

Le Morne Cultural Landscape (Republic of Mauritius)

No 1259

*Official name as proposed
by the State Party:* Le Morne Cultural Landscape

Location: Black River District

Brief description:

Rising from two spurs of low lying land that enclose lagoons, the rugged Le Morne mountain juts into the Indian Ocean in the south-west of Mauritius, and became the nodal point of the India Ocean Slave Trade. With its isolated, densely wooded and almost inaccessible cliffs, the mountain was a retreat for escaping slaves, or maroons. Through the 18th and during the early years of the 19th century, maroons formed small settlements in caves, around the base and on the summit. Since the abolition of slavery in 1835, the mountain, largely unchanged since it sheltered the maroons, has come to be seen as a symbol of heroic resistance, enshrined in popular memory, for all slaves who fought for freedom.

Category of property:

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a site. In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2 February 2005) paragraph 47, it is also a *cultural landscape*.

1. BASIC DATA

Included in the Tentative List: 28 July 2003

*International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund
for preparing the Nomination:* 10 March 2004

*Date received by
the World Heritage Centre:* 29 January 2007

Background: It is a new nomination.

Consultations: ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes.

Comments on the assessment and management of the natural heritage values of this property were received from IUCN on 13 December 2007 and are related to the following issues:

- Typology of the property
- Marine environment

This information was carefully considered by ICOMOS in reaching the final decision and recommendation in March 2008.

Literature consulted (selection):

Allen, Richard B., *Slaves, Freedmen & Indentured Labourers*, Cambridge, 1999.

Allen, Richard B., "Maroonage and its Legacy in Mauritius in the Colonial Plantation World", *Outre-mers: Revue d'histoire* 89.

Alpers, E., Campbell, G. and Salman, M. (eds), *Slavery and Resistance in Africa and Asia*, London, 2005.

Nagapen. Amédée, *Le Marronnage à l'Isle de France-Ile Maurice: Rêve ou Riposte de l'Esclave*, Mauritius, 1999.

Teelock, V., *Maroonage and the Maroon Heritage in Mauritius*, Mauritius 2005.

Technical Evaluation Mission: 28 August - 1 September 2007

Additional information requested and received from the State Party: ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 7 December 2007 to raise the question of the extension of boundaries of the nominated area and of the protection of views from key points of the mountain.

A response was received from the State Party on 26 February 2008. This included a newly commissioned views analysis and the enlargement of the buffer zone. The information provided has been included in this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report: 11 March 2008

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

Mauritius was the 'Grand Station' of the Indian Ocean slave trade, a transshipment place for slaves between Africa, India and the Americas. It also came to be known as the 'Maroon republic' in view of the comparatively large number of escaped slaves or maroons who were living in hiding on the mountain in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Le Morne mountain, in the south west tip of the island, was the focal point for these maroons, offering them an almost inaccessible retreat against those who hunted them down. Many only survived as free men for a few weeks: others managed to set up small communities on the mountain, around its base, in caves on its sides or on its summit. Yet more, it is reputed, flung themselves to their death off its sides rather than be recaptured, in an ultimate act of defiance.

Since the abolition of slavery in 1835 these maroons have achieved a sort of legendary status as heroic resistance fighters and Le Morne mountain has become the symbol of their suffering, their bid for freedom and their sacrifice.

The mountain has a naturally dramatic form, its crumpled extinct volcano clashing brutally with the tranquillity of the low foothills and lagoons at its base, which merge into the light turquoise waters of the shallow sea. The mountain has changed comparatively little since it ceased to be a fortress, but around its base some of the area has been developed as resorts and for private homes.

The nominated area covers the Le Morne Mountain and most of its foothills, an area of 349 hectares. It is surrounded by a buffer zone which encompasses the rest of the peninsula and surrounding lagoons up to the fringing reef, an area of 2,407 hectares.

The nominated Le Morne property consists of the following tangible assets:

- *Natural fortress*
- *Archaeological evidence*

And the intangible association between the mountain and maroons:

- *Memories of maroons*

These are considered separately:

- *Natural fortress*

The three thousand metre mountain rises almost vertically and is separated from the mainland by a narrow isthmus. Its precipitous cliffs around almost all sides gave it a certain impermeability while gullies and crevices hidden by woods, and the small flat plateau at its summit watered by a perennial spring, made it attractive to those wanting a natural retreat.

