



# CRITERIA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

# The three pillars of Outstanding Universal Value

(Note: Authenticity is not applicable to natural properties)

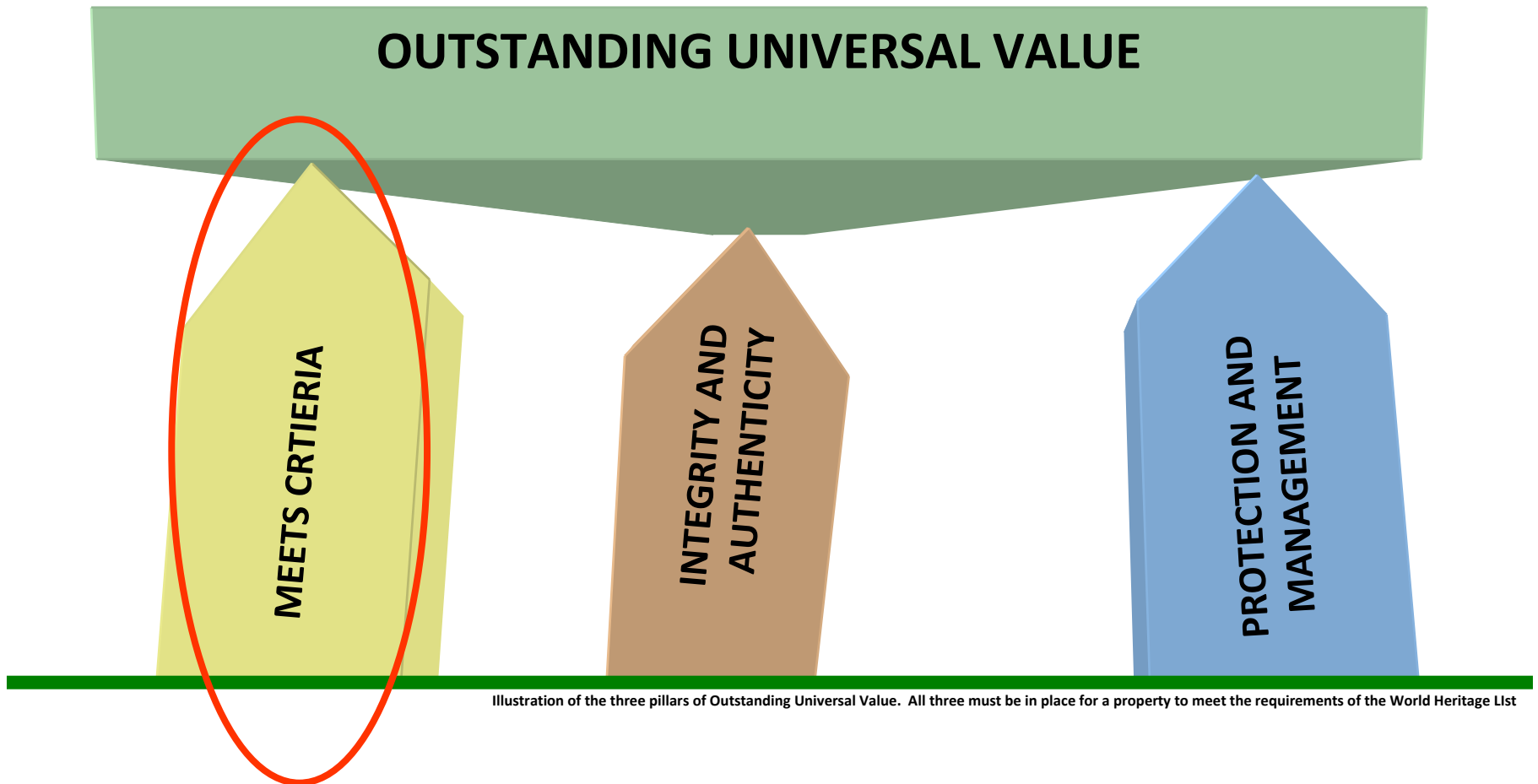


Illustration of the three pillars of Outstanding Universal Value. All three must be in place for a property to meet the requirements of the World Heritage List

## Criteria for natural properties:

- (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 the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;

## Criteria for natural properties:

- (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.

## What you need to write a SOUV...

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value should reflect, as far as possible, the Outstanding Universal Value of the property at the time of inscription on the World Heritage List, therefore you need:

- The **nomination document** and any **supplementary information** submitted during the nomination process - particularly the Justification for Inscription ;
- The Advisory Body's **evaluation**;
- The World Heritage Committee's **decision** at the time of inscription.

The retrospective Statement of OUV should be based as far as possible in information contained in these documents.

## How to write the section on criteria...

- The statements should strictly relate **only to the agreed criteria for inscription**. New criteria may not be added;
- The text should make reference to the **relevant attributes**.

## Criterion vii

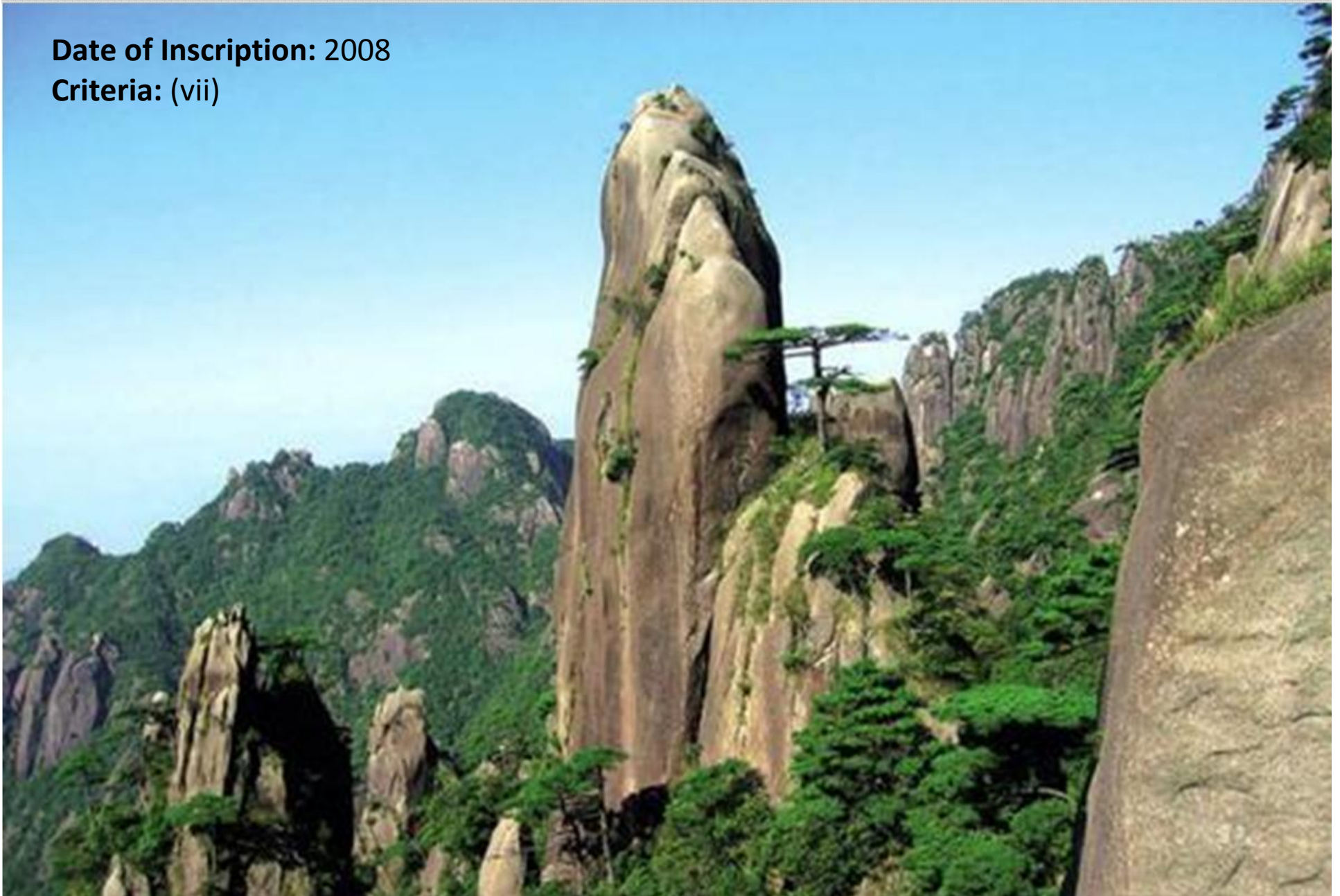
*'contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance'*



