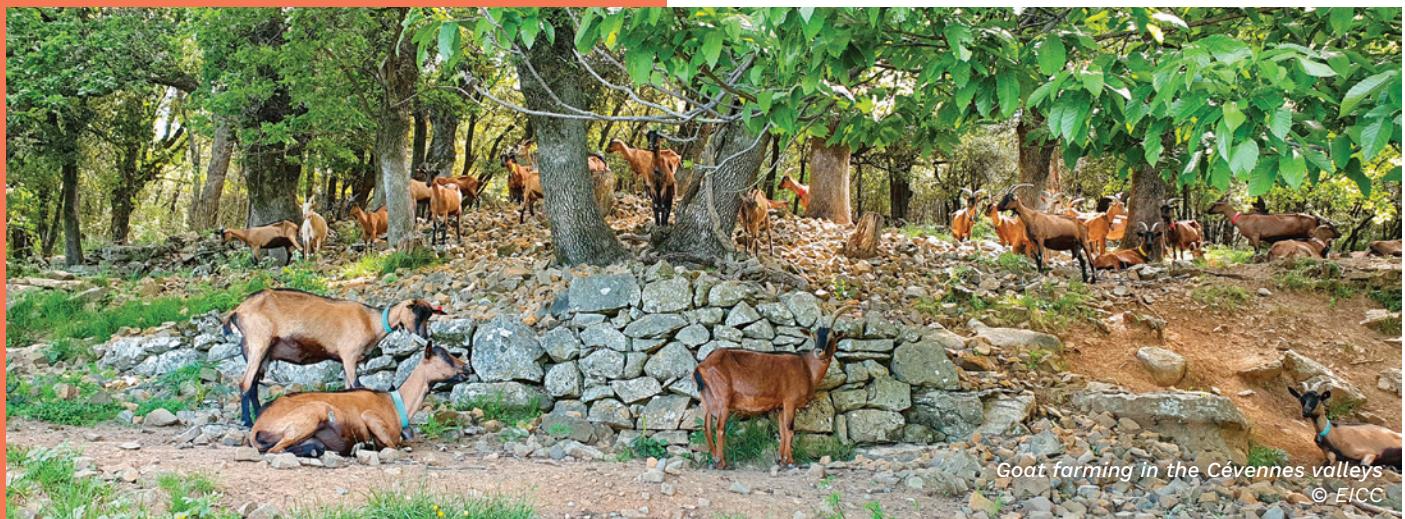
Herd of Aubrac cows in Aveyron
© EICC

The great Causses plateaus are home to sedentary sheep farming using grazing land, focused on milk and meat production. The breeding of dairy sheep, mainly of the Lacaune breed, is the basis for the production of Roquefort cheese, as well as other types of sheep's cheese.

These different forms of agropastoralism, representative of Mediterranean pastoralism in all its diversity, still coexist today in the Causses and Cévennes area. This specificity is the basis of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) that justified the inclusion of this territory on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a cultural landscape of Mediterranean agropastoralism.



Herd of sheep on the Causse Méjean
© EICC



Goat farming in the Cévennes valleys
© EICC

Landscapes shaped by agropastoralism

Agricultural and pastoral activities have shaped the landscapes of the Causses and Cévennes over time, as revealed by the diversity of their marks, also known as 'attributes', which visitors can observe along roads, trails and at remarkable scenic viewpoints. Here are a few examples of these characteristic markers...

A BACKGROUND FORMED BY A MOSAIC OF CULTURES AND RANGELANDS...

Among the characteristics of the site are the distinctive forms shaped by agriculture in the landscape, such as:

- **The development of terraced slopes in the Cévennes**

Typical of the Cévennes landscape, terraces were built on south-facing slopes, also known as adrets, to increase the amount of arable land and to retain the soil. Combined with the implementation of irrigation and runoff drainage systems, the terraces made it possible to grow chestnut trees and mulberry trees. Today, they are mainly used for growing sweet onions and market gardening.

- **The dolines on the Causses**

The most fertile areas of the causses midmountains, the dolines are cultivated sinkholes where erosion has accumulated, forming *terra rossa* soil ideal for growing cereals. Brown at ploughing time, green in spring, golden when the wheat is at its peak of maturity, they form beautiful landscape patterns.

