

World Heritage Sites

Exploring the World's Greatest Places

Justin M. Jacobs



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Justin M. Jacobs is an Associate Professor of History at American University. He studied English and Chinese at the University of Washington before earning his PhD in History at the University of California San Diego. Between degrees, he traveled widely throughout the world, including extended stays in China and Taiwan for research. At American University, he teaches courses on Chinese and Japanese history, the history of archaeology, the Silk Road, voyages of exploration, and global history.

Justin has published articles on the history of the Silk Road and served as editor of *The Silk Road*, a journal sponsored by the Silk Road House. He is the author of three books on history and archaeology: *The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost Its Treasures*; *Indiana Jones in History: From Pompeii to the Moon*; and *Xinjiang and the Modern Chinese State*. His work on the history of archaeological expeditions in China has also been translated into Chinese.

Justin is regularly interviewed by prominent media outlets and has written articles for major newspapers such as *The Washington Post*. More than 60 of his lectures on East Asian history have been recorded for the podcast *Beyond Huaxia: A College History of China and Japan*. He also gives frequent public lectures for lifelong education programs such as Smithsonian Associates, Profs and Pints, and Live & Learn Bethesda. ■

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About This Course and Pamphlet

As of this course's production, there are more than 1,000 World Heritage sites throughout the globe. They receive their World Heritage designation through UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Each World Heritage site tells us something profound about the human experience in different times and places.

This course provides an in-depth introduction to 24 of the most fascinating UNESCO World Heritage sites, from well-known monuments such as the Taj Mahal and Machu Picchu to lesser-known wonders such as Teotihuacán and the Mogao Grottoes. As an accompaniment, this pamphlet briefly covers the course's sites by providing interesting facts. It also lists several resources for additional learning.



01 PALEOLITHIC CAVE ART OF SPAIN AND FRANCE

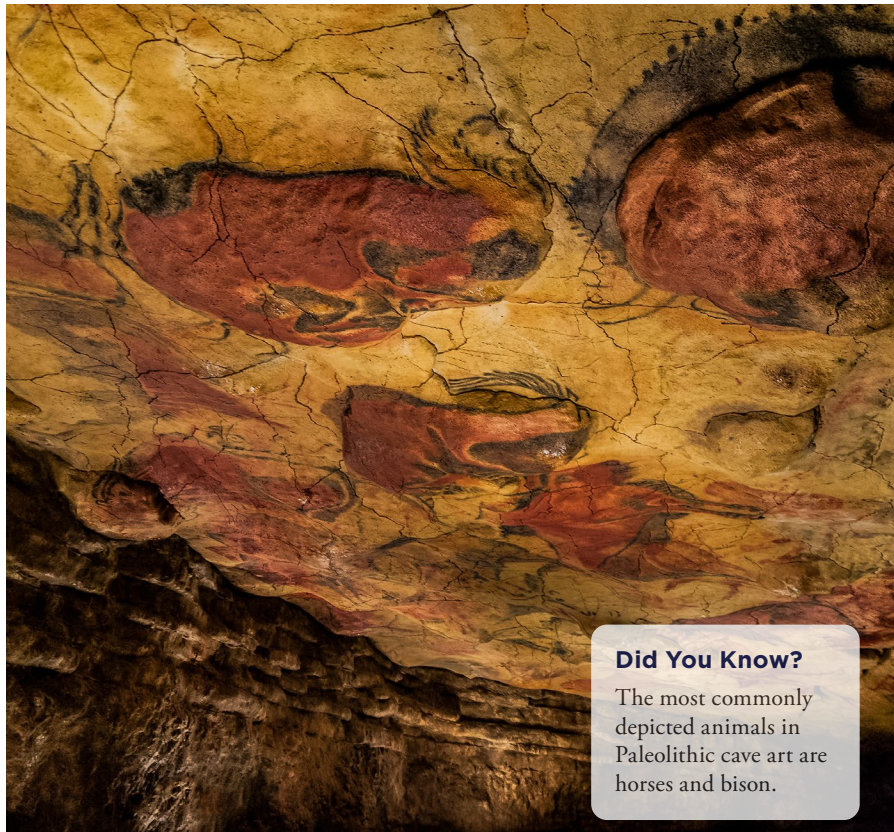
Overview

This lecture focuses on three paleolithic caves: Altamira in Spain and Lascaux and Chauvet-Pont d'Arc in France. The art in all three caves dates to what is commonly referred to as the Upper Paleolithic era, which was roughly between 50,000 to 10,000 years ago. These paintings predate agriculture, domestication, and fixed settlements. They are a window to our most ancient past.