## Example: Mount Sanqingshan National Park (China)

Date of Inscription: 2008

Criteria: (vii)





## Criterion vii

Extract of SOUV as adopted under Decision 32COM 8B.6 :

‘Mount Sanqingshan National Park displays a **unique array** of forested, fantastically shaped granite pillars and peaks concentrated in a relatively small area. The looming, intricate rock formations intermixed with delicate forest cover and combined with ever-shifting weather patterns create a landscape of **arresting beauty**.

Mount Sanqingshan also derives from the juxtaposition of its granite features with the mountain's vegetation enhanced by meteorological conditions which create an ever-changing and arresting landscape. The access afforded by suspended walking trails in the park permits visitors to appreciate the park's **stunning scenery** and enjoy its serene atmosphere’.

## Criterion vii

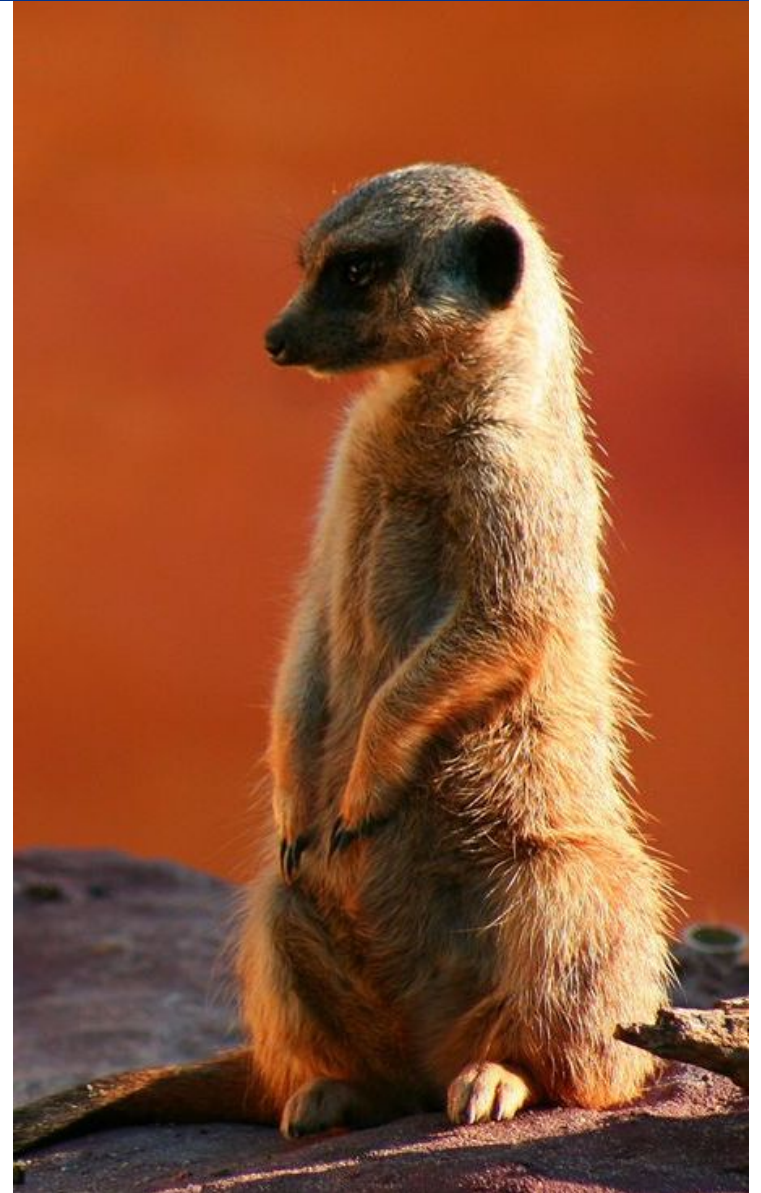
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## Criterion vii

- Two distinct ideas embodied in this criterion:
  - ‘**superlative natural phenomena**’, and
  - ‘**exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance**’.
- Need to make sure which one of it (or if both)



# Example: Mount Kilimanjaro (Tanzania)

## Nomination dossier :

### 5. Justification for inclusion in the World Heritage List

~~It~~ is an outstanding example representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history of major eras of geological history.

