

Turkey

Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia

Brief description

In a spectacular landscape, entirely sculpted by erosion, the Göreme valley and its surroundings contain rock-hewn sanctuaries that provide unique evidence of Byzantine art in the post-Iconoclastic period. Dwellings, troglodyte villages and underground towns - the remains of a traditional human habitat dating back to the 4th century - can also be seen there.

1. Introduction

Year of Inscription 1985

Agency responsible for site management

- Ministry of Culture and Tourism
General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria N (iii) C (i) (iii) (v)

Justification provided by the State Party

As cultural property, the churches, refectories and other structures built in the “fairy chimneys” and cliffs of Göreme Valley corresponds to criteria (i), (iii), (iv) and (vi).

(i) The monastic settlements in Göreme represent a unique combination of man and his religious devotions set in a highly specialized environment. Within the space of the churches hewn into the tuff, are found paintings of Christ, disciples and saints which are expressive of a devout faith.

(iii) They bear a unique or exceptional testimony to a civilization which has disappeared. Christian monasticism, while it began before Turkish rule, was continued during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. It no longer exists in Turkey, but the heritage of Göreme is a unique testimony to the historical development of Christian monasticism.

(iv) The rock-hewn churches are an outstanding example of the development of a troglodyte way of life in Cappadocia. Large underground cities were once occupied as centers of refuge during times of stress. There are still communities, such as Ortahisar, which exploit the tuff for residences to store supplies and shelter livestock.

(vi) As already stated under the related chapter of history and within the context of criterion (iv), the area is significant because of displaying a distinctive chapter in the history of Byzantine church architecture and religious art.

As natural property, Göreme Valley and its surroundings corresponds to criteria (i), (ii) and (iii).

(i) Erciyas Dağ is still active and eruptions occur, though not on the scale of the past. The deposits of tuff in which Göreme is found, represents one of the most extensive series of volcanic activity in the past.

(ii) it also represents an ongoing geological process, as the area in which the tuff was deposited, covered by later flows of lava is estimated to be in the neighborhood of 10.000 square kilometers. The landscape of Cappadocia has resulted from the process of erosion in which the soft layers of tuff have been cut away by wind, water aided by diurnal and seasonal variations in temperature and weather. The Valley which was proposed to be established as a Historical National Park is approximately 10 hectares.

(iii) Rare natural formations and features of exceptional beauty are found in the landscape, reflecting varying conditions of resistance as well as the works of man. Göreme is an exceptional representation of the close relationship between man and his environment.

Since Göreme satisfies the criteria of both cultural and natural property, a justifiable claim can be made for its inclusion in the World Heritage List.

As provided in ICOMOS/IUCN evaluation

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria i, iii and v.

Criterion i: Owing to their quality and density, the rupestrian sanctuaries of Cappadocia constitute a unique artistic achievement offering irreplaceable testimony to post-iconoclast period Byzantine art.

Criterion iii: The rupestrian dwellings, villages, convents and churches retain the fossilized image, as it were, of a province of the Byzantine Empire between the 4th century and the Turkish invasion.

Thus, they are the essential vestiges of a civilization which has disappeared.

Criterion v: Cappadocia is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which has become vulnerable under the combined effects of natural erosion and, more recently, tourism.

ICOMOS considers that the following should be included on the World Heritage List:

- 1) All of the natural and cultural properties which are included in the Göreme Historical National Park
- 2) The sites of Karain, Karlik, Yesilöz and Soganli and especially the subterranean cities of Kaymakli and Derinkuyu.

IUCN Evaluation

The Göreme Valley meets criteria (iii) for natural properties as it contains unique natural features and displays a harmonious combination of natural and cultural landscape elements. Precise boundaries for the property need to be established and the Committee may wish to urge implementation of the 1968 proposal for protected area status to ensure future integrity. Göreme Valley should be added to the World Heritage List on the basis of its values as a natural property. Boundaries of the site should ideally coincide with the 1968 park proposal and this must be clarified with the Turkish authorities. Depending on the evaluation of the cultural values by ICOMOS, it may also be accepted as a mixed cultural/natural site.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1985): In the light of the evaluations by IUCN and ICOMOS, the Bureau was of the opinion that the outstanding universal value of this property justified without a doubt its inscription on the World Heritage List. However, the present delimitation of the site nominated appeared to be rather restricted since it encompassed neither the National park in its entirety (which would be desirable according to IUCN), nor the sites of Karain, Karlik-Yesilöz and Soganli, and the subterranean cities of Kaymakli and Derinkuyu (which ICOMOS recommends for inclusion). The Bureau therefore decided that additional information should be requested of the Turkish government before the 9th session of the World Heritage Committee, to permit the latter to make a decision about the inscription of this site on the World Heritage List.

