UNESCO’s new list of natural and man-made marvels

Apart from the Walled City of Jaipur, UNESCO recently recognised several heritage sites — ecological wonders and masterpieces of ‘human creative genius’ — from around the world

From the Walled City of Jaipur and the iron village in Burkina Faso, to the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, UNESCO recently added a broad array of cultural and natural marvels to its World Heritage list. To be included on the list, a site must meet at least one of the ten criteria, like being a landmark of human history or culture, an ecological wonder, or “a masterpiece of human creative genius”. UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee considered 35 nominations this year and accepted 29 from around the world, some of them composed of multiple sites, covering the full range of categories. “That is a relatively high but not an unusual number,” said Mechtild Rössler, the director of the organisation’s World Heritage Centre in Paris.

“The World Heritage List, which began in 1978, includes more than 1,100 sites nominated by their respective nations, like the Acropolis in Athens and the Great Wall of China,” Rössler added. They include landscapes as disparate as the Vatnajokull National Park in Iceland, a region of active volcanoes, glaciers and rare geological formations; Le Colline del Prosecco di Conegliano e Valdobbiadene, a wine-growing area in northeastern Italy; and Budj Bim in southwestern Australia, whose wetlands are one of the world’s oldest human aquaculture sites. Jaipur, which is renowned for its architecture, was founded almost 300 years ago and was laid out on a grid with wide boulevards, colonnades and public squares.

Eight major works designed by Frank Lloyd Wright were inscribed on the World Heritage List, including the Guggenheim and the Fallingwater house in Mill Run, Pennsylvania — the first recognition on the list of American modern architecture.

The new inclusions in the list were welcomed enthusiastically on social media, particularly by officials in their respective countries, where the designations can bolster tourism as well as local pride. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, “Jaipur is a city associated with culture and valour. Elegant and energetic, Jaipur’s hospitality draws people from all over.”

Rajyavardhan Rathore tweeted, "A proud moment for India & Rajasthan as UNESCO declared Jaipur a World Heritage Site. Be it architecture that stands out or tales of bravery that stand tall, Jaipur holds an immense historical significance as d most visited city of India (sic)."

Jaipur’s Walled City also houses the architectural marvel, Hawa Mahal
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The Lovell Telescope (in pic) is part of the Jodrell Bank Observatory, a site in northwestern England that was among the additions.

The temple city of Bagan in Myanmar was cited by UNESCO for its exceptional range of Buddhist art and architecture.