<sup>On</sup> Outstanding example representing on-going geological processes and biological evolution of plants and probably animals. Also of man's interaction with his natural environment.

contain unique, rare or superlative natural phenomena, with areas of exceptional natural beauty - most important ecosystem to man, natural features (e.g. rivers, the mountain itself, waterfall, etc.)

~~It~~ is a habitat where populations of rare or endangered species of plants and animals e.g. the fragile alpine and heath endemic plants and black and white colobus monkey, rhino and certain species of birds, e.g. Lamagaya, etc. still survive.

~~It~~ is snow - capped in the heart of the overhead sun of the Equator.

## IUCN evaluation:

Kilimanjaro's floral and fauna resources are important but are not seen as unique or as outstanding as other equatorial mountains. Nevertheless, Kilimanjaro is a superlative natural feature, its snow-capped peak standing almost 5km from the surroundings plains. It thus meets criterion (iii) of the World Heritage Convention.



## Criterion viii

*'be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features'*

## Example: Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes (South Korea)

Date of Inscription: 2007

Criteria: (vii)(viii)



## Criterion viii

Extract of SOUV as adopted under Decision 31COM 8B.12:

'Jeju has a distinctive value as one of the few large shield volcanoes in the world built over a hot spot on a stationary continental crust plate. It is distinguished by the Geomunoreum lava tube system, which is the most impressive and significant series of protected lava tube caves in the world and includes a spectacular array of secondary carbonate speleothems (stalactites and other decorations), with an abundance and diversity unknown elsewhere within a lava cave. The Seongsan Ilchulbong tuff cone has exceptional exposures of its structural and sedimentological characteristics, making it a world-class location for understanding Surtseyan-type volcanic eruptions'.

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## Criterion ix

*'be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals'*



## Example: Rainforests of the Atsinanana (Madagascar)

Date of Inscription: 2007

Criteria: (ix)(x)



## Criterion ix

Extract of SOUV as adopted under Decision 31COM 8B.9:

'The Rainforests of the Atsinanana are relict forests, largely associated with steeper terrain along the eastern escarpment and mountains of Madagascar. The protected areas included in this serial property have become critically important for maintaining ongoing ecological processes necessary for the survival of Madagascar's unique biodiversity. This biodiversity reflects Madagascar's geological history and geographic placement. It is the world's fourth largest island and has been separated from all other land masses for at least 60-80 million years and thus most of its plant and animal life has evolved in isolation. These forests have also offered important refuge for species during past periods of climate change and will be essential for the adaptation and survival of species in the light of future climate change'.

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## Criterion 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'*



## Example: Socotra Archipelago (Yemen)

Date of Inscription: 2008

Criteria: (x)



## Criterion x

Extract of SOUV as adopted under Decision 32COM 8B.5 :

'Socotra is globally important for biodiversity conservation because of its exceptional level of biodiversity and endemism in many terrestrial and marine groups of organisms. Socotra is particularly important for its diversity of plants and has 825 plant species of which 307 (37%) are endemic. Socotra has high importance for bird species as underlined by the identification by Birdlife International of 22 Important Bird Areas on Socotra. Socotra also supports globally significant populations of other land and sea birds, including a number of threatened species. Extremely high levels of endemism occur in Socotra's reptiles (34 species, 90% endemism) and land snails (96 species, 95% endemism). The marine life of Socotra is also very diverse, with 253 species of reef-building corals, 730 species of coastal fish and 300 species of crab, lobster and shrimp, and well represented in the property's marine areas'.

