

Identification

Nomination	Ha Long Bay
Location	Province of Quang Ninh
State Party	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Date	29 September 1992

Justification by State Party

Ha Long is an area of natural beauty combined with many valuable cultural properties that are legislatively protected as part of the national heritage.

History and Description

Ha Long Bay is a stretch of sea studded with small islands on the Gulf of Tonkin, covering some 1500 sq km.

Van Don, in the Van Hai group of islands in the southeast part of the bay is one of the oldest commercial ports in Vietnam, with trading links with China, Japan, and the countries of southeast Asia stretching back over 2000 years. Remains from the Mesolithic period have been found in the Soi Nhu Cave, and much early material in the form of harbour remains, pottery, coins, and evidence of military and religious buildings has also come to light.

Management and ProtectionLegal status

Decision No 313/VH VP by the Minister of Culture of 28 April 1962 classified Ha Long Bay as an historical and cultural relic and a national scenic site of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Management

Overall responsibility is vested in the Department for Relics Conservation and Museums of the Ministry of Culture, Information, and Sport, with administration delegated to the Department of Culture of the People's Committee of the Province of Quang Ninh. Under the General Development Plans of both the central and the local governments, it is to be preserved as a major tourist and cultural centre. No construction will be allowed in the area that might damage its landscapes and environment.

Evaluation

An ICOMOS expert mission visited this area in March 1993. It became clear that the intentions of the Vietnamese authorities regarding the extent of the nominated area were unclear. The main interest is undoubtedly the archipelago of over a thousand islands and islets in Ha Long Bay, which are the subject of an evaluation as a natural property by IUCN. The material evidence of human settlement on these islands is slight.

There is no doubt that there is a number of archaeological sites on the surrounding mainland area of regional importance, and that Von Don is a trading port of considerable antiquity. However, none of these cultural properties can be considered to be of outstanding universal significance, either individually or as a group.

Recommendation

That this property should not be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of cultural criteria.