- **Summer pastures and grazing lands**

Resident and migrating herds roam these open spaces of heathland and grassland, located on the higher slopes of Mont Aigoual and Mont Lozère. On the limestone plateaus, the passage of herds has shaped the steppe-like appearance of the grazing lands.



A HUMBLE AND INGENIOUS HERITAGE

Beyond these landscape patterns, agropastoral culture has a rich heritage, often simple and ingenious, based mainly on observation of the environment and making use of its natural resources. It consists of many diverse built elements. From the Neolithic period to the present day, 5,000 years of history are accessible to those who know how to read them.

Scattered throughout the landscape are constructions designed to shelter livestock and people, structures for storing or collecting water, landmarks to help travellers find their way along migrating routes, and so on. Most are built using dry stone, a construction technique that does not require any binding material and uses stones found on site.

More significant buildings also bear witness to the great history of the Causses and the Cévennes: Templar and Hospitaller cities, religious buildings, and remarkable agricultural estates.



Lavogne (man-made watering point) on the Causse Méjean plateau / © EICC

Authenticity / Integrity / Attributes

As part of the World Heritage listing process, it is necessary to be able to demonstrate the authenticity and integrity of the site. **Authenticity** allows the credible and truthful nature of the site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) to be assessed through a series of **cultural attributes**. **Integrity**, on the other hand, allows to assess the completeness and preservation of these attributes, which is essential for expressing OUV.

The attributes are therefore the characteristics of the cultural landscape, the elements that constitute its identity and OUV. They can be **tangible** or **intangible** and allow to define more precisely the unique landscape and cultural features of a listed site. More specifically in the Causses and Cévennes, they are comparable to markers in the landscape that bear witness to **agropastoral culture** in its broadest sense and evolution.

AN AGROPASTORAL CULTURE RICH IN EXPERTISE

Most of the agropastoral heritage is still named in Occitan, reflecting a rich culture linked to oral tradition. Highly specific skills, which have also often been passed down orally and through demonstration, also constitute what is known as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Among these elements of agropastoral culture, now recognised in French and even international inventories, are the art of dry stone building technique, leather-working in the Millavois region, traditional gravity irrigation and transhumance, the seasonal migration of herds.



Little owl on a clapas (piled stones)

© Régis DESCAMPS - PNC

Biodiversity

Dolines (sinkholes), summer pastures and grazing lands are areas rich in specific biodiversity (flora, fauna, natural habitats) linked to extensive livestock farming, whether on limestone, granite or schist substrates. Maintaining this biodiversity often depends on preserving the characteristic features of agropastoral activity (open environments, hedges, clapas (piles of stones), lavognes (man-built watering points for herds), etc.). Numerous Natura 2000 classifications within the site bear witness to it.

Since 2002, the Association of craftsman builder using dry stone technique (Artisans Bâtisseurs Pierre Sèche or ABPS) has been promoting and structuring the development of this sector, and has set up a vocational school in the hamlet of Espinas in Lozère.



Find out more about :



Glossary of attributes

EXCEPTIONAL TERROIRS and PRODUCTS

Agropastoral activity in the Causses and Cévennes areas has given rise to numerous high-quality industries and products, which are major components of the region's economy.