A steep shoulder on the east side of the mountain provides the only way to approach the top. To reach the summit a deep crevice, known as the V-gap, some 30-40 metres beneath the summit and hundreds of metres deep, has to be crossed. Tradition records that this was bridged by escaping slaves at its narrowest point of some 1.6 metres with a wooden plank. This narrow point came to be known as the 'key to the mountain'.

In Mauritius, as in many other countries, opposition to slavery led to slaves fleeing from their masters. Fugitive slaves, or maroons, were first recorded in Mauritius in the Dutch period of rule (1638-1710) and, after French colonisation in 1721, had become a part of the social landscape. By the 1770s around 4-5% of slaves had become maroons rising to 11-13% by the 1820s. Some slaves remained at large for only a few weeks, while others remained uncaptured for several years. Escape by boat to Madagascar was attempted by a few of the 'grand maroons' while others took refuge on and around Le Morne.

The mountain was used as a refuge throughout the 18th and during the early 19th century. While most maroon bands were ad hoc groups of fugitives that probably did not remain together for extended periods, there are indications that at least some of the groups may have established small settlements if only for short periods of time. A description of 1769-70 records the slaves as having plantations and huts on the summit and an elected

chief to protect them, while a story of heroic resistance published in 1853, but referring to earlier times, mentions crops growing on the summit.

By the early 19th century it was widely acknowledged in written records that Le Morne was a refuge for escaped slaves. From all the assembled written evidence, it is clear that there were maroons on the top of the mountain, around the slopes and at its base and that the sea channels were used as a means of escape.

Until the mid 18th century, when they were felled by the French, the lower slopes of the mountain were clothed in tall trees. The vegetation is now mostly scrub some 3-3.5 metres high with in places taller trees up to 10 metres. On the summit, the vegetation is completely degraded in the south-west and slightly less so in the north-west. In some parts the natural vegetation has been invaded by vigorous exotics, introduced to the island over the past two hundred years.

Le Morne together with its setting of foothills, lagoons and sea is a place of great scenic beauty.

- *Archaeological evidence*

A rock shelter was discovered in 2002 and subsequent archaeological exploration has revealed traces of human presence on the western part of the mountain. Rock shelters revealed minor modifications, such as rocks brought into one cave for seats, and food bones, including a sheep bone dated to between 1736 and 1807. Information from 25 soil samples has confirmed human interference in the southern part of the summit and also in some areas of the Tecomia forest.

Archaeological evidence so far collected thus confirms both written and oral traditions that the mountain was used by bands of people living a temporary existence and plundering domestic livestock from the estates below.

- *Memories of maroons*

By the beginning of the 19th century, Le Morne had come to be enshrined in popular memory as a symbol of resistance to oppression. Even after the abolition of slavery in 1835 and the subsequent introduction of the indentured labour system, the maroon legacy was perpetuated. This memory has survived vividly within local slave-descended communities and beyond.

One of the most persistent memories is of slaves jumping to their death from the mountain into the sea, to escape from slavery as a final act of resistance. The first published account of this was Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's in 1773 which became a classic of anti-slavery literature and was widely read in Europe and elsewhere. The story was re-counted many times during the 19th century becoming intertwined in popular beliefs. Although it is impossible to jump into the sea from the mountain, the legend continues to the present day and features in contemporary guidebooks.

The legend has contributed to Le Morne being seen as a place of maroonage, suffering and sacrifice.

The Morne legacy achieved wider recognition from the 1960s when the Sega songs of the Mauritians of African and Malagasy descent in the Black River district around Le Morne, became popular around the world and were recognised as a link to the African mainland.

The mountain is now seen within Mauritius as a focal point for a celebration of resistance to slavery. It is seen as a sacred and mystical place and a place of pilgrimage. A slave memorial is being planned for the base of the mountain.

History and development

An understanding of the role Mauritius played in the India Ocean slave trade has developed in response to research in recent years. Slaves first reached Mauritius in 1639 only a year after the Dutch East India Company established its first settlement on the island. During the 1640s more than 300 slaves were imported from Madagascar to exploit the natural resources of the island and slaves remained part of the population until 1710 when the Dutch abandoned the island.