Session (1985): The Committee encouraged the Turkish authorities to proceed with the legal formalities for the setting up of a Göreme National Park.

- No information available on whether the statement of significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- Need to seek a decision from the Committee on changes to the statement of significance
- Proposal for text has been made by State Party

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone has been defined and is adequate

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- In 1976 a defined area within the Cappadocia region became "a site to be conserved" by a special preservation law
- In 1986 a Historical and National Park was defined in the region
- In 2004 a new boundary for the Cultural and Tourism Conservation and Development Area was determined
- All these areas are subject to their own legislations within their own boundaries
- Protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed

- Conservation, implementation and monitoring units will be established within the local authorities in accordance with the revised conservation legislation

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, urban centre, national park, religious use, rural landscape
- Tourist activities and accommodations throughout the region

Management/Administrative Body

- No steering group
- No site manager/coordinator
- Levels of public authority primarily involved with the management of the site: national, regional and local
- The current management system is not sufficiently effective

Actions proposed

- New long term city and regional plans are being made by various national bodies; all plans

prepared by the municipalities in the eleven towns of the heritage site have to be integrated

5. Management Plan

- No management plan, but will be prepared

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- There is no core funding. Every year state funds are allocated for various purposes (infrastructure, conservation projects etc.) to the related bodies within the area
- Funding for conservation and protection provided by state budget, municipalities and foundations
- Financial assistance through UNESCO International Campaign
- UNESCO is also considering to finance the conservation of the church located at the Kayakapı Gate in the site
- Funding for management is insufficient; funding for protection and conservation is adequate

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: no information

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: promotion
- Good: interpretation, visitor management
- Average: conservation, management, education

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- In 2006, the Sinasos Academy Restoration Department will be established

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: no figure provided
- Visitor facilities: All kinds of services and facilities are provided for the visitors throughout the site
- Visitor needs: none

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment; Studies related to the value of the site; Condition surveys; Archaeological

surveys; Transportation studies; Geographical data survey

- These studies are utilised for determination of boundaries of sites to be conserved; for determination and registration of assets to be conserved; as a guide for decisions on intervention and implementation

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage site among visitors, local communities, businesses and local authorities
- Various symposiums and panels are organized for the region but not particularly on World Heritage status
- Web site available
- Involvement of local population: A campaign was organized in 2002 in cooperation with UNESCO

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Bureau sessions: 16th (1992); 18th (1994)

Conservation interventions

- Göreme Open Air Museum Project implementations; Archaeological excavations; Kayakapı Restoration Project. Sustainable use of historic buildings, both private and public owned, is a highly implemented and accepted trend throughout the region
- Present state of conservation: good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure, natural disasters, visitor/tourism pressure
- Ortahisar Castle, fairy chimneys, rock hewn churches and traditional houses carry the risk of collapse
- Pressure by new tourism investments

Measures proposed/taken

- Research studies are being carried out at the research centre in the governorship. The integration of the various conservation and development plans of eleven towns in the

region may provide a solution within the management plan to be prepared in near future in accordance with the revised conservation legislation

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- An archaeologist from the Ministry monitors the process for the archaeological excavations
- Municipal conservation, implementation and monitoring units will be established for the urban sites according to the revised conservation legislation
- The regional conservation council monitors the implementations in the site as a whole

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social and economic
- Strengths of management: awareness of local people raised; worldwide recognition of the site; tourism activities increased
- Weaknesses of management: lack of management plan; lack of full time dedicated specialists; risk of the unique natural tuff formations being open to environmental influences, leading to a possible collapse

Future actions:

- A management plan will be prepared
- Local conservation, implementation and monitoring units will be established in the municipalities