## Criterion x

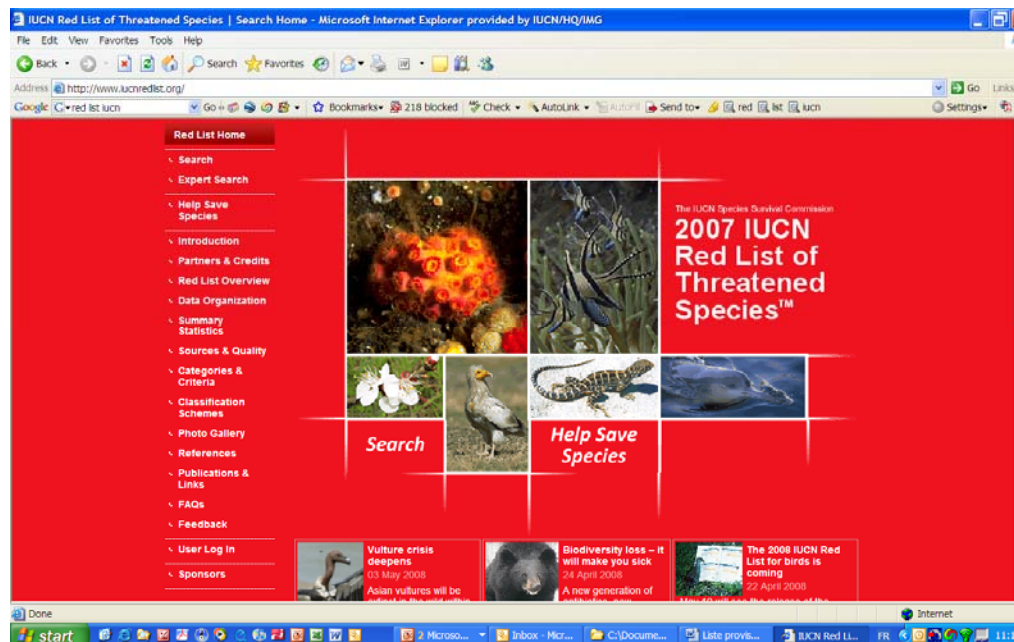
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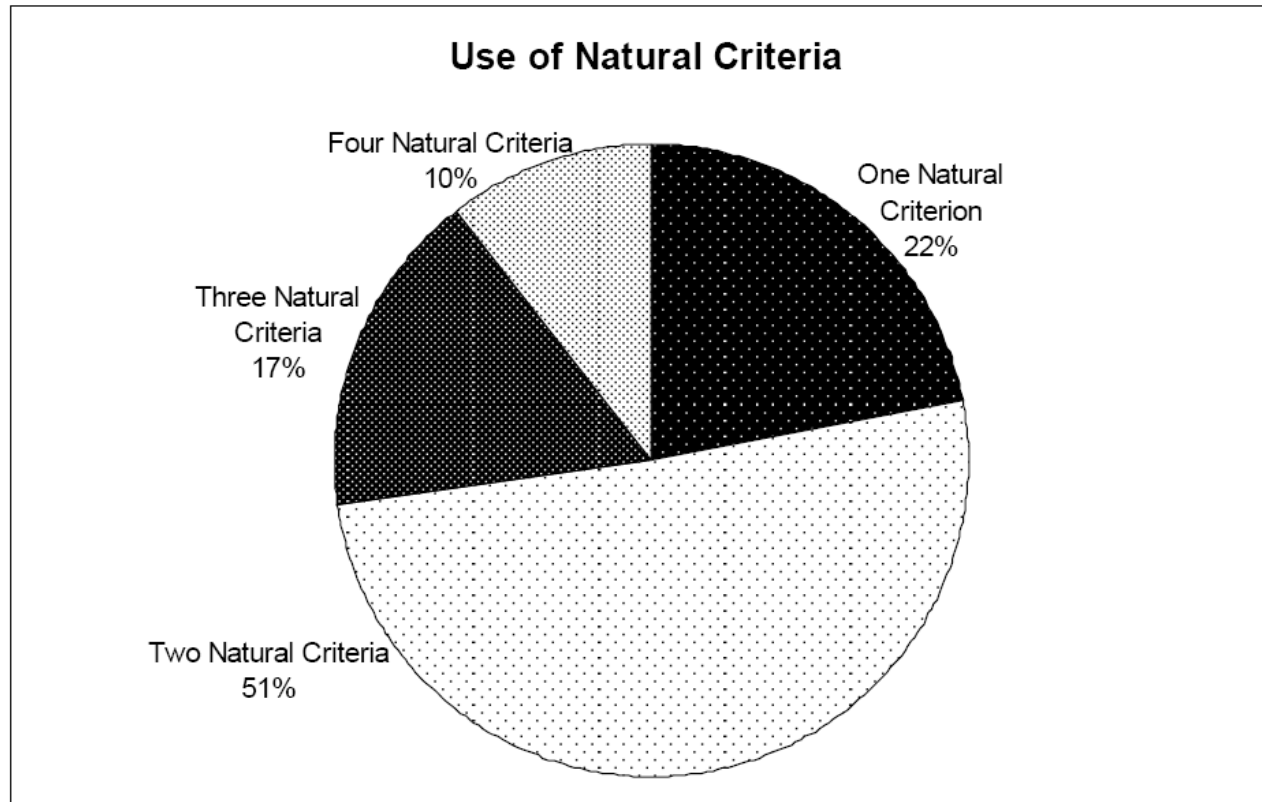