Eleven years later slaves accompanied the first French colonists. By 1740 slaves outnumbered the white population by almost seven to one. A royal decree opening the island to free trade by all French nationals in 1769 led to an increase in trade and population with slaves being bought not just in Madagascar but also the slave markets of Kilwa and Zanzibar (now in Tanzania). The increase in the slave population was dramatic rising from around 15,000 in 1767 to around 49,000 in 1797. During the later 18th century they accounted for around 80-85% of the population. By the early 19th century there were around 60,000 slaves; thereafter the numbers declined but still accounted for two-thirds of the population at the time of emancipation in 1835.

Slaves in Mauritius came from throughout the Indian Ocean and beyond. Colonial censuses record people from Madagascar, Mozambique, Guinea Coast of West Africa, Canary Islands, Abyssinia, and from the Indian sub-continent – there is mention of Bengalis, Malabars and Timorians for instance. The slaves were usually recorded as belonging to one of four groups: Creole or locally born, Malagasy, Mozambiquan and Indian. Overall about 40% seemed to have come from east Africa, 50% from Madagascar, 6.8% from India and the remainder from elsewhere such as West Africa.

A village called Trou Chenilles was established for freed slaves on the southern foot of Le Morne Mountain. The village was hit by a cyclone in 1945 and moved to a location further east along the coast. It was moved again in 1964 to the present location of Le Morne Village, to the southeast of Le Morne Mountain along the coast. It is largely inhabited by Creoles, descendants of maroon Slaves who lived on and around Le Morne Mountain. The village residents have maintained a spiritual connection with Le Morne Mountain which they regard as sacred. The community is custodian to traditions including music, dance, story-telling and cuisines handed down from their slave ancestors.

In the past decade, parts of the core and buffer zones have been developed including five resort hotels along the coast, an upmarket residential settlement, the Morcellement Cambier on the north-western foot of Le Morne Mountain, and six houses on the southern foot of the mountain.

Le Morne Cultural Landscape values

The values put forward for the nominated property are associated with its use as a retreat for escaped slaves and the way it is perceived as a contemporary symbol of slave resistance.

3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Integrity and Authenticity

Integrity

The values of the property, in relation to the shelter of the maroons and their attempts to escape to freedom, extend beyond the main bulk of the mountain to the foothills and coast – although it is undoubtedly the case that the impregnability of the steep cliffs was the main attraction for the maroons. The mountain is revered for its connections with the maroons as it still presents itself visually as a somewhat remote fortress rising dramatically out of the sea. Only the mountain is in the core zone and its spiritual qualities extend well into its surroundings.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries should ideally have encompassed the foothills and shoreline of the mountain as these are so interlinked with the way it is valued and perceived and thus with its visual integrity.

Authenticity

There is no doubt over the authenticity of the remains of maroon settlements on the mountains nor of the strong associations between the maroons and the mountain which are now known and valued far beyond the area.

ICOMOS considers that the condition of integrity has been partly met and condition of authenticity fully met.

Comparative analysis

The analysis included in the nomination dossier considers properties already on the World Heritage List and other sites that are linked to slavery, resistance to slavery and slave routes around the world.

There are several properties on the World Heritage List commemorating slavery through their built form such as Island of Gorée, Senegal, James Island and Related Sites, Gambia, but none in the south-west Indian Ocean apart from the Stone Town of Zanzibar (Tanzania) which is inscribed for other qualities as well as its slavery association, which is not widely promoted.

In terms of resistance to slavery, several sites are associated with this, such as the National History Park – Citadel, Sans Souci, Ramiers, Haiti which is inscribed on the World Heritage List as a symbol of a nation born out of a slave rebellion. As slavery and resistance to it were world-wide phenomena, manifestations to it vary around the world and several could be reflected on the World Heritage List.

In a carefully reasoned analysis of the Global Strategy and the ICOMOS “Gap Report” in the nomination dossier, it is shown how Le Morne is a site that reflects under-represented themes and cultures identified by ICOMOS.

Much work has been undertaken in recent years as part of the UNESCO Slave Route Project and the Central Slave and Ivory Trade Route is on the Tentative List for Tanzania. This project together with Le Morne, and other key points on the India Ocean slave route could be a catalyst for further collective action.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the inscription on the World Heritage List.

Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

Le Morne cultural landscape:

- Is a focal point for celebrating resistance to slavery in the south-west Indian Ocean and more widely
- Symbolises the birth of Creole people of Mauritius and their influence in nation building
- Guards the memory of the shared suffering of slaves and is a reminder of oppression which still persists
- Stands as a monument of national identity for those who originated in Africa, Madagascar, India and South-East Asia

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Le Morne bears an exceptional testimony to the slave trade tradition as a focal point for commemorating and celebrating resistance to it.

ICOMOS considers that this justification is relevant to criterion (vi) not (iii). However ICOMOS also considers that the mountain is an exceptional testimony to maroonage or resistance to slavery in terms of the mountain being used as a fortress for the shelter of escaped slaves, with evidence to support that use.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the mountain bears witness to resistance to slavery which is a significant stage in human history.

ICOMOS considers that although the resistance to slavery which was demonstrated so effectively in Mauritius and particularly on Le Morne came to have an influence on the sugar plantation system and in time indirectly on the abolition of the slave trade, it is difficult to argue in our current state of knowledge that this was a significant direct contributory factor in the abolition of the slave trade.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Le Morne mountain is associated with a rich and specific oral history associated with the fight of slaves for freedom and that its imposing physical presence make it a national monument and symbol for understanding and appreciating the bravery of the resistance fighters and celebrating what they ultimately achieved.

ICOMOS considers that Le Morne needs to be seen as of wider than national significance. The dramatic form of the mountain, the heroic nature of the resistance it sheltered, and the longevity of the oral traditions associated with the maroons, has made Le Morne a symbol of slaves’ fight for freedom, their suffering, and their sacrifice, all of which have relevance beyond its geographical location, to the countries from which the slaves came - the African mainland, Madagascar and India and South-east Asia.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

ICOMOS considered the possibility of applying criterion (vii) for Le Morne cultural landscape. It is indeed a case where this criterion could be justified to acknowledge the beauty of the site.

However, a study of the implications of the use of criterion (vii) for a cultural property is needed before making any proposal in that sense. ICOMOS is currently working on this issue.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (iii) and (vi) and that the outstanding universal value has been demonstrated.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROPERTY

Development pressures

Development and land use changes are the biggest threats to the integrity of the property, as has been demonstrated by the impact of recent development in the core and buffer zones - hotels along the coast and houses on the lower slopes of the mountain. Although the government has turned down several major projects, others are still being considered in modified form.

It is essential that this development does not increase either in the buffer or core zones - as visually the views of the site encompass both core and buffer zones and its values and visual integrity apply to both. It is necessary to mitigate the impact of existing development. Apart from two hotels with grass roofs, the roofs of other buildings are obtrusive from the summit (the refuge place of the maroons) and the Valley of the Bones (the most sacred site). Impacts need to be mitigated by introducing a screen of trees and upgrading screening where it already exists, and introducing controls on colour schemes.

Control is also needed for development outside the buffer zone in the villages of Coteau Raffin and La Gaulette on the coastline north of Le Morne, the southern limits of the former being only 300 m from the northern boundary of the buffer zone and where two storey houses are being developed. Both these villages are highly visible from the mountain.

Le Morne is seen as a spiritual sanctuary where people can reflect on ideas – such a sanctuary needs to be separated from development, physically and visually, in order to protect the quietness and perceived remoteness of the mountain.

Impact of climate change

A significant change in sea level could impact on the edges of the mountain but would not have a major impact on its values.

Risk preparedness

The main disaster which might affect the site are cyclones and drought and with the latter the risk of fire. The Management Plan includes mitigation and contingency measures.

ICOMOS considers that the main threat to the property is development which might impact on the spiritual values of the mountain and views to and from it.

5. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

What are nominated are the mountain and its foothills. The surrounding peninsula and lagoons are in the buffer zone. As an entity the mountain is inseparable from the land at its foot; as a visual symbol – a mountain that rises sharply from the sea - it is impossible not to view the

mountain without viewing the land that fringes the mountain. ICOMOS considers that as the visual dimension of the mountain is a crucial part of its value as a sacred site, and as a sense of remoteness is also necessary to perpetuate this value, the boundaries of the site should ideally encompass both the mountain and the land at its base.

