

# UNESCO LIST OF WORLD HERITAGE SITES GETS FOUR NEW ADDITIONS



The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recently revealed the names of four new additions to their list of World Heritage Sites.

The UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites features some 936 monuments of great cultural as well as natural importance. This year, four more sites have been added to the category of “natural wonders”.

Japan’s **Ogasawara Islands** are one of the four new locations on the list; local unique biodiversity features over 200 endangered bird species as well as the critically endangered Bonin flying fox, a rare kind of bat. Experts compare the archipelago to the Galapagos Islands, especially in terms of local remoteness. Technically speaking, the Ogasawara Islands present a living evolutionary laboratory.

The **Ningaloo Coast** on the western shores of Australia is home to one of the world’s largest near-shore coral reef systems. It attracts sea turtles as well as whale sharks and many other exotic species. The Ningaloo Coast also features a complex of underwater caves, which on their own create an exceptional ecosystem.

The **Wadi Rum Protected Area** of Jordan combines outstanding natural and cultural heritage. The striking desert with towering rock formations and maze-like canyons has for millennia been home to the Bedouin tribes. There are over 25,000 rock carvings as well as 20,000 inscriptions found scattered around Wadi Rum.

Last, but certainly not least, among the new additions is the **Keya Lake System** in the Great Rift Valley. Birdwatchers will find an abundance of bird species there, 13 of which are globally threatened. It is a significant nesting ground for the white pelican as well as a popular foraging site for the lesser flamingo. The system is home to many other exotic animal species, such as the black rhino, Rothschild’s giraffe, lion, cheetah, greater kudu, as well as wild dog.

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