## Criterion x

- **Information regarding species populations:**
  - even if the condition of the property has deteriorated (or improved) over time, the SOUV should still record the conditions at the time of inscription.
  - a range of tools available: IUCN Red List, Centres of Plant Diversity, Endemic Birds Areas of the World, the CI's Biodiversity Hotspots and WWF's Global 200 Ecoregions for Saving Life on Earth;



## Usually more than one criteria...



*Figure 4: Numbers of natural World Heritage criteria used in decisions to inscribe sites on the World Heritage List. This diagram shows the use of the criteria in natural and mixed site inscriptions. It can be seen that the most common situation is for inscription under two criteria, accounting for about half the sites on the World Heritage List.*

....the combination of criteria should be carefully considered!

## How to write the section on criteria...

### Where to find the information:

The section on criteria should reflect, as far as possible, the Outstanding Universal Value of the property at the time of inscription on the World Heritage List, therefore you need:

- The **nomination document** and any **supplementary information** submitted during the nomination process - particularly the Justification for Inscription;
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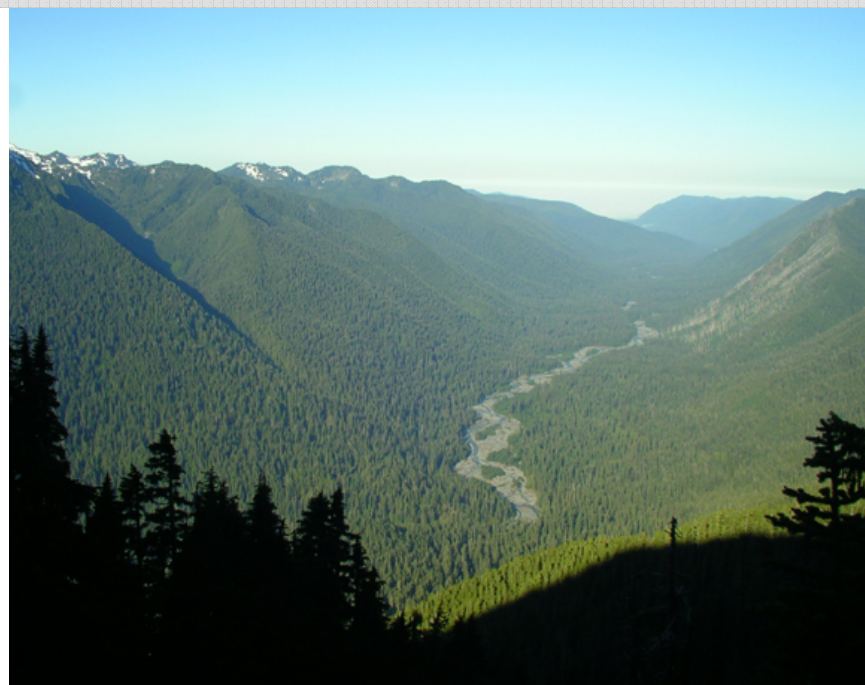
# Example: Olympic National Park (United States of America)

## Where to find the information:

Committee's decision 5<sup>th</sup> session 1981

"Olympic National Park  
United States of America 151

The Committee urged the competent authorities of the United States of America to take steps to include in this World Heritage site the coastal strip, which is owned by the State of Washington. "



## IUCN's evaluation

### 9. RECOMMENDATION

Olympic National Park meets natural criteria (ii) and (iii) and should be added to the World Heritage List. The Committee might wish to express concern about the introduced mountain goats and request a copy of the mountain goat management plan.