ICOMOS does not consider that including all of the peninsula in the core zone, would preclude all development but would ensure that development was low-key, environmentally sustainable and in tune with the ethos of the overall site. Having expensive hotels and up-market housing or leisure activities in such a spiritual and sensitive site would seem to detract from, and be irreverent to, the memory of those who suffered on its slopes and could detract from the quietness that is needed for spiritual reflection.

ICOMOS requested the State Party to consider extending the boundary of the core zone to encompass the peninsula. In their response they argued that it is only the mountain itself that is considered sacred, not the surrounding peninsula. Furthermore they consider that it would not be possible to stop all development in the buffer zone and that the buffer zone is very well protected through planning policies which will ensure appropriate development. In order to ensure key views are protected, they commissioned a study of nine keys views and analysed their threats and protection. As a result the buffer zone has been enlarged to the south-east.

ICOMOS considers that it is essential that the mountain and its peninsula are seen as a single entity and managed to respect this. Furthermore it considers that the buffer zone contributes substantially to the outstanding universal value of the property and thus needs to be managed for these values.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the core and buffer zone are adequate if together they are managed as an integrated whole and key views of and from the mountain are protected.

Ownership

Much of the core zone is State Land, part of which is currently subject to a grazing lease which is to be revoked. Core land in private ownership is recommended to be bought by the State as the development of villas will not be allowed.

The buffer zone has six major owners of land. Five private owners together own 491 hectares and the State 154 hectares. The remainder is also owned by a mixture of private owners and government.

Protection

Legal Protection

There are a number of legal measures in force for the protection of the Le Morne Cultural Landscape.

The National Heritage Fund Act (2003) provides the national framework for the management of cultural heritage resources in Mauritius. The Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Act (2004) is specific to the Le Morne Cultural Landscape prescribing a Trust Fund and Board of Trustees for the management of the site.

Further to these Acts, in 2006 the Government passed Regulations under the National Heritage Fund Act designating the boundaries of Le Morne as including the area described in the nomination as the buffer zone.

The implementation of these acts falls directly under the boards of National Heritage Fund and Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund.

These acts do not contain any legal provision for Heritage Impact Assessments to be carried prior to development projects being approved. The Environmental Protection Act (2002) does contain provisions for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) prior to any development project being approved; and the assessments must embrace cultural components where they exist. However the enforcement of the Environmental Protection Act is the responsibility of a different Ministry.

Since the nomination was submitted, in the face of applications for development and recognising that development and land use change poses the most imminent threat to the integrity of both the core and buffer zones of the property, the Government has prepared guidelines known as Planning Police Guidance: Le Morne Cultural Landscape. These guidelines provide for predevelopment Heritage Impact Assessment as the basis on which the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund would approve or disapprove a project in the Cultural Landscape core area and buffer zone.

This demonstrates commitment to back up management with appropriate legislation. The existing development at the foot of the mountain (see below) has shown what a negative impact building can have. Overall, currently the total sum of the built area is a small proportion of the total landscape and measures can be taken to mitigate it. If development were to ring the mountain no amount of mitigation could reduce the impact on the spiritual qualities of the mountain and the visual integrity of the site.

Some protection is also needed for land outside the buffer zone but visible from the mountain, where the Planning Policy Guidance does not apply. Critical view points to the horizon in all directions need to be controlled.

Traditional Protection

The mountain has until fairly recently looked after itself as a remote place with few people attempting to gain access.

The most crucial role for the local community is as guardians of the oral traditions that relate to the mountain – and this role has been strengthened with the recent project to record oral traditions.

Effectiveness of protection measures

Overall the present measures show a strong commitment to backing up management with effective protection. To be effective at deflecting powerful developers, the planning policies will need to be rigorously enforced.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate for the core zone; it remains unclear whether the Planning Policy Guidance for control of development in the buffer zone will be adequate to constrain development to appropriate low-key projects.

Conservation

Inventories, recording, research

In recent years, research into the archaeology and oral history of the mountain have been undertaken and thoroughly documented.

Present state of conservation

Overall the state of conservation of the mountain is good from the point of view of managing natural resources and limiting the impact of development and access, apart from where development has intervened.

In the buffer zone the impact of development has changed the nature of part of the site from a semi-natural one to a resort.

Active Conservation measures

Much of the cliffs and upper reaches of the mountain are managed to protect indigenous flora. An eradication programme is underway to remove exotic plants that have invaded the summit of the mountain.

