



The World Heritage
in Japan

日本の
世界遺産

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Located in the far east and surrounded on four sides by the sea, Japan is blessed with a rich nature, which shows a great variety throughout the seasons. In its long history, Japan has adopted culture from foreign countries, especially from the Continent, as well as developing its own culture rooted in the sensibility nurtured by the colors of nature.

Cultural Properties in Japan are preserved and utilized under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, as well as the cultural properties protection ordinance of each local government, in order to contribute to the advancement of national and world culture. In this way, each tangible and intangible heritage is protected under appropriate protection measures to each category. In order to protect the rich nature and biological diversity of our

land, the Nature Conservation Law and the Natural Parks Law have been enacted.

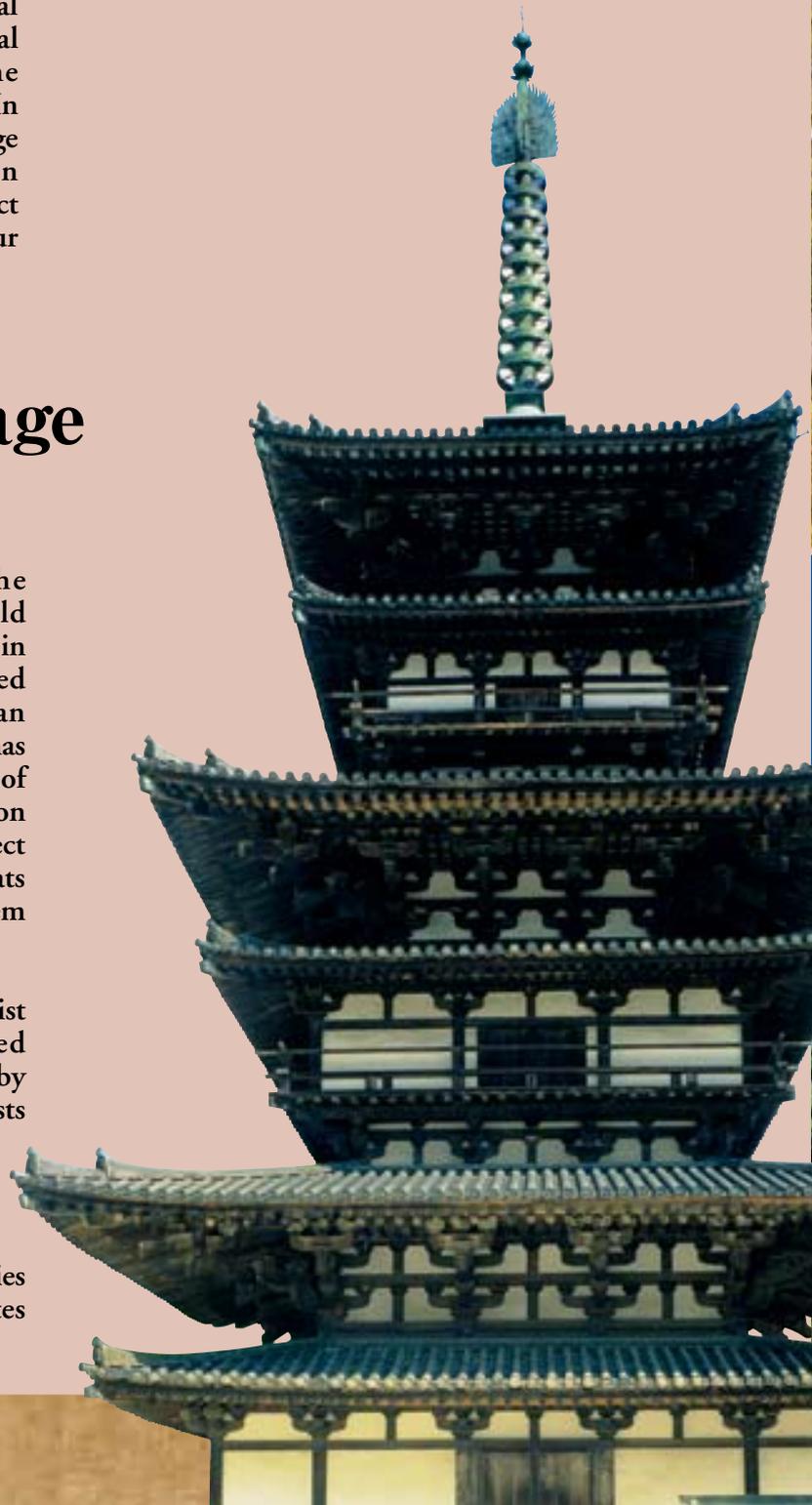
In addition, cultural properties and nature are getting more accessible to people, through local activities of volunteers and NPO's, and the interest in conservation activities is growing.