Fast Facts: Altamira

1. Altamira's famous polychrome chamber features a composition nearly 60 feet wide. The most famous section is known as the great panel, and it has been carbon-dated to about 14,000 years ago. On this panel are 34 figures vividly painted in black and reddish-brown. Twenty-seven of them are bison.
2. Certain artistic motifs are found in the polychrome chamber that recur throughout Paleolithic cave art. First, the animals are usually suspended in space without any surface to stand on. Second, they generally don't interact with one another. Finally, they are almost always shown from the side perspective, often with missing anatomy.
3. Several of the bison in the polychrome chamber have been painted in places where the natural contours of the rock surface accentuate bodily features. We see this clever technique in other Paleolithic caves.





Did You Know?

The most commonly depicted animals in Paleolithic cave art are horses and bison.

Fast Facts: Lascaux

1. The paintings in Lascaux's main rotunda have been dated to around 17,000 years ago, which makes them a few millennia older than the bison at Altamira.
2. From one side to the other, the paintings in the rotunda span more than 50 feet and contain enormous animal portraits from prehistoric times, one of which, an aurochs, is 18 feet long. Aurochs were wild cattle that once roamed freely around Europe.
3. A side hall of Lascaux known as the shaft is difficult to reach and features a hard-to-interpret scene. The traditional explanation is that it shows a bison who has been pierced by a spear with his entrails hanging out. Possibly the bison has knocked over the nearby stick-figure human, who may have a bird's head and what appears to be an erect penis. This is speculation.

Fast Facts: Chauvet-Pont d'Arc

1. Chauvet is probably most famous for its skull chamber. In a chamber toward the back of the cave, there is a floor filled with bear prints and bones, including more than 30 bear skulls.
2. Chauvet also includes rare depictions of motion and interaction. For instance, one panel has a bison whose multiple limbs give the appearance of motion.
3. Circles, lines, and other geometric shapes are some of the most commonly encountered visual elements in Paleolithic cave art. We call these non-figurative signs. Chauvet, in addition to its depictions of animals, includes the entire gamut of non-figurative signs: dots, lines, gridirons, crosses, clubs, and rectangles with stripes. It also has two distinctive signs not seen anywhere else. One resembles a shaded butterfly, while the other looks like some sort of large insect.



Resources for Further Learning

Bahn, *Images of the Ice Age*.

Beltrán, ed., *The Cave of Altamira*.

Chauvet, Deschamps, and Hillaire, *Dawn of Art*.

Ruspoli, *The Cave of Lascaux*.

02

THE TAJ MAHAL OF AGRA



Fast Facts

1. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983, the Taj Mahal is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful works of architecture ever built by humankind.
2. The Taj Mahal is widely portrayed as a monument to love. Specifically, Shah Jahan, the emperor of the Mughal dynasty in India, built it as a monument to his late wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631.
3. About 5 million rupees, or approximately 5% of the total annual revenue of the Mughal Empire, was spent on the Taj Mahal over the course of its 17 years of construction.

Did You Know?

The famous *charbagh* garden at the center of the Taj Mahal complex is supposed to represent the Muslim paradise.

Resources for Further Learning

Joshi and Okada, *Taj Mahal*.

Tillotson, *Taj Mahal*.