IUCN stated that: "While the property is nominated as a cultural landscape, and the terrestrial natural and cultural values are detailed, there is no definition of how these resources interact to present a "combined work of man and nature". Indeed, the management plan for the natural values of the area is oriented to restoring the native vegetation and eradicating the introduced species that are a product of the interaction of humans and the environment. This brings into question the objectives of management. If the site is to be managed as a cultural landscape, the "combined work of man and nature" needs to be defined, preserved, presented, and interpreted for the visiting public."

ICOMOS considers that, although it could be argued that the invasive plants were introduced as part of the human use of the mountain, they cannot be seen to be part of the outstanding universal value which reflects the maroons interaction with the native vegetation of the mountain, as modified through the removal of trees.

IUCN stated that: "More than half of the buffer zone that surrounds the nominated property is in the marine environment and yet there is no description of the marine components or prescription for their monitoring and management."

ICOMOS agrees with IUCN views and recommends that active conservation measures need to be extended to the marine environment which covers around half of the buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is adequate but conservation needs to be extended to the marine environment of the buffer zone.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund Board has its offices in Reduit outside Port Louis, where some key government services including the Ministry of Education are also located. The Chairman of the Board is also adviser to the Deputy State Prime Minister. The Deputy Chairman of the Board is a former cabinet minister. Board members include the Chairman of the National Heritage Fund who is also the Director of the National Archives, and a recent past director of National Parks, and an expert on biodiversity conservation.

The Board in its present composition appears to have sufficient clout to carry out its responsibilities including fundraising and advise to the Government on issues relating to Le Morne.

A Director reports to the board and manages staff. Also reporting to the Board is a Consultative Forum involving the local community and local land owners. This Forum also advises the Director along with a Technical Advisory Committee of specialists.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

A Management Plan has been created which sets out clearly the organisational arrangements and lines of accountability. At the moment the Management Plan is a general document that sets out overall aims. Detail will be given in sub-plans on different themes. A number exist in indicative formats and these were due to be refined in early 2007. Subject areas provided in indicative format are: research, visitor management, public outreach, rehabilitation and conservation, risk preparedness, guidelines for the buffer zone and local economic development in the buffer zone. One of these elements (rehabilitation and conservation) has an action plan with costs, the others merely give aims with no indication of resources or how they are to be achieved.

There is a need to complete the sub-plans with action plans and identified resources and to create an overall action plan for the site for the next say 5 year, with an indication of what resources are needed and how these might be achieved. The plan also needs to address the marine values in the buffer zone.

Involvement of the local communities

Local communities are involved through the Consultative Forum.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

An operational team reports to the Director. This includes conservation and maintenance officers, researchers guides and information officers. The Management Plan proposes that “research and specialized tasks involving among others archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, biodiversity conservation and preparation of education and awareness material will be contracted to or carried out under a Memorandum of Understanding with individuals, organizations or institutions qualified in the relevant field”.

Total dependence on external organisations and individuals will not create the continuity and the level of accountability needed to run a site of the complexity of Le Morne. The Board needs to identify a core set of disciplines for which resident practitioners will be employed on a permanent basis. The core set of disciplines should include biodiversity conservation, archaeology, history and education. One or two graduate recruits could form the nucleus of a team which could benefit from existing training programmes and internships offered at ICCROM, Getty Conservation Institute or the Africa 2009 Programme.

This scheme should not overturn existing institutional arrangements or preclude networking with and engagement of external institutions, individuals and consultant experts, but it will be a capacity building programme necessary to internalise heritage management skills.

As one of the measures to improve management after the submission of the nomination, an administrative office has been established on the site for the manager and service staff. It is equipped with modern internet facilities, which residents in Le Morne Village use at no cost. This is a component of the Board's outreach programme.

ICOMOS considers that the current Management Plan is a good framework document, but that it needs to be augmented as soon as possible with detailed sub-plans which identify actions and resources and could feed into an overall action plan for the site, and be extended to address the marine environment of the buffer zone. ICOMOS considers that the management system for the property should be extended to include professional staff with conservation and other appropriate disciplines and capacity building programmes.

6. MONITORING

Indicators have been developed for both the natural and cultural environment. For the natural aspects indicators will cover invasive species and the effects of people. For the cultural aspects, information is being gathered on physical evidence on the mountain with a view to identifying indicators. Indicators need also to be developed for the marine environment.