In line with UNESCO's wishes, we will pass on this wonderful heritage to future generations and to share it with people all over the world.

The World Heritage Convention

The World Heritage Convention (The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage) was adopted in 1972 by UNESCO, and has been concluded by 188 countries at present (2011. 8). Japan also accepted this convention in 1992, and has contributed to the establishment of a system of international cooperation and support, based on the recognition that it is important to protect cultural and natural heritage from such threats as damage and destruction and to preserve them as the world heritage of all humankind.

Sites are inscribed on the World Heritage list through a process in which recommended properties from each country are examined by the World Heritage Committee, which consists of 21 countries. As of June 2011, 936 properties have been inscribed on the list, of which 725 are Cultural Heritage, 183 are Natural Heritage, and 28 are Mixed properties. Among them are 16 World Heritage properties in Japan, including 12 Cultural Heritage sites and 4 Natural Heritage sites.



Criteria for the assessment of outstanding universal value

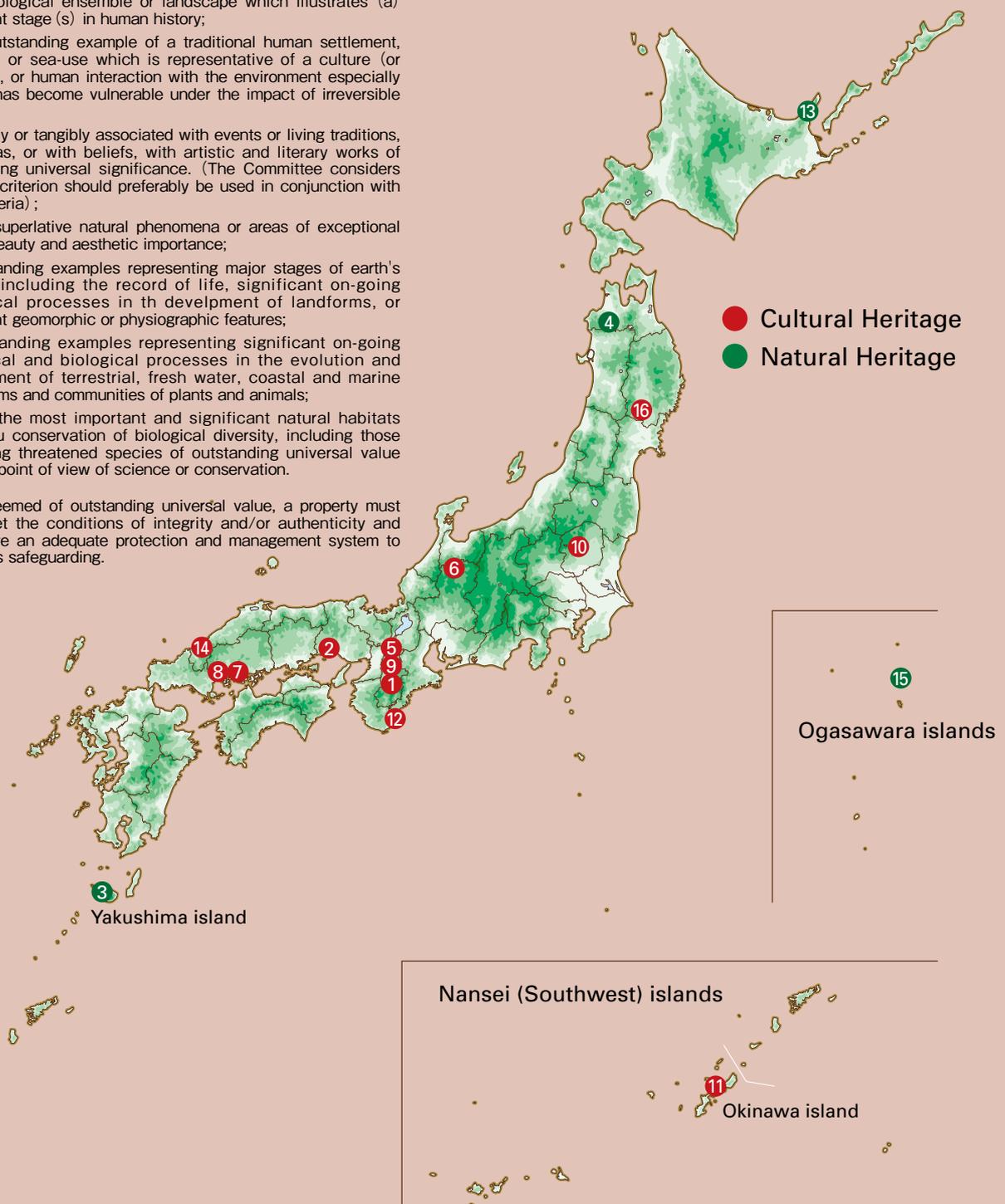
(Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention II.D)