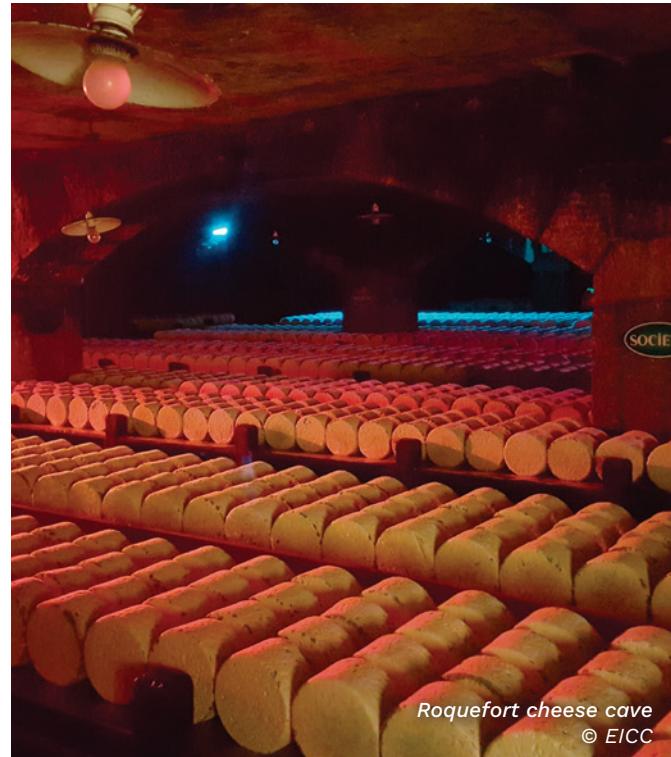
CHEESES...

Roquefort

In 1925, Roquefort became France's first Controlled Designation of Origin (AOC) labelled cheese. Isn't Roquefort known as the 'king of cheeses'?

Today, sheep's milk is collected within the 'Roquefort radius'. This is an area that stretches from the great limestone plateaus to cover most of the Aveyron department and also includes municipalities in neighbouring departments. The specifications require that the milk come exclusively from Lacaune breed ewes and that three-quarters of their feed must stem from the geographical area of production. The maturing and ripening of the cheese are strictly regulated, starting with a maturing period in naturally 'air-conditioned' caves under the scree slopes at the foot of the Combolou plateau, in the commune of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon.

However, the quota on milk deliveries for Roquefort explains the diversification of products made from sheep's milk (other cheeses, yoghurts, ice creams, etc.).



Bleu des Causses blue cheese

In a wide strip stretching from the Lot to the Lozère departments, raw cow's milk can be processed into a blue cheese under the Bleu des Causses Protected Designation of Origin (AOP), a recognition awarded in 1996. The appearance of this cheese and the *Penicillium roqueforti* mould used to inoculate it are evidence of its shared history with Roquefort. However, from 1925 onwards, it was no longer permitted to be matured in Roquefort and production moved to caves built in the scree slopes of the Tarn, Jonte and Dourbie river canyons. The Bleu des Causses blue cheese can only be matured there.

Périal

A cheese with Protected Geographical Indication (IGP) status since 2022 (the first label for sheep's milk), Périal is made from whole Lacaune sheep's milk. Its terroir, shaped by a long pastoral tradition, extends south of the Massif Central, between Aveyron, Lozère, Hérault, Tarn and Gard departments. It is characterised by its round, flat shape, varying from 8 to 10 cm in diameter. Its crust is ecru in colour and ribbed.



Pélardon

This traditional raw goat's milk cheese looks like a small disc with rounded edges and a natural crust. Awarded AOC status in 2000 and AOP status in 2001, it is emblematic of the Cévennes area. It is produced in the departments of Hérault (Montagne Noire, garrigue), Gard (Cévennes and garrigue), Lozère (Cévennes) and Aude (Corbières audoises).

The specifications include the requirement to have the goats graze for at least 180 or 210 days per year, depending on the altitude, and to provide at least 0.2 hectares per goat. The pastoral tradition implies that the goats graze not only on meadows, but also on scrubland, heathland and chestnut or oak groves.



Pélardon cheese
© EICC

Meats...

With hardy breeds of sheep and lambs fed mainly on milk, the agropastoralism of the Causses and Cévennes areas has developed to offer lamb meat of recognised quality, such as 'Agneau de Lozère' (IGP) and 'Agneau de l'Aveyron'.

On the Mont Lozère, likewise in Aubrac, the procession of fat oxen or 'Easter beef' marked the end of the fasting period of Lent, and heralded the arrival of spring. This custom nowadays upheld by a few butchers, promotes a local meat product renowned under the Label Rouge 'Bœuf fermier Aubrac' (Aubrac farm beef). In addition, the 'Fleur d'Aubrac' IGP distinguishes heifers of the cross-bred Aubrac-Charolais.



Traditional beehive in the Cévennes
© EICC

Local specialities

Are you familiar with these local specialities, made from agricultural and pastoral products?

