Can you imagine your local area without heritage? What represents the past, the present, and the future? What should be preserved? What is irreplaceable? What is the role of local communities in preserving World Heritage?

In 1972, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) gathered nations from around the world to create an international treaty to protect and conserve outstanding sites of cultural and natural heritage. Adoption of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention) marked the first time that a legal instrument recognized and protected sites of universal value. Forty years later, 189 countries are parties to the convention and 982 sites are inscribed on the World Heritage list.

Both the Smithsonian Institution and UNESCO support the development of long-term sustainable conservation practices and international research on, and education about, the world’s diverse cultural and natural heritage. Toward this shared vision, the Smithsonian and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre have developed Protection, Preservation, and Prosperity: Stories of World Heritage. Through the use of the website and accompanying mobile application, educational curriculum, and poster set exhibition, the Smithsonian and UNESCO are committed to encouraging and promoting the interchange of ideas among the world’s peoples about sustainable development and the role of local communities in these efforts.

The 10 World Heritage sites featured on the website are unique and represent a wide range of natural and cultural heritage sites. Take the journey to learn more about their success stories and so much more!

1. The M’Zab Valley - ALGERIA
2. Kakadu National Park - AUSTRALIA
3. West Lake Cultural Landscape - Hangzhou, CHINA
4. Coffee Culture Landscape - COLOMBIA
5. Rock-Hewn Churches, Lalibela - ETHIOPIA
6. Fagus Factory in Alfeld - GERMANY
7. Cliff of Bandiagara - Land of the Dogons - MALI
8. Agave Landscape & Industrial Facilities - MEXICO
9. Everglades National Park - UNITED STATES
10. Taos Pueblo - New Mexico, UNITED STATES

Big Blue Marble, Seamless Image Mosaic of the Earth (WMS), NASA