03 AUSTRALIA'S GREAT BARRIER REEF

Fast Facts

1. From the Queensland coast to the open sea, the Great Barrier Reef's ecosystems move from mangroves, to a lagoon, to outer reefs, to the Queensland Trench.
2. The Great Barrier Reef is made up of some 3,000 individual reefs, nearly 1,000 islands, and at least 20 distinct bioregions.
3. In 1975, Australia designated the Great Barrier Reef a national marine park. Just six years later, it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites.
4. A barrier reef is one of three forms that coral reefs can take. The first type is the fringing reef. Fringing reefs are adjacent to land. Atoll reefs, the second type, are usually much farther out in the open sea and tend to encircle a lagoon. Barrier reefs split the difference: They run along a coast, but they are separated from the mainland by at least several miles, creating a lagoon between themselves and shore.
5. Humans have greatly harmed the Great Barrier Reef: The polluting effects of coastal agriculture and heavy industry have wreaked havoc on the reef's ecosystems.

Did You Know?

The Great Barrier Reef contains around 10% of all the coral reefs in the world.

Resources for Further Learning

Veron, *A Reef in Time*.

Zell, *The Great Barrier Reef*.

04 THE MOGAO GROTTOES AND MANUSCRIPTS

Fast Facts

1. Dunhuang lies in the deserts of northwestern China along a key transport route of the ancient Silk Road. The Mogao Grottoes are a collection of some 500 caves just a few miles outside of Dunhuang.
2. The Mogao Grottoes were all carved out of a soft granite cliff that overlooks a narrow strip of land fed by a small river. This was a popular destination for pilgrims, merchants, and soldiers traveling between China, India, and the Middle East. The wealth that accumulated in Dunhuang was soon invested into ambitious programs of religious patronage.
3. From the 4th to the 14th centuries AD, nearly 500 caves were dug out of the nearby cliffs and filled with one of the most breathtaking collections of Buddhist art anywhere in the world. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987, the Mogao Grottoes preserve a remarkable synthesis of cultural traditions and artistic styles.

Did You Know?

Cave 17 at the Mogao Grottoes is known for its so-called secret cave library, which was discovered by the Daoist priest Wang Yuanlu in 1900.

Resources for Further Learning

Agnew, Reed, and Ball, eds. *Cave Temples of Dunhuang*.
Whitfield, Whitfield, and Agnew, *Cave Temples of Mogao*.

05 PERSEPOLIS, THE GREAT PERSIAN CAPITAL

Fast Facts

1. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979, Persepolis was the capital of the Achaemenid Empire for nearly 200 years. From approximately 515 to 329 BC, Persepolis served as the base from which Darius I and his successors ruled.
2. Darius I was one of the most powerful kings of the Achaemenid dynasty. This dynasty ruled over the vast empire from the 6th to the 4th centuries BC.
3. Today, among other features, the guardian bulls on the western and eastern doorways of Persepolis's Gate of All Nations capture the attention of visitors to Persepolis.

Did You Know?

Exquisite bas-reliefs depicting a procession of soldiers, diplomats, and tributaries adorn the staircase leading to Persepolis's Apadana structure.

Resources for Further Learning

Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*.
Shahbazi, *The Authoritative Guide to Persepolis*.

06 EASTER ISLAND AND THE MOAI

Fast Facts

1. Easter Island is more than 1,000 miles away from the nearest inhabited island to the west and nearly 2,500 miles from the coast of South America to the east.
2. Easter Island was called Rapa Nui by its original inhabitants. It is famous for the hundreds of gargantuan stone sculptures, or *moai*, that dot its barren landscape. In 1995, the island and its statues were recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.
3. The Polynesian settlement of the Pacific was what led to the habitation of Rapa Nui. This island had some ecological liabilities for its early settlers to overcome. Once they did so, they adorned the island with the *moai*, which were carved out of compacted volcanic ash called tuff.

Did You Know?

Certain Easter Island megaliths featured a red headdress known as a *pukao*.

Resources for Further Learning

Lipo and Hunt, *The Statues That Walked*.
Thompson, *Sea People*.

07

CANADA'S ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Fast Facts

1. In 1981, the Burgess Shale, an important fossil site, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site—the first of many to come in the majestic Canadian Rockies.
2. Three years later, it was joined by four more national parks, and then three additional provincial parks another six years after that. Today, the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage site covers nearly 9,000 square miles.
3. This site contains within its boundaries some 27 mountain ranges, 12 major icefields, 384 glaciers, 295 lakes, 44 rivers, 600 plant species, 277 bird species, and 69 different species of mammals, including the grizzly bear.