77. The Committee considers a property as having outstanding universal value (see paragraphs 49-53) if the property meets one or more of the following criteria. Nominated properties shall therefore:

- (i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- (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;
- (iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- (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;
- (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;
- (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. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria) ;
- (vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- (viii) be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in th development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- (ix) be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- (x) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

78. To be deemed of outstanding universal value, a property must also meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity and must have an adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding.

Map of World Heritage in Japan



16 Sites in Japan World Her



1 Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area

Property: 15 ha
Buffer Zone: 571 ha
Location: NARA Prefecture
Inscribed: 1993
Criteria: (i) (ii) (iv) (vi)

There are around 48 Buddhist monuments in the Horyu-ji area, in Nara Prefecture. Several date from the late 7th or early 8th century, making them some of the oldest surviving wooden buildings in the world. These masterpieces of wooden architecture are important not only for the history of art, since they illustrate the adaptation of Chinese Buddhist architecture and layout to Japanese culture, but also for the history of religion, since their construction coincided with the introduction of Buddhism to Japan from China by way of the Korean peninsula.



2 Himeji-jo

Property: 108 ha
Buffer Zone: 143 ha
Location: HYOGO Prefecture
Inscribed: 1993
Criteria: (i) (iv)

Himeji-jo is the finest surviving example of early 17th-century Japanese castle architecture, comprising 83 buildings with highly developed systems of defence and ingenious protection devices dating from the beginning of the Shogun period. It is a masterpiece of construction in wood, combining function with aesthetic appeal, both in its elegant appearance unified by the white plastered earthen walls and in the subtlety of the relationships between the building masses and the multiple roof layers.



3 Yakushima

Property: 10,747 ha
Location: KAGOSHIMA Prefecture
Inscribed: 1993
Criteria: (vii) (ix)

Located in the interior of Yakushima Island, at the meeting-point of the palaeartic and oriental biotic regions, Yakushima exhibits a rich flora, with some 1,900 species and subspecies, including ancient specimens of the sugi (Japanese cedar). It also contains a remnant of a warm-temperate ancient forest that is unique in this region.