## How to write the section on criteria...

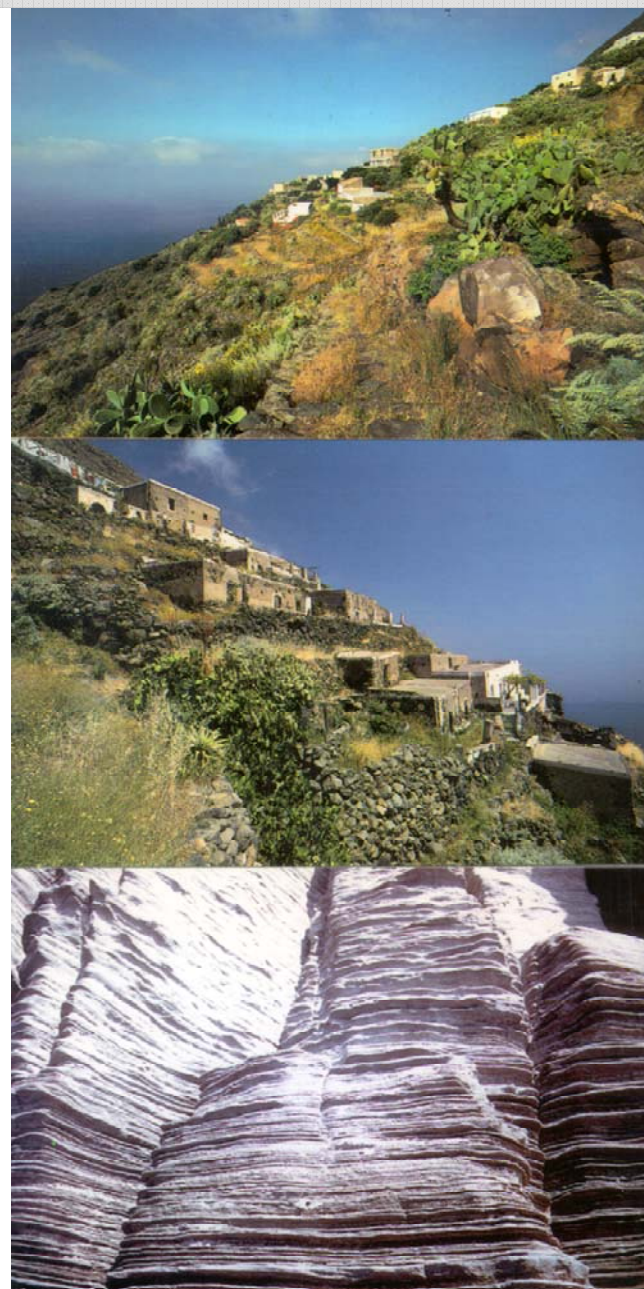
- Where the Committee has agreed the justification for the accepted criteria, **the wording that was adopted must be respected.**

## Example: Isole Eolie (Aeolian Islands) (Italy)

### Decision 24COM X.A.1

“The Committee inscribed the Aeolian Islands on the World Heritage List under natural *criterion (i)*.

*Criterion (i)*: The volcanic landforms of the site represent classic features in the continuing study of volcanology worldwide. With their scientific study from at least the 18th Century, the islands have provided two of the types of eruptions (Vulcanian and Strombolian) to volcanology and geology textbooks and so have featured prominently in the education of all geoscientists for over 200 years. They continue to provide a rich field for volcanological studies of on-going geological processes in the development of landforms.”