Resources for Further Learning

Luxton, *Banff*.

Sandford, *Ecology and Wonder in the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage Site*.

———, *Yoho*.

Taylor, *Jasper*.

Did You Know?

The Columbia Icefield is a deep basin of snow and ice that sits more than 10,000 feet above sea level in Jasper National Park, part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks World Heritage site.



TEOTIHUACÁN, LARGEST CITY OF MESOAMERICA

Fast Facts

1. In 1987, Teotihuacán and its wonders were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in recognition of the significant role they played in the development of Mesoamerican civilization.
2. Today, the ruins of Teotihuacán stand as a testament to one of the largest and most sophisticated cities of the ancient world. Its monuments rivalled those of both Egypt and Rome. They are a marker of the settlement of the Americas and the flourishing pre-Columbian civilizations that evolved there.
3. The residents of Teotihuacán built massive pyramids, the largest of which, the Pyramid of the Sun, topped out at more than 200 feet.

Did You Know?

Mesoamerica encompasses the southern two-thirds of Mexico and most of the lands now considered to be part of Central America.

Resources for Further Learning

Hirth, Carballo, and Arroyo, eds., *Teotihuacan*.

Robb, ed. *Teotihuacan*.

SAMARKAND, CROSSROADS OF CENTRAL ASIA

Fast Facts

1. The earliest settlements in the vicinity of the modern-day city of Samarkand arose along a fertile stretch of land situated in between the two great rivers of central Asia: the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, a region called Transoxiana by Greek chroniclers.
2. There are few written records for Samarkand's early history, but archaeology provides critical clues. For instance, excavations at Panjikent, a Sogdian town some 40 miles east of Samarkand, show that the earliest documented cultural influences came from Iran in the west.
3. The conqueror Timur, also known as Tamerlane, decided to build a new capital at Samarkand in 1370. He and his successors eventually transformed Samarkand beyond recognition.



Did You Know?

Timur had risen to prominence as a general in the Chagatai Khanate, a Mongol successor state.

Resources for Further Learning

Chuvin and DeGeorge, *Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva.*

Hansen, "Homeland of the Sogdians, the Silk Road Traders."

Kurbanov, *Samarkand.*

10 ANCIENT EGYPTIAN THEBES

Fast Facts

1. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979, Thebes is an archaeological wonderland in Egypt. Most of its sprawling temples and elaborate tombs were constructed over the course of about five centuries beginning around 1500 BC. This was an era known as the New Kingdom, and it represented the height of ancient Egyptian wealth and power.
2. Pharaohs of the New Kingdom were often portrayed as incarnations or manifestations of gods such as Amun.
3. Thebes's Temple of Luxor was dedicated to rejuvenation and renewal and was a critical place for the legitimation of Egypt's rulers.

Did You Know?

The west bank of the Nile near ancient Thebes features prominent monuments, including the Ramesseum and the Colossi of Memnon.

Resources for Further Learning

Haag, *Luxor Illustrated*.

Strudwick and Strudwick, *Thebes in Egypt*.

11

THE FORBIDDEN CITY OF BEIJING

Fast Facts

1. The Forbidden City in Beijing was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987. This reflects its status as the preeminent architectural symbol of imperial China.
2. The architects of the Forbidden City pursued a vision in which Chinese models of cultural harmony are endlessly replicated, with the goal of placing the emperor at the center of the cosmos, between heaven and earth.
3. The emperor Zhu Di commissioned the Forbidden City, and it was completed in the year 1420. It served as the primary residence for 24 emperors over two different dynasties.

Did You Know?

The Forbidden City's outer court was where the more formal audiences and ceremonies of the imperial state took place.

Resources for Further Learning

Barmé, *The Forbidden City*.

Wang and Stuart, eds., *Empresses of China's Forbidden City, 1644–1912*.