ICOMOS considers that the visual integrity of the mountain and its buffer zone also needs monitoring – both views out and views of it and these could be undertaken by annual photographs of key views.

As the oral traditions associated with the mountain are a key part of its values, these too should be monitored in terms of ensuring understanding and awareness appropriateness of documentation and publicity.

ICOMOS considers that the approach being adopted for physical monitoring is adequate but needs extending to the marine environment of the buffer zone, and more attention should be given to monitoring views and the way the mountain is promoted and understood.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This is a well presented nomination dossier substantiated by careful research into the archaeology of the mountain and oral traditions. What emerges is a clear picture of strikingly beautiful, but almost impregnable, mountain mostly surrounded by sea, which has come to be seen as a sacred and mystical place in which are embodied memories of maroons' bids for freedom and stories of their ultimate sacrifice to avoid recapture.

As stressed many times in the nomination dossier, it is the spiritual qualities of Le Morne that are crucial to its value as a focal point for remembrance – the conjunction of beauty with harrowing tales of suffering and sacrifice commend it to attention. It is the image of Le Morne that has come to be seen as the symbol of resistance and that image extends beyond the current boundaries.

ICOMOS considers that ideally the boundary of the core zone should include not only the mountain but the rest of the peninsula on which it sits and the surrounding shallow sea. It is the mountain and its setting which are an inseparable whole. They can only be viewed and perceived together and should be managed as an entity. The State Party does not wish to see the core boundary extended to include the peninsula as it considers that there should be a separation between the 'sacred' mountain, where no development is allowed, and the peninsula where development will be allowed, subject to tight constraints.

ICOMOS considers that if the core boundaries are not extended, then the core and the buffer zone need to be managed as an entity and the buffer zone managed to respect the values that relate to the outstanding universal value.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that Le Morne Cultural Landscape, Mauritius, be inscribed on the World Heritage list as a relict and associative cultural landscape on the basis of *criteria (iii) and (vi)*.

Suggested Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Le Morne Cultural Landscape is of outstanding universal value:

- As an exceptional testimony to maroonage or resistance to slavery in terms of the mountain being used as a fortress for the shelter of

escaped slaves, with physical and oral evidence to support that use

- As representing maroonage and its impact, which existed in many places around the world but was demonstrated so effectively on Le Morne mountain
- As a symbol of 'slaves' fight for freedom, their suffering, and their sacrifice, all of which have relevance beyond its geographical location, to the countries from which the slaves came - the African mainland, Madagascar, India, and South-east Asia

Criterion (iii): The mountain is an exceptional testimony to maroonage or resistance to slavery in terms of it being used as a fortress for the shelter of escaped slaves, with evidence to support that use.

Criterion (vi): The dramatic form of the mountain, the heroic nature of the resistance it sheltered, and the longevity of the oral traditions associated with the maroons, has made Le Morne a symbol of slaves' fight for freedom, their suffering, and their sacrifice, all of which have relevance beyond its geographical location, to the countries from which the slaves came - the African mainland, Madagascar and India and South-east Asia.

The values of the property, in relation to the shelter of the maroons and their attempts to escape to freedom, extend beyond the main bulk of the mountain to the foothills and coast. Only the mountain is in the core zone and its spiritual qualities extend well into its surroundings. To preserve the integrity of the mountain means considering the core and buffer zone as a management unit. There is no doubt over the authenticity of the remains of maroon settlements on the mountains nor of the strong associations between the maroons and the mountain which are now known and valued far beyond the area.

The legal protection in place is adequate for the core zone; the Planning Policy Guidance for the buffer zone needs to be rigorously enforced. The current Management Plan is a good framework document, but needs to be augmented with detailed sub-plans and extended to address the marine environment of the buffer zone. The management system for the property should include professional staff with conservation and other appropriate disciplines and capacity building programmes.

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party:

- Augment the management system for the property to include professional staff with conservation and other appropriate disciplines and through capacity building programmes
- Augment the Management Plan through the development of sub-plans which identify actions and resources, particularly relating to protection of the buffer zone

- Include the monitoring of views, appropriate awareness of and respect for oral traditions, and the marine environment in the monitoring programme.





Le Morne village



View from centre of land bridge towards the Mountain



Slave Route Monument



Valley of the Bones