- Bajana (chestnut soup)
- Brazucade (chestnuts roasted over an open fire)
- Flaune (a tart made with sheep's milk curd and orange blossom water, a speciality of the Aveyron department)



Cévennes chestnuts
© EICC

MANAGING THE UNESCO LABEL FOR THE CAUSSES AND CÉVENNES

The Causses and Cévennes area, one of the first agricultural and non-wine-growing cultural landscapes, is an atypical asset, particularly due to its vast size, straddling four departments. Its governance is therefore unique, reflecting this large region's desire to organise itself on a multi-partner basis in order to develop shared management.

Each UNESCO property is free to define its own management. However, as the French State ratified the 1972 Convention, it is responsible for ensuring the preservation of World Heritage sites. This is why it is represented by a coordinating prefect who oversees governance in the four departments of Aveyron, Gard, Hérault and Lozère. The Prefect of Lozère was appointed coordinating prefect by order of the Prime Minister in January 2013, and this appointment was renewed in February 2019.

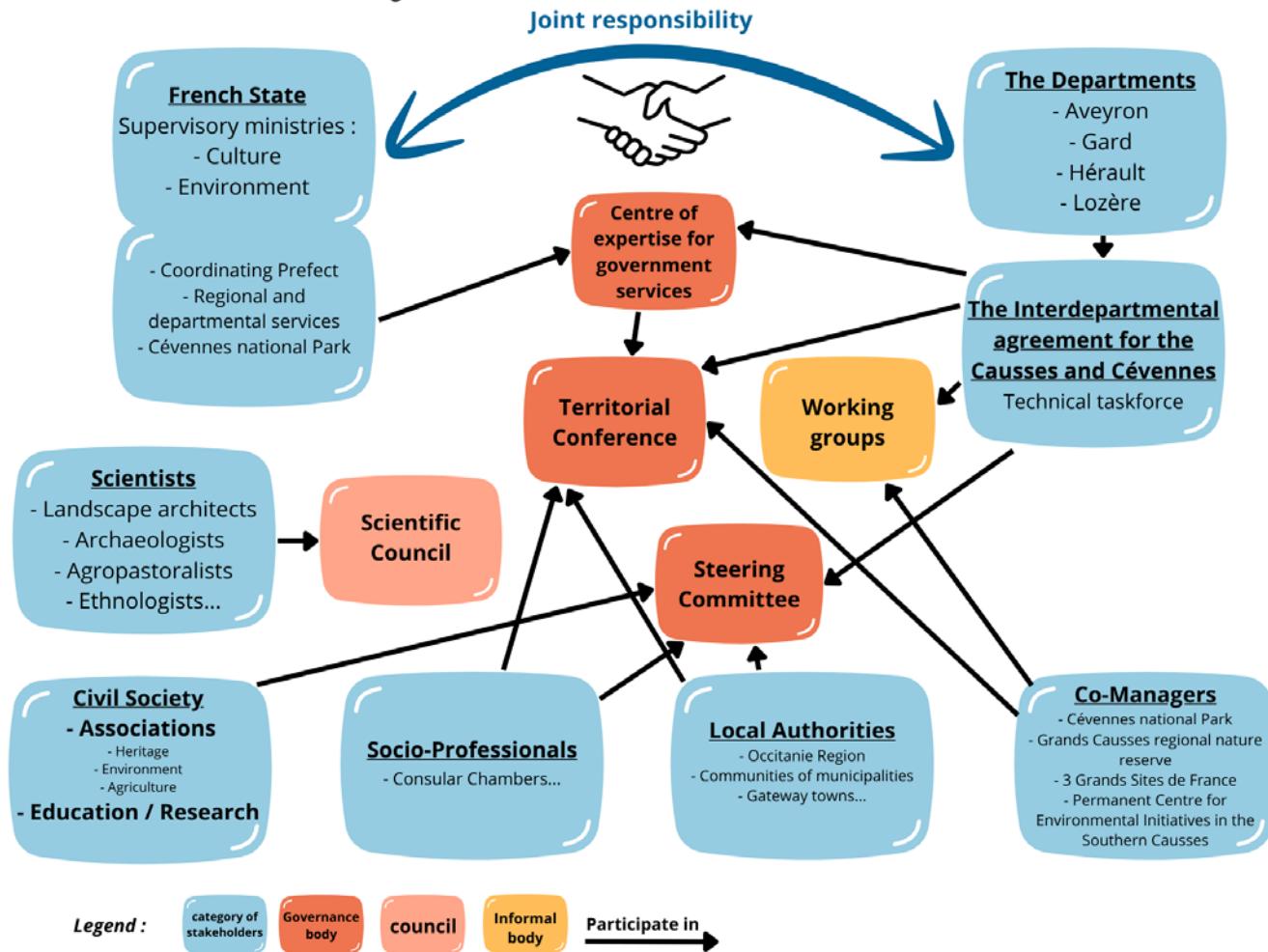
A governance structure organised around several bodies was put in place following its inclusion on the World Heritage list. It should be noted that this governance structure is not set in stone; it remains open to further developments to better integrate the stakeholders involved in the site (socio-economic actors, local elected officials, etc.) and new management issues.