12 MOUNT FUJI, THE SYMBOL OF JAPAN

Fast Facts

1. Mount Fuji is widely seen as Japan's most prominent landmark. At 12,385 feet tall, it is the highest mountain in Japan. Mount Fuji is a dormant stratovolcano that contains the remains of two older volcanos inside. It gained World Heritage site status in 2013.
2. Mount Fuji straddles the intersection of three tectonic plates: the Amurian, Okhotsk, and Filipino. Their shifting, converging, and diverging worked to form the entire Japanese island chain millions of years ago.
3. According to Japanese legend, Mount Fuji itself was formed by an earthquake in 286 BC, but the true age of the formation is closer to 2.5 million years. The current Mount Fuji appeared around 10,000 years ago, its eruptions eventually covering over the older peaks on the site.

Did You Know?

The legendary Japanese prince Shotoku was said to have leaped over Mount Fuji on his horse.

Resources for Further Learning

Earhart, *Mount Fuji*.

Kerrigan, *Visions of Fuji*.

13

TIMBUKTU, ISLAM'S CENTER BY THE SAHARA



Fast Facts

1. Timbuktu is a city in the country of Mali. This is on the southern edge of the Saharan desert in western Africa.
2. Timbuktu has taken on a deep significance across the Islamic world as a powerful symbol of a sophisticated Islamic civilization that predated the rise of the West by several centuries.
3. Timbuktu is now home to the highest concentration of Arabic manuscripts in all of western Africa—a distinction that helped earn it UNESCO World Heritage site status in 1988.
4. Timbuktu hosts as many as 60 private libraries and 1 million ancient manuscripts that have survived through the centuries.

Did You Know?

Timbuktu was founded in the 12th century AD as a temporary seasonal camp for desert nomads. By the 14th century, Timbuktu was a prosperous entrepôt within the Malian empire.

Resources for Further Learning

Hammer, *The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu and Their Race to Save the World's Most Precious Manuscripts*.

Hunwick and Jay Boye, *The Hidden Treasures of Timbuktu*.

14 THE RUINS OF POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM

Fast Facts

1. Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried by the eruption of the volcanic Mount Vesuvius in the year 79 AD. Herculaneum was rediscovered first.
2. Designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites in 1997, the excavated ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum bring the ancient Roman world back to life.
3. These were entire towns frozen at a single moment in time. Things that are normally lost to the ravages of history were here preserved intact for nearly 2,000 years, including paint on household walls, graffiti on the street, and even loaves of bread in the oven.

Resources for Further Learning

Beard, *The Fires of Vesuvius*.
Parslow, *Rediscovering Antiquity*.
Wallace-Hadrill, *Herculaneum*.

Did You Know?

In Pompeii's House of the Faun, a remarkable mosaic of Alexander the Great defeating the Persian king Darius is displayed on the floor.

15

VIRUNGA NATIONAL PARK, GORILLA SANCTUARY

Fast Facts

1. Virunga National Park is located within the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 1979, the park has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.
2. In terms of biological diversity, Virunga is the richest protected area in all of Africa. It is said to contain the highest biomass of ungulates, or hoofed animals, anywhere in the world.
3. The park also includes some 218 species of mammals, of which 13 are classified as critically endangered and several are endemic. The mountain gorillas are the most famous. Its 700 species of birds represent twice as many bird species as in all of Europe, while its 119 amphibious species account for 20% of all those in Africa.

Did You Know?

Manmade conflicts have long threatened, and continue to threaten, Virunga National Park.

Resources for Further Learning

Languy and de Merode, *Virunga*.

Weber and Vedder, *In the Kingdom of Gorillas*.

16 ANGKOR WAT, THE GREAT KHMER TEMPLE



Did You Know?

The design of Angkor Wat took into account the expectation that the king would arrive on top of an elephant.

Fast Facts

1. Angkor Wat is a temple complex located in the heart of Cambodia. Angkor Wat's home site, Angkor, at one point became the capital of the Khmer empire, one of the greatest in Southeast Asian history.
2. Angkor's rise to prominence is usually dated to the year 802. That was the year that Jayavarman II, a local Khmer king, was ordained by his brahman advisors as a "universal monarch," or *cakravartin*.
3. Angkor Wat was dedicated to Vishnu, the creator of the universe and benefactor of humankind. The occasion was the coronation of Suryavarman II, the 17th king of the Khmer dynasty.

