



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



Birthplace of Jesus placed on UNESCO's World Heritage in Danger List



Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem. Photo: UNESCO/Federico Busonero

29 June 2012 –

The Church of the Nativity, which sits on a site in Bethlehem that is identified by Christian tradition as the birthplace of Jesus, was inscribed today on the [World Heritage List](#) of the United Nations Scientific, Cultural, and Educational Organization ([UNESCO](#)), as well as on the list of sites in danger.

The church, and the pilgrimage route on the site, was placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger since it is suffering from damages due to water leaks, according to a news release issued by UNESCO.

A church was first completed on the site in 339 A.D. and the edifice that replaced it after a fire in the 6th century retains elaborate floor mosaics from the original edifice. The site, situated 10 kilometres south of Jerusalem, includes the church as well as Latin, Greek Orthodox, Franciscan and Armenian convents and churches as well as bell towers and terraced gardens.

The [List of World Heritage in Danger](#) is designed to inform the international community of threats to the outstanding universal values for which a property has been inscribed, and to encourage corrective action.

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, which is meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, until 6 July, also inscribed sites from Israel, Palau, Indonesia, Morocco, China, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire on the World Heritage List today.

The Nahal Me'arot/Wadi el-Mughara Caves at Mount Carmel in Israel covers 54 hectares and contains cultural deposits representing 500,000 years of human evolution with evidence of burials, early stone architecture and the transition from a hunter-gathering lifestyle to agriculture and animal husbandry.

The Rock Islands Southern Lagoon in Palau contains 445 uninhabited limestone islands of volcanic origin, and also counts with a complex reef system featuring over 385 coral species and different types of habitat. The site harbours the highest concentration of marine lakes anywhere and isolated bodies of seawater separated from the ocean by land barriers.

Five rice terraces and their water temples in Bali, Indonesia, were also recognized for their cooperative water management system, known as subak, which dates back to the 9th century.

The modern capital of Morocco, Rabat, and the site of Xanadu, north of China's Great Wall, were also added to the List, as were Bassari and Bedik Cultural Landscapes in south-east Senegal and the first capital of Côte d'Ivoire, the historic town of Grand-Bassam.

The Committee meets once a year and is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, which defines the kind of natural or cultural sites that can be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List. It also considers the inscription or deletion of sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Mali's Timbuktu and Tomb of Askia sites added to List of World Heritage in Danger](#)