The Territorial Conference

The Territorial Conference (TC), created on 13 January 2012, is chaired by the coordinating Prefect. It is the decision-making body that defines the broad management guidelines and validates the objectives aimed at ensuring the proper conservation of the site. The TC brings together:

- the Occitanie Region,
- the Departmental Councils of Aveyron, Gard, Hérault and Lozère
- representatives of regional ministries (agriculture, ecological transition, culture)
- co-managers
- consular chambers (agriculture, trade and crafts),
- Councils for Architecture, Urban Planning and Environment
- gateway towns (Alès, Ganges, Lodève, Mende, Millau)
- Departmental Committees and Departmental Tourism Agencies.

Causses and Cévennes Governance Design



The centre of expertise for government services

The centre of expertise for government services brings together regional and departmental services as well as public institutions from the four departments concerned by the inscription: Regional Directorate for Cultural Affairs (DRAC), Regional Directorate for the Environment, Planning and Housing (DREAL), Regional Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Forestry (DRAAF), Departmental Directorates for Territories and Sea (DDT-M), Departmental Units for Architecture and Heritage (UDAP), Cévennes National Park.

It meets approximately once a year and provides an opportunity to discuss current issues relating to the management of the site.

The Steering Committee

The Association for the Promotion of the Causses and Cévennes Area (AVECC), which had submitted the application, was intended to become the steering committee for the site, an advisory body, a source of proposals, and a representative of the local socio-economic actors.

The Scientific Council

To carry out their duties, the Prefect and the technical mission can rely on a scientific council composed of around fifteen specialists in topics related to the subject of the inclusion (landscape architects, archaeologists, ethnologists, agropastoralists, geographers, heritage conservators, etc.). It contributes to research topics proposed by the governance and management bodies. It may be called upon to work in partnership with the scientific councils of partner organisations involved in the management of the site (Cévennes National Park, Grands Causses Regional Nature Reserve, etc.).

Co-managers

The governance of the site also takes into account the presence, prior to the site's recognition, of management structures whose objectives contribute significantly to the preservation of the site. There are six such structures, which are identified as co-managers: the Cévennes National Park, the Grands Causses Regional Nature Reserve, the Permanent Centre for Environmental Initiatives in the Southern Causses, the three Grands Sites de France (Cirque de Navacelles / Gorges du Tarn, de la Jonte et Causses / Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert Vallée de l'Hérault).

These administrative entities, which together cover a large part of the site, work in particular, each within their own area of competence, to protect the landscapes and agropastoral attributes. They are equipped with management documents of a sovereign or contractual nature.

[Find out more](#)



[our website](#)

The Technical Taskforce: the Interdepartmental Agreement for the Causses and Cévennes

A public institution created on 11 April 2012 at the instigation of the four concerned departments (Aveyron, Gard, Hérault, Lozère), the Interdepartmental Agreement for the Causses and Cévennes coordinates management actions carried out in the area by local managers in order to ensure consistency in responding to the challenges of preserving the Outstanding Universal Value of the site. Its headquarters are located in the town of Florac.