## How to write the section on criteria...

- As the wording of criteria have changed several times since they were first defined, care must be taken to **use the wording in use at the time of inscription;**

# Changes to the Natural World Heritage Criteria

critterion i	critterion ii	critterion iii	critterion iv
<p><b>1977</b> be outstanding examples representing <u>the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history</u>. This category would include sites which represent the major "eras" of geological history such as "the age of reptiles" where the development of the planet's natural diversity can well be demonstrated and such as the "ice age" where early man and his environment underwent major changes;</p>	<p>be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing <u>geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment</u>. As distinct from the periods of the earth's development, this focuses upon ongoing processes in the development of communities of plants and animals, landforms and marine and fresh water bodies. This category would include for example (a) as geological processes, glaciation and volcanism, (b) as biological evolution, examples of biomes such as tropical rainforests, deserts and tundra (c) as interaction between man and his natural environment, terraced agricultural landscapes;</p>	<p>contain <u>unique, rare or superlative natural phenomena, formations or features or areas of exceptional natural beauty</u>, such as superlative examples of the most important ecosystems to man, natural features, (for instance, rivers, mountains, waterfalls), spectacles presented by great concentrations of animals, sweeping vistas covered by natural vegetation and exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements;</p>	<p>be <u>habitats where populations of rare or endangered species of plants and animals still survive</u>. This category would include those ecosystems in which concentrations of plants and animals of universal interest and significance are found.</p>
<p><b>1980</b> be outstanding examples representing <u>the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history</u> ;</p>	<p>be outstanding examples representing <u>significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment</u> ; as distinct from the periods of the earth's development, this focuses upon ongoing processes in the development of communities of plants and animals, landforms and marine and fresh water bodies; or</p>	<p>contain <u>superlative natural phenomena, formations or features or areas of exceptional natural beauty</u>, such as superlative examples of the most important ecosystems to man, natural features, spectacles presented by great concentrations of animals, sweeping vistas covered by natural vegetation and exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements; or</p>	<p>contain <u>the most important and significant natural habitats where threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding universal value</u> from the point of view of sciences or conservation still survive.</p>
<p><b>1983</b> No change</p>	<p>No change</p>	<p>contain <u>superlative natural phenomena, formations or features</u> for instance, outstanding examples of the most important ecosystems, areas of exceptional natural beauty or exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements;</p>	<p>No change</p>
<p><b>1994</b> be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of land forms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance</p>	<p>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</p>
<p><b>2005</b> (vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;</p>	<p>(vii) be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;</p>	<p>(vii) 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;</p>	<p>(vii) 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.</p>



# Changes to the Natural World Heritage Criteria



## 1994

- after major revisions on the implementation of the Convention in 1992
- 'significant ongoing ecological processes' moved from criterion ii to criterion i
- revision of cultural and natural criteria towards the inclusion of cultural landscapes: removal of 'man's interaction with his natural environment' from criterion ii and 'exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements'
- no explicit reference to the interaction between nature and culture

1983	1994	1983	1994	1983	1994	1983	1994
crit. i	crit. i	crit. ii	crit. ii	crit. iii	crit. iii	crit. iv	crit. iv
be outstanding examples representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history ;	be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of land forms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features	be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment ; as distinct from the periods of the earth's development, this focuses upon ongoing processes in the development of communities of plants and animals, landforms and marine and fresh water bodies; or	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	contain superlative natural phenomena, formations or features for instance, outstanding examples of the most important ecosystems, areas of exceptional natural beauty or exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements;	contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance	contain the most important and significant natural habitats where threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of sciences or conservation still survive.	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

## Changes to the Natural World Heritage Criteria

### 2005

- change of criteria numbering :
- criterion i became criterion viii
- criterion ii became criterion ix
- criterion iii became criterion vii
- criterion iv became criterion x

	critterion i	critterion ii	critterion iii	critterion iv
1994	be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of land forms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features	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	contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance	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
2005	(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 the 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.

## How to write the section on criteria...

- If, since inscription, **very significant additional discoveries** have been made at the property **that reinforce the OUV** acknowledged at the time of inscription, then **these may be referred to** in the draft Statement of OUV, provided that they relate to the existing justification for inscription;
- If however **the discoveries are unrelated to the existing justification** for inscription, then normally it will **not be appropriate to refer to them** in the draft Statement of OUV.