Resources for Further Learning

Coe, *Angkor and the Khmer Civilization*.
Maxwell, *Of Gods, Kings, and Men*.

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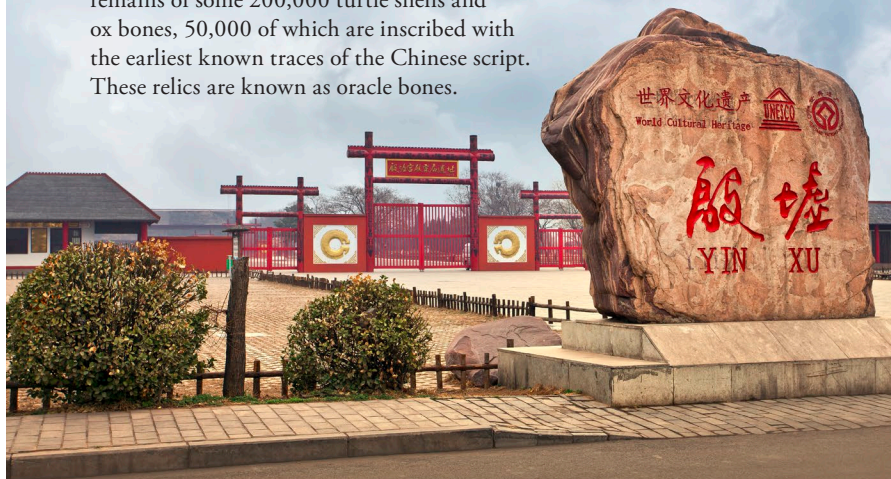
EARLIEST CHINA: YINXU AND THE ORACLE BONES

Fast Facts

1. The ruins of the Yin, or Yinxu, are the remains of the capital of the earliest recorded dynasty in East Asian history: the Shang dynasty.
2. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2006 in recognition of the extraordinary light it has shed on Bronze Age China, the ruins of Yin include a vast royal necropolis and the foundations of a temple and palace complex.
3. Truly setting this site apart are the fragmented remains of some 200,000 turtle shells and ox bones, 50,000 of which are inscribed with the earliest known traces of the Chinese script. These relics are known as oracle bones.

Did You Know?

According to the oracle bones, there was an elaborate hierarchy of supernatural beings who were imagined to play a role in royal affairs. At the top of this hierarchy was a god known as Di.



Resources for Further Learning

Campbell, *Violence, Kinship, and the Early Chinese State*.
Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*.

18 THE INCA ESTATE OF MACHU PICCHU

Fast Facts

1. Machu Picchu received its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983. It was built by the Inca, a group of peoples who originated in what is today the southern part of Peru.
2. The Inca undertook conquest and expansion. By the time they first encountered the Spanish conquistadors in the 1530s, the Inca had forged a highland empire that stretched for some 2,400 miles along the Andes.
3. Machu Picchu was built soon after the conquest of the lower Urubamba Valley in the middle of the 15th century by an Inca king named Pachacuti. Machu Picchu is located less than a week's journey from the Inca capital in Cuzco, and it would have served as a royal retreat.
4. Machu Picchu was never self-sufficient, and it relied heavily on the importation of human labor and material resources from throughout the empire.

Did You Know?

Today, some 1.5 million tourists visit Machu Picchu every year. Collectively, they contribute about \$7.6 billion to Peru's economy.

Resources for Further Learning

Burger and Salazar, eds., *Machu Picchu*.

Wright and Zegarra, *The Machu Picchu Guidebook*.

10 ICELAND'S GREAT ASSEMBLY AT THINGVELLIR

Fast Facts

1. Thingvellir is one of the most famous sites in Iceland. It has been a national park since 1928 and a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2004.
2. Thingvellir marks the site of an open-air parliament, the Althing, that met for more than 300 years from the 10th to the 13th centuries.
3. Thingvellir features majestic scenery. On its southern flank, for instance, the plains hug the shore of the largest lake in Iceland, Thingvallavatn.