4 Shirakami-Sanchi

Property: 10,139 ha
Location: AOMORI Prefecture AKITA Prefecture
Inscribed: 1993
Criteria: (ix)

Situated in the mountains of northern Honshu, this trackless site includes the last virgin remains of the cool-temperate forest of Siebold's beech trees that once covered the hills and mountain slopes of northern Japan. The black bear, the serow and 87 species of birds can be found in this forest.



9 Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara

Property: 617 ha
Buffer Zone: 1,963 ha
Location: NARA Prefecture
Inscribed: 1993
Criteria: (ii) (iii) (iv) (vi)

Nara was the capital of Japan from 710 to 784. During this period the framework of national government was consolidated and Nara enjoyed great prosperity, emerging as the fountainhead of Japanese culture. The city's historic monuments-Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines and the excavated remains of the great Imperial Palace-Provide a vivid picture of life in the Japanese capital in the 8th century, a period of profound political and cultural change.



10 Shrines and Temples of Nikko

Property: 51 ha
Buffer Zone: 373 ha
Location: TOCHIGI Prefecture
Inscribed: 1999
Criteria: (i) (iv) (vi)

The shrines and temples of Nikko, together with their natural surroundings, have for centuries been a sacred site known for its architectural and decorative masterpieces. They are closely associated with the history of the Tokugawa Shoguns. Ancient mountain worship, Buddhism, Shintoism and worship are combined, that is responsible for the unique religious space.



11 Gusuku Sites and related properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu

Property: 55 ha
Buffer Zone: 560 ha
Location: OKINAWA Prefecture
Inscribed: 2000
Criteria: (ii) (iii) (vi)

Five hundred years of Ryukyuan history (12th-17th century) are represented by this group of sites and monuments. The ruins of the castles, on imposing elevated sites, are evidence for the social structure over much of that period, while the sacred sites provide mute testimony to the rare survival of an ancient form of religion into the modern age. The wide-ranging economic and cultural contacts of the Ryukyu Islands over that period gave rise to a unique culture.



12 Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range

Property: 495 ha
Buffer Zone: 11,370 ha
Location: MIE Prefecture NARA Prefecture WAKAYAMA Prefecture
Inscribed: 2004
Criteria: (ii) (iii) (iv) (vi)

Set in the dense forests of the Kii Mountains overlooking the Pacific Ocean, three sacred sites-Yoshino and Omine, Kumano Sanzan, and Koyasan-linked by pilgrimage routes to the ancient capital cities of Nara and Kyoto, reflect the fusion of Shinto, rooted in the ancient tradition of nature worship in Japan, and Buddhism. The sites (495.3-ha) and their surrounding forest landscape reflect a persistent and extraordinarily well-documented tradition of sacred mountains over 1,200 years.

Heritage List



5 Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto [Kyoto, Uji and Ohtsu Cities]

Property: 1,056 ha
Buffer Zone: 3,579 ha
Location: KYOTO Prefecture SHIGA Prefecture
Inscribed: 1994
Criteria: (ii) (iv)

Built in A.D.794 on the model of the capitals of ancient China, Kyoto was the imperial capital of Japan from its foundation until the middle of the 19th century. As the center of Japanese culture for more than 1,000 years, Kyoto illustrates the development of Japanese wooden architecture, particularly religious architecture, and the art of Japanese gardens, which has influenced landscape gardening the world over.



6 Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama

Property: 68 ha
Buffer Zone: 4,335 ha
Location: GIFU Prefecture TOYAMA Prefecture
Inscribed: 1995
Criteria: (iv) (v)

Located in a mountainous region that was cut off from the rest of the world for a long period of time, these villages with their Gassho-style houses subsisted on the cultivation of mulberry trees and the rearing of silkworms. The large houses with their steeply pitched thatched roofs are the only examples of their kind in Japan. Despite economic upheavals, the villages of Ogimachi, Ainokura and Suganuma are outstanding examples of a traditional way of life perfectly adapted to the environment and people's social and economic circumstances.



