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World Heritage - Intangible Cultural Heritage

Similarities and differences

UNESCO is active in many ways to protect and preserve the cultural heritage. These efforts take the specific form of a series of conventions, two of which are often confused.

- > **The World Heritage Convention (1972)**
- > **The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage (2003).**

1. World Heritage

The world heritage is defined by the **UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, ratified by Switzerland in 1975.

The world heritage is the realisation of a revolutionary idea: making all humankind responsible for protecting **cultