World Heritage Week (19–25 Nov): free entry to ASI monuments on 19 Nov

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News

World Heritage Week is observed every year from 19 to 25 November to raise public awareness of cultural and natural heritage. On its opening day, Thursday 19 November 2026, entry was made free at Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-protected monuments across the country (DD News). The ASI protects more than 3,800 monuments, of which 143 are ticketed – such as the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort and the Qutub Minar. Exhibitions, heritage walks and student competitions are held through the week. India has 45 UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Sarnath became the 45th at the 48th session in Busan, South Korea, in July 2026. From Tamil Nadu, the Mamallapuram monuments, the Great Living Chola Temples, the Nilgiri Mountain Railway and Gingee Fort (part of the Maratha Military Landscapes) are on the list.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Week	19–25 November (every year)
2026 highlight	19 Nov – free entry at ASI monuments
ASI protects	3,800+ monuments; 143 ticketed
WH Convention	UNESCO, Paris – 1972

Point	Details
Advisory bodies	ICOMOS (cultural), IUCN (natural), ICCROM (conservation training)
India's sites	45 – Sarnath the 45th (July 2026, Busan)
44th site	Maratha Military Landscapes (2025) – 12 forts incl. Gingee
TN sites	Mamallapuram (1984), Chola temples (1987/2004), Nilgiri railway (2005), Gingee (2025)

Background

- In 1972 UNESCO's General Conference in Paris adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Three advisory bodies assist the World Heritage Committee: ICOMOS evaluates cultural sites, IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) evaluates natural sites, and ICCROM (Rome) provides conservation training.
- Origins of the ASI: in December 1861 Alexander Cunningham was appointed the first Archaeological Surveyor; when the Survey was revived as a separate department in 1871 he became its Director General. He documented Ashokan inscriptions (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. I, 1877) and excavated the Bharhut stupa. The ASI now works under the Union Ministry of Culture.
- The 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India' became India's 44th World Heritage Site at the 47th session in Paris in July 2025 – 11 forts in Maharashtra and Gingee Fort in Tamil Nadu (News On AIR).

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's World Heritage treasures: the Pallava monuments of Mamallapuram – the Shore Temple dates to Narasimhavarman II, known as Rajasimha; the Thanjavur Big Temple, Gangaikonda Cholapuram (Ariyalur) and the Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram – the Great Living Chola Temples; the Mettupalayam–Ooty Nilgiri Mountain Railway; and Gingee Fort in Villupuram district. In July 2025, at the Aadi Thiruvathirai festival at Gangaikonda Cholapuram, the PM released a commemorative coin marking Rajendra Chola I's birth anniversary, 1,000 years of his Southeast Asian naval expedition and the start of the temple's construction (News On AIR).

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

World Heritage Week is observed every year from 19 to 25 November to raise public awareness of cultural and natural heritage. On its opening day, Thursday 19 November 2026, entry was made free at Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-protected monuments across the country (DD News).

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Week: 19–25 November (every year); 2026 highlight: 19 Nov – free entry at ASI monuments; ASI protects: 3,800+ monuments; 143 ticketed; WH Convention: UNESCO, Paris – 1972.

What is the background to this news?

In 1972 UNESCO's General Conference in Paris adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which advisory body evaluates natural sites nominated for UNESCO's World Heritage List?

A) WWF

B) UNEP

C) IUCN

D) ICCROM

Answer: C – Explanation: IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature. ICOMOS evaluates cultural sites; ICCROM trains in conservation.

2. Who was appointed India's first Archaeological Surveyor in 1861 and later became Director General of the ASI?

A) Alexander Cunningham

B) John Marshall

C) James Prinsep

D) William Jones

Answer: A – Explanation: Alexander Cunningham – Director General from 1871. Harappa was dug under John Marshall; Prinsep deciphered Brahmi.

3. Which Pallava king is credited with building the Shore Temple at Mamallapuram?

A) Mahendravarman I

B) Rajasimha

C) Nandivarman II

D) Aparajita

Answer: B – Explanation: Narasimhavarman II, called Rajasimha – it has Shiva and Vishnu shrines. He also built Kanchi's Kailasanathar temple.

4. At the Aadi Thiruvathirai festival at Gangaikonda Cholapuram in July 2025, a coin honouring which Chola emperor was released?

A) Rajaraja I

B) Kulothunga I

C) Rajadhiraja I

D) Rajendra I

Answer: D – Explanation: Rajendra Chola I – marking his birth anniversary and 1,000 years of his Southeast Asian expedition; released by the PM.

5. Which Tamil Nadu fort is part of UNESCO's 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India' (2025)?

A) Vellore Fort

B) Gingee Fort

C) Dindigul Fort

D) Thirumayam Fort

Answer: B – Explanation: Gingee Fort (Villupuram district) – with 11 Maharashtra forts; India's 44th World Heritage Site.

Sources: DD News; News On AIR (Maratha Military Landscapes); News On AIR (Aadi Thiruvathirai); ASI history; UNESCO WHC (advisory bodies); Tamil Nadu Tourism (Shore Temple); UNESCO WHC decision 48 COM (Sarnath) – whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/9171; DD News – ddnews.gov.in, 19 Nov 2026. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.