Administered by elected representatives from the departmental councils of Aveyron, Gard, Hérault and Lozère, who participate equally in its operation, it has been designated by the State as the delegated manager to ensure, in liaison with the coordinating Prefect and existing structures, the management, preservation and promotion of the site.

A small team of employees has been set up to carry out day-to-day activities aimed at gathering knowledge, mediation and promotion in the fields of heritage, agropastoralism, landscapes, tourism and communication. This team implements the UNESCO site management plan.



Site management document

Article L612-1 of the Heritage Code stipulates that, in order to ensure the preservation of the outstanding universal value of the site, a management plan including the protection, conservation and enhancement measures to be implemented shall be drawn up jointly by the State and the local authorities concerned, for the perimeter of the site and, where applicable, its buffer zone, and then approved by the administrative authority. Several management plans, developed in partnership with local stakeholders, have been implemented since the Causses and Cévennes were listed in 2011.

International co-operation

The Causses and Cévennes site is open to the world and faithful to UNESCO's values of promoting intercultural exchanges as a means of fostering peace. It regularly exchanges information with managers of inhabited natural sites around the world. In particular, it is twinned with the Val del Madriu Perafita Claror site in Andorra and the Libo Karst site in Guizhou Province, China.



AGROPASTORALISM

Term used when pastoralism (extensive grazing on the spontaneous fodder resources of natural areas) is closely linked to the production of crops to supplement the diet with fodder and cereals grown on the farm.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are those elements, processes or features that convey and make manifest the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of a property. Attributes can be tangible or intangible. They can be physical qualities or fabric, or the relationships between them. Attributes can also be processes impacting on physical qualities, such as natural or agricultural processes, social arrangements or cultural practices that have shaped distinctive landscapes.

AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity only applies to cultural properties. A World Heritage property may be understood to meet the conditions of authenticity if their cultural values are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes, including form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions, techniques and management systems, location and setting, language and other forms of intangible heritage, spirit and feeling, and other internal/external factors.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The Operational Guidelines define cultural landscapes as cultural properties which represent the 'combined works of nature and of man' as designated in Article 1 of the Convention.

There are three main types of cultural landscape:

- landscapes designed and created intentionally by people;
- organically evolved landscapes (such as the Causses and Cévennes);
- associative landscapes.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE (ICH)

It is the practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities, groups and sometimes individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. It is usually expressed in one of the following forms: oral traditions; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship. The 2003 Convention for ICH aims at safeguarding this living form of heritage and at ensuring its continuing renewal and transmission to future generations.

INTEGRITY

Integrity applies to both natural and cultural properties, and is defined as a measure of the completeness or intactness of the attributes that convey Outstanding Universal Value.

The key words to understanding integrity are:

- Wholeness: all the necessary attributes are within the property;
- Intactness: all the necessary attributes are still present – none are lost or have been significantly damaged or have decayed;
- Absence of threats: none of the attributes are threatened by development, deterioration or neglect.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE

Usually referred to as simply the Operational Guidelines, these help to explain the implementation of the Convention. They include procedures for:

- inscription of properties on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger;
- protection and conservation of World Heritage properties;
- granting of International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund;
- mobilization of national and international support in favour of the Convention.

OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, OR OUV

Cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.

RANGELANDS

Rangelands are grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, wetlands that are grazed by domestic livestock (either resident or migrating) or wild animals.

WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE

It is an administrative and technical body of UNESCO created in 1992. It is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Convention and for the administration of the World Heritage Fund.

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

It meets once a year, and consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention elected for terms up to six years. The Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, allocates financial assistance from the World Heritage Fund and has the final say on whether a site is inscribed on the World Heritage List. It examines reports on the state of conservation of inscribed sites and decides on the inscription or removal of sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

The World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972, is a legally binding instrument providing an intergovernmental framework for international cooperation for the identification and conservation of the world's most outstanding natural and cultural properties. It sets out the duties of States Parties in identifying potential sites and their role in protecting and preserving them.

WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

World Heritage properties (either natural, cultural or mixed) are those defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the World Heritage Convention and inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of their Outstanding Universal Value, which is fulfilled through meeting one or more of criteria (i)–(x) as explained in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.



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