
WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION –IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

THE PYRÉNÉES – MOUNT PERDU - EXTENSION (FRANCE/SPAIN)

1. INSCRIPTION OF THE ORIGINAL SITE

The Pyrénées – Mount Perdu (France/Spain) was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a mixed site by the Committee at its 21st session in Naples, Italy. The site (30,639ha) was inscribed under natural criteria (i) and (iii) and under cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (v). In relation to the natural values of the site the Committee noted:

“The calcareous massif of the Mont Perdu displays classic geological land forms, including deep canyons and spectacular cirque walls. It is also an outstanding scenic landscape with meadows, lakes, caves, and forests on mountain slopes. In addition, the area is of high interest to science and conservation.”

In relation to the cultural values the Committee noted: “The Pyrénées – Mount Perdu area between France and Spain is an outstanding cultural landscape which combines scenic beauty with a socio-economic structure that has its roots in the past and illustrates a mountain way of life that has become rare in Europe.”

“The Committee furthermore encouraged France to consider including the village of Bestué and its environs, including its spectacular flights of terraced fields.”

2. SUMMARY OF NATURAL VALUES

The proposed extension is a relatively small area of 550ha (or 1.8% of the existing World Heritage area) located on the French side of the frontier. The area is bordered to the east and south by the existing WHS and contains the northern side of the upper valley of Héas – a glacial trough gouged by quaternary glaciers. The southern side of the valley of Héas is part of the current WHS.

The extension stretches from the existing WHS boundary on the lower slopes of the southern side of the valley of Héas (la Lèche) down to the valley floor and up northern side of the valley (Montagne de Camplong) to the Crête de Campbieil. Two peaks, the Pic de Pelay (2,401m) and the Pic de Hourquette (2,563m) along the Crête de Campbieil, are within the extension area. The extension also includes the plateaux of Camplong at approximately 2,000m.

The extension includes the Gave de Héas [*Gave*: fast flowing mountain stream] which flows from the Cirque de Troumouse within the World Heritage area and its tributary the Gave de l’Aguila which flows from the Montagne des Aiguillous also within the World Heritage area.

3. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

See 1997 IUCN Technical Evaluation.

4. INTEGRITY

The proposed extension area is owned by private individuals and the “commission syndicale do Barèges pour les pâturages.” The area receives 40,000 visitors a year who are attracted by the cirques of Troumouse (to the south east) and Estaubé (to the south) as well as the hamlet of Héas. The D 922 road runs along the floor of the valley de Héas.

The area is in the Site Classé de Gavarnie-Gèdre which is part of the “zone périphérique” of the Pyrénées National Park. The area is also part of the “zones naturelles d’interêt écologique, faunistique et floristique (ZNIEFF)” Type 1 & 2. The extension area will be part of the area covered by the management plan which is currently in preparation (for presentation to the Bureau/Committee in November/December, 1999) and will be completed in 2000.

The existing site is made up of two types of protected area on the French side and three types of protected area on the Spanish side (see Box 1). The 1997 IUCN evaluation noted that though the proposed boundary of the nominated site conformed closely to the scientific boundary (the landscape unit that has Mount Perdu as its centrepiece) it does not conform to current administrative boundaries (see Map 1). IUCN expressed its concerns that “this overlay of World Heritage Site boundary that is different from the existing protected area matrix may present some challenges in terms of management and presentation the site.”

Box 1. Administrative Units of Pyrénées - Mont Perdu

Spain:	Ordessa National Park	15,608ha
	Vignemale Wildlife Sanctuary	3,200ha
	Periphery Protection Area	1,326ha
	Total Spain	20,134ha
France:	Pyrénées National Park (part)	7,451ha
	Site Classé Gedre Gavarnie	3,054ha
	Total France	10,505ha
	Total	30,639ha

The original IUCN evaluation noted that “IUCN was also not fully convinced that the legal basis of a “Site Classé” (French designation) and a “Periphery Protection Area “ (Spanish designation) were sufficient for long-term protection.”

It is hoped that these management issues will be addressed in the management plan.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The area is also nominated for its cultural landscape values as an example of traditional human occupation centred on the chapel of Héas. The plateaux of Camplong has been traditionally used for summer grazing, however, the area is not being grazed as extensively as it was in the past and is becoming naturally reforested. It is hoped that extending the World Heritage area will help re-establish traditional pastoralism on the Camplong plateaux.

The area nominated does not appear to correspond to the area the 1997 World Heritage Committee encouraged France to consider for inclusion following ICOMOS' recommendation.

6. APPLICATION OF WORLD HERITAGE NATURAL CRITERIA

The existing Pyrénées – Mount Perdu (France/Spain) World Heritage site was inscribed under criteria i and iii. The proposed extension would not meet any natural criteria on its own. However, the extension has comparable scenic and geomorphological values to the existing site. IUCN still retains its concerns as to whether the legal basis is sufficient for long term protection (as noted in the original IUCN evaluation). IUCN believes that the value of the area lies in its significance as a cultural landscape. The applicability of cultural criteria to the proposed extension will be reviewed separately by ICOMOS.

7. RECOMMENDATION

That the extension of the World Heritage area be recommended on the basis of cultural landscape values.