Did You Know?

Local chieftains traveled to Thingvellir every summer to resolve disputes at the Althing. They were known as *goðar*.

Resources for Further Learning

Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*.

Roesdahl, *The Vikings*.

20 AFGHANISTAN'S LOST BAMIYAN BUDDHAS

Fast Facts

1. In the Bamiyan valley in Afghanistan once sat a pair of colossal statues of the Buddha, carved directly out of the sandstone cliffs that rimmed the valley.
2. The smaller one was chiseled out of the rock around the year 550 AD and once stood 120 feet high. The larger one, located a little over a half mile to the west and carved some seven decades later, rose to a dizzying 173 feet.
3. The statues met a sad end. On February 26, 2001, the Taliban declared that “all statues and non-Islamic shrines located in different parts of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan must be destroyed.” Soon after, the Bamiyan Buddhas were reduced to rubble by a series of carefully planned detonations, each of which involved the use of dynamite, artillery, and anti-aircraft guns.
4. In 2003, following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan as part of its global war on terrorism, the devastated remains of Bamiyan were granted belated designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Did You Know?

In June of 2015, the Chinese adventurers Xinyu Zhang and Hong Liang used laser lights to holographically project reconstructions of the Buddhas into their niches.

Resource for Further Learning

Morgan, *The Buddhas of Bamiyan*.

21

THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS

Fast Facts

1. The Acropolis complex in Athens represents ancient Greece in all of its glory. Throughout most of the 1st millennium BC in the region, different city-states, such as Athens, Sparta, and Syracuse, took turns exerting a short-lived dominion over the other fiercely independent city-states. During the 5th century BC, Athens commanded the greatest wealth, power, and esteem.
2. In the year 450 or 449 BC, the statesman Pericles unveiled his proposal for a grand public works project. At the center of Pericles's vision was the desire to turn the Acropolis into a monumental symbol of Athens's wealth and power. Over the next 50 years, the Acropolis would see the addition of new gateways, temples, storehouses, altars, and theaters.
3. In more recent times, the Acropolis has been turned into an open-air museum. It showcases heavily reconstructed monuments that date back to the golden age of Pericles: the Propylaea, the Erechtheion, the Temple of Victory, and the Parthenon.

Did You Know?

The Erechtheion stored a humble olive-wood statue of Athena. This was considered the most sacred statue of Athena on the Acropolis during the classical era.

Resources for Further Learning

Beard, *The Parthenon*.

Hurwit, *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*.

22

TIBET'S POTALA PALACE AND JOKHANG TEMPLE



Fast Facts

1. Three of the most revered sites in all of Tibet are the Jokhang Temple, the Potala Palace, and the Norbulingka. Together they constitute a UNESCO World Heritage site.
2. Located in the heart of old-town Lhasa, the Jokhang Temple is the most sacred Buddhist temple in the Tibetan world. Pilgrims travel for weeks or even months to reach it.
3. The Potala Palace, for its part, serves as Lhasa's most recognizable architectural icon. It was likely constructed on top of earlier royal palaces. Its purpose was to serve as the winter residence of the Dalai Lama.
4. In 1755, the seventh Dalai Lama commissioned the Norbulingka's first buildings after a dip in one of its springs cured his foot disease. Though today a public park, the Norbulingka was originally restricted to the Dalai Lama and his inner circle. It acted as the Dalai Lama's summer residence, and it was protected by two sets of walls.

Did You Know?

The Jokhang Temple is surrounded by a circular ring road known as the Barkhor. Designed for the Buddhist ritual of circumambulation, the Barkhor provides a convenient path for residents and pilgrims to contemplate Buddhist doctrine and history.

Resources for Further Learning

Dorje et al., *Jokhang*.

Tashi, *Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace, Lhasa*.