7 Hiroshima Peace Memorial [Genbaku Dome]

Property: 0.39 ha
Buffer Zone: 43 ha
Location: HIROSHIMA Prefecture
Inscribed: 1996
Criteria: (vi)

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome) was the only structure left standing in the area where the first atomic bomb exploded on 6 August 1945. Through the efforts of many people, including those of the city of Hiroshima, it has been preserved in the same state as immediately after the bombing. Not only is it a stark and powerful symbol of the most destructive force ever created by humankind, it also expresses the hope for world peace and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons.



8 Itsukushima Shinto Shrine

Property: 431 ha
Buffer Zone: 2,634 ha
Location: HIROSHIMA Prefecture
Inscribed: 1996
Criteria: (i) (ii) (iv) (vi)

The island of Itsukushima, in the Seto inland sea, has been a holy place of Shintoism since the earliest times. The first shrine buildings here were probably erected in the 6th century. The present shrine dates from the 13th century and the harmoniously arranged buildings reveal great artistic and technical skill. The shrine plays on the contrasts in colour and form between mountains and sea and illustrates the Japanese concept of scenic beauty, which combines nature and human creativity.



13 Shiretoko

Property: 34,000 ha
Buffer Zone: 37,100 ha
Location: HOKKAIDO Prefecture
Inscribed: 2005
Criteria: (ix) (x)

Shiretoko Peninsula is located in the sea of Okhotsk. Due to topographical and geographical conditions, the sea of Okhotsk is the most southern (lowest latitude) ocean in the world as a seasonal sea ice area. Influenced by the formation of the seasonal sea ice, Shiretoko is an outstanding example of an integrated ecosystem displaying the interrelationship between a terrestrial ecosystem and a contiguous marine ecosystem. Also, the site contains a diverse fauna and flora because of the complex topography and the differences in weather conditions between the east and west sides of the peninsula. It is an important breeding or wintering site for globally threatened bird species such as Blakiston's fish-owl.



14 The Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine and its Cultural Landscape

Property: 442 ha
Buffer Zone: 3,221 ha
Location: SHIMANE Prefecture
Inscribed: 2007
Criteria: (ii) (iii) (v)

The property exhibits universal outstanding value as the site of the silver mine that produced a large amount of silver in the 16th and 17th centuries, triggered the mass production of gold and silver in Japan through the spread of its mining techniques to other mines throughout Japan, and exerted significant influence upon the history of the exchange of goods and communications among civilizations, not only between the nations of East Asia but also between East and West, reaching as far as Europe.



15 Ogasawara Islands

Property: 7,939 ha
Location: TOKYO Metropolis
Inscribed: 2011
Criteria: (ix)

Ogasawara Islands, despite their small area, show a high rate of existence of endemic species identified only in this area, and providing precious evidence of adaptive radiation in the process of evolution, particularly in snails and vascular plants.



16 Hiraizumi Temples, Gardens and Archeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure land

Property: 187 ha
Buffer Zone: 5,998 ha
Location: IWATE Prefecture
Inscribed: 2011
Criteria: (ii) (vi)

"Hiraizumi" is a striking case of creation and aimed to realize the special expression of Buddhaksetra (Pure Land) in the real world based on Japanese Buddhism, thought of pure land grown from it in particular, which had been endowed with unique Japanese characteristics fused with ancient Japanese thought of nature worship, from the 6th century when Buddhism was introduced from China and the Korean Peninsula to the 12th century. "Hiraizumi" is a prominent representation of important human interaction in the sense of values as to design concept and design drafting of architecture and horticulture in East Asia as well as showing important steps of human history in these fields.



Agency for Cultural Affairs

TEL 03-5253-4111