

African World Heritage Day

“African Natural and Cultural Heritage without Borders”

Our rich and varied cultural heritage has a profound power to help build our nation.

Nelson Mandela

By Marsha Hall

May 5 was declared African World Heritage Day in 2015 during the 38th session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference. Its purpose is to highlight and promote the incredible legacy and rich cultural diversity inherent to the continent - from the people, language, food, dress, rituals to the belief systems.

The African continent is home to numerous historical monuments and landscapes, such as the Great Wall of Zimbabwe, Uganda's Kasubi Tombs, the Pyramids of Giza located in Egypt, Mapungubwe's Cultural Landscape, and the forests of Central Africa (Cameroon, Congo, Gabon and the Central African Republic). Yet more than twenty-three African heritage sites are at risk from natural and man-made disasters, whether by climate change or being put under strain by planned infrastructure projects, such highways, dams, and the extractive industries. While African countries have the sovereign right to develop their economies, it is also critical that preservation and conservation of Africa's natural and cultural heritage include local, regional and global efforts.

However, it is necessary to increase awareness about African World Heritage Day, particularly for Africans celebrating the continent's outstanding heritage. Despite the challenges and adversity, African leaders have been urged to help preserve the cultural heritage for continuity, adaptation and transfer of knowledge from one generation to another. In this ecosystem, there is real emphasis on the need to mobilize more young people across the continent and engage with others on social media platforms through shared experiences on the pertinence of African World Heritage Day.

Today is an opportunity to celebrate the richness of the African heritage, since it does require shared visions and collective energies, not only for preservation but sustainability, which has become a new catalyst for thinking and actively doing.

We all are custodians of Africa's cultural heritage. Let us continue to tell her story.

Website Sources:

“African World Heritage Day.” <https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/evento/african-world-heritage-day/>

“African World Heritage Day 2023.” <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2541>