23

PALMYRA, OASIS IN THE SYRIAN DESERT

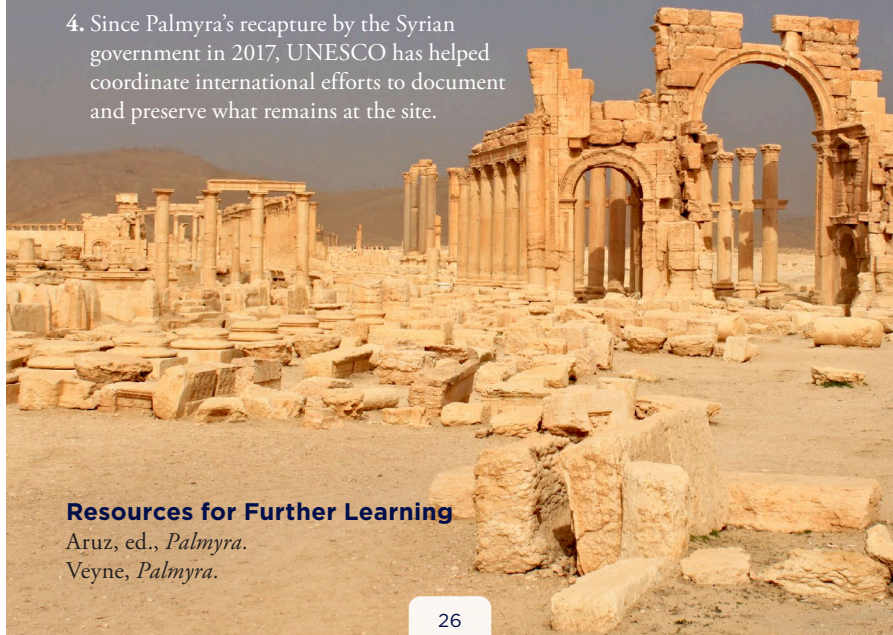


Fast Facts

1. Tadmor in central Syria is the modern town located right next to an ancient collection of monuments and ruins. We know these interesting ruins by their Greek name: Palmyra.
2. In antiquity, the oasis of Palmyra was located in a strategic position—about halfway between the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Euphrates River to the east.
3. The year 2015 saw the arrival of ISIS in the area. Regarding Palmyra's ancient temples and columns as evidence of Western intrusion into Muslim lands, ISIS set out to destroy them. They also set out to execute people like Khaled al-Asaad, who had studied and cared for Palmyra's monuments.
4. Since Palmyra's recapture by the Syrian government in 2017, UNESCO has helped coordinate international efforts to document and preserve what remains at the site.

Did You Know?

In AD 271, the Palmyrene queen Zenobia rebelled against the Roman Empire.



Resources for Further Learning

Aruz, ed., *Palmyra*.

Veyne, *Palmyra*.

24 THE REDWOOD FORESTS OF CALIFORNIA

Fast Facts

1. Redwood trees are endemic to a narrow strip of land about 5 to 40 miles inland from the Pacific coast. Today, only 75,000 acres of original old-growth forest continue to survive, as much of the redwoods' territory has been logged at least once. With the right conditions, coast redwoods can soar to astonishing heights and live to a mind-boggling age. A mature redwood is anywhere from 500 to 1,000 years old, stands 200 to 300 feet tall, and boasts a trunk of 6 to 20 feet in diameter.
2. At the turn of the 20th century, nearly all redwood land was held in private hands. The Save the Redwoods League, founded in 1918, began working to preserve these trees. It was able to purchase limited sections of redwood forest on a grove-by-grove basis.
3. Over the course of the 1920s, the state of California agreed to consolidate those groves into three state parks: Prairie Creek Redwoods, Del Norte Coast Redwoods, and Jedediah Smith Redwoods. Later, in 1968, President Lyndon Johnson formally oversaw the creation of Redwood National and State Parks, adding a new national park to the mix. The Redwood National and State Parks were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1980.

Did You Know?

As of this course's production, the world's tallest known redwood tree is one named Hyperion, which boasts a height of more than 379 feet.

Resources for Further Learning

Evarts and Popper, eds., *Coast Redwood*.

Rohde and Rohde, *Redwood National and State Parks*.

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