

HOLY SEE

Vatican City

Brief description

The Vatican City, one of the most sacred places in Christendom, attests to a great history and a formidable spiritual venture. A unique collection of artistic and architectural masterpieces lie within the boundaries of this small state. At its centre is St. Peter's Basilica, with its double colonnade and a circular piazza in front and bordered by palaces and gardens. The basilica, erected over the tomb of St. Peter the Apostle, is the largest religious building in the world, the fruit of the combined genius of Bramante, Raphael, Michelangelo, Bernini and Maderna.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription

1984

Agency responsible for site management

- Secretariat of State
- Apostolic Palace, V-Vatican City State

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria

C (i), (ii), (iv), (vi)

Justification provided by the State Party

The inclusion of the Vatican City in the World Heritage List is fully justified, since the Popes transformed the Vatican into a unique complex including some of the most outstanding artistic achievements of the genius of man, employing the finest artists, architects, sculptors or painters of their times.

In the late 15th and 16th centuries, Rome replaced Florence as the artistic capital of Italy. The Vatican became the centre for all talented artists, anxious to perfect their skills as pupils of famous masters. The masterpieces of architecture, sculpture and painting contained within the walls of the Vatican City profoundly influenced the Europe of the Enlightenment during the 17th and 18th centuries. Modern painters still admire the sculptural quality of Michelangelo's frescoes, contrasting with the grace of Raphael's figures, while architects and sculptors are fascinated by the rhythm Bramante gave to the bays of the Belvedere courtyard and the dramatic

grandeur of Bernini's compositions. The Vatican City has always attracted and impressed all the pilgrims who come to seek and find here the essential sense of beauty, perfection and the supernatural.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS finds that the inclusion of Vatican City on the World Heritage List marks an important date in the history of the Convention. This exceptional cultural property responds to the majority of the criteria.

- criterion (I): the Vatican, a continuous artistic creation whose progress spreads over centuries, represents a unique masterpiece of the modelling of a space, integrating creations which are among the most renowned of mankind: the chapel of Nicholas V decorated by Fra Angelico, the Borgia apartments with frescoes by Pinturicchio, the "stanze" of Raphael and his students, the Sistine Chapel, whose mural decor, begun by Botticelli and other Florentine Painters was completed in the 16th century by Michelangelo, author of the frescoes of the vault and the monumental Last Judgement, the Pauline Chapel, painted as well by Michelangelo, etc...

- criterion (II) : the Vatican exerted an underlying influence on the development of art from the 16th century. Architects have visited it to study the constructions of Bramante (the Basilica of Saint Peter, the Belvedere Court), of Michelangelo (the cupola of Saint Peter), of Bernini (the Saint Peter's colonnade, the Baldacchino of the Basilica). Both within and outside of Europe, the Vatican buildings have been abundantly copied and imitated, the paintings (the frescoes of Raphael and Michelangelo) and the antiquities of the Museum (the Laocoon, the Belvedere Apollo, etc...), no less so.

- criterion (IV) : the Vatican is both an ideal and exemplary palatial creation of the Renaissance and of Baroque art.

- criterion (VI) : site of the tomb of Saint Peter, pilgrimage centre, the Vatican is directly and materially linked with the history of Christianity. For more than a thousand years, mankind has accumulated, in this privileged site, the treasures of its collective memory (manuscripts and books of the Library) and of its universal genius.

Committee Decision

The Committee made no statement.

- UNESCO official description of the site is not satisfactory. Proposal for text has been made by State Party

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- No buffer zone needed as the entire surface of the Vatican City State is included

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- The site is under protection of the Law for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage 25/07/2001 and the relative Statutory Role 26/7/2001
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, urban centre, religious use

Management /Administrative Body

- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national
- No steering group or coordinator needed
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- No specific management plan

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- No core funding due to the unique characteristics of the Holy See
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- number of staff: 400

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

- Very good: conservation; management; education

- Good: promotion, interpretation, visitor management
- Access to professional resources with art-historians, archaeologists, historians, theologians, Church historians, palaeographers
- Regular support of volunteers guiding tours in the basilica of St.Peter's

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

- Vatican Museums: conservation of paintings, textiles, mosaics, wood, stone, metals, terracotta and ceramics, paper, organic media; small specialised library on archaeology and history of art, conservation; photographic archive; registrar's offices; Vatican Library: extensive library and archive of documents; conservation of paper, books and manuscripts; courses of the School for librarianship; photographic archive; Vatican Secret Archive: archive of documents, conservation of paper and manuscripts; school for palaeography and diplomatic; photographic and informatic archive; Archive of St. Peter's basilica: archives of documents; Studio del Mosaico: production of mosaics; Fabbrica di S.Pietro: photographic archive; Pontificia Commissione per i Beni Culturali della Chiesa, Pontificia Università Urbaniana, Pontificia Università Lateranense, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, Pontificio Istituto Biblico

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 3508229 (2004). Visitors in the Vatican Museums, guided tours in the Vatican Gardens, guided tours of the necropolis under St Peter's Basilica. The millions of visitors in St Peter's Basilica are not accountable
- Trend: increase of 10.88% over the previous year
- Visitor facilities: Vatican Museums: open daily (ticket); audioguide; museum shops; cafeteria and restaurant; guided tours for schools, groups and special visits; facilities for disabled visitors; Vatican post office; visitors centre; photographic archive; Vatican Library and Secret Archive: open daily for scholars and researchers; on-line catalogue of the Library; photographic and informatic archive;

St. Peter's basilica: open daily; separate visit of the treasury, the dome, the "Grotte"; guided tours of the necropolis under the basilica; archive open for scholars and researchers; photographic archive;
 Vatican Gardens: guided tours;
 St. Peter's Square: visitor centre

programmes about risk prevention (fire protection, alarm systems, state of conservation surveys). The Law for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage makes provisions for supplementary surveys, if needed, and emergency assistance projects

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment; Studies related to the values of the site; Condition surveys; Archaeological surveys; reports of major restoration projects, reports of excavations; historical, archaeological and art historical studies of monuments, buildings and their decoration etc.
- A selective bibliography and list of major interventions on the site attached

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- No signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem is not used
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local authorities
- Education strategy includes: Vatican Museums, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican Gardens and Vatican City: special visits and guides for schools; printed guides of collections of the Vatican Museums for children; audio guides; printed guides for the ensemble of the site or for single monuments or collections
- Web site : www.vatican.va

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 16th (1992)

Conservation interventions

- A comprehensive list of interventions 1984 - 2004 attached
- Present state of conservation: Good

Threats and Risks to site

- Increasing visitor pressure

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- The different Institutions responsible for the various parts of the site carry out monitoring

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: International cooperation on conservation issues
- Strengths: A better awareness at a global level and improved scientific and technical cooperation for the conservation of the site