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## World Heritage and the Australian Convict Sites



### What is World Heritage?

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. Places as unique and diverse as the wilds of East Africa's Serengeti, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, the Baroque cathedrals of Latin America and now the Australian Convict Sites, make up our world's heritage.

What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites are important to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of where they are located.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of *outstanding universal value* to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972.

As of June 2010, a total of 187 countries including Australia have ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention which established the World Heritage List. The World Heritage List reflects the wealth and diversity of the Earth's cultural and natural heritage and includes more than 900 properties, 18 of which are in Australia.

### What is the Australian Convict Sites inscription?

The Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property is a series of heritage sites across the country which collectively are representative of the global phenomenon of convictism and its association with worldwide developments in the punishment of crime in the modern era. In July 2010, the Australian Convict Sites was inscribed on the World Heritage List.



The Port Arthur and Coal Mines Historic Sites form part of that inscription.

The 'Australian Convict Sites' is the title given to the collection of Australia's penal sites that form the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property.

The 11 sites are:

***Port Arthur Historic Site*** (Tasman Peninsula, TAS);  
***Cascades Female Factory*** (Hobart, TAS);  
***Darlington Probation Station*** (Maria Island, TAS);  
***Coal Mines Historic Site*** (Tasman Peninsula, TAS);  
***Brickendon - Woolmers Estates*** (near Longford, TAS);  
***Old Government House and Domain*** (Parramatta, NSW);  
***Hyde Park Barracks*** (Sydney, NSW);  
***Cockatoo Island Convict Station*** (Sydney, NSW);  
***Old Great North Road*** (near Wiseman's Ferry, NSW);  
***Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area*** (Norfolk Is) and  
***Fremantle Prison*** (Fremantle, WA).

The 11 sites which form the property are a representative selection from the thousands established by the British Empire on Australian soil in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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British transportation of convicts to Australia was the world's first conscious attempt to build a new society on the labour of convicted prisoners. Around 166,000 convicts were transported to Australia over the 80 years between 1787 and 1868. Each of the sites above tells a different part of that story. For more information on each site visit – [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/worldheritage](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/worldheritage)

## **What is Outstanding Universal Value and how do the Australian Convict Sites meet this level of significance?**

Outstanding universal value recognises that the cultural and/or natural significance of a place is so exceptional that it goes beyond national boundaries to be of importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.

The Australian Convict Sites are unparalleled as the best surviving examples of the forced migration of convicts. They reflect the common elements of convictism during the modern era as well as a number of features that are unique in the world. Typically, convictism involved: the use of convicts to extend the geo-political influence of the home state; the transportation of prisoners to penal colonies to deter crime in the home state; and the reformation of convicts. The 11 sites comprise a diverse array of architectural ensembles with more than 200 convict structures, ruins and archaeological remains. Each site represents one or more elements of Australia's

integrated and diverse convict system which included assignment, gangs, probation, female factories, surveillance regimes, entitlement and reward schemes and penal stations.

## **What will World Heritage Listing mean for the Port Arthur and the Coal Mines Historic Sites?**

Inscribing a site on the World Heritage List is not the end of the story. The Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority (PAHSMA) and state authorities will continue to work towards managing, monitoring and preserving the sites and their outstanding heritage values.

The inscription of a site(s) on the World Heritage List brings an inevitable awareness and curiosity about the site(s) outstanding values.

World Heritage Listing can result in building the capacity for sustainable tourism, raising public awareness of conservation principles, sharing expertise and knowledge with other sites and protected areas, and building an increased understanding of the need to protect heritage for future generations.

World Heritage status brings no guarantee of funding from any source. UNESCO has only limited funding for training and other assistance to third-world countries. Recurrent funding is the responsibility of the country in which the site is located.

The Port Arthur Historic Sites receives significant recurrent support from the Tasmanian Government for the ongoing conservation of the Port Arthur and Coal Mines Historic Sites. The Australian Government has provided significant funding for major projects, most recently for conservation and interpretation works of the Separate Prison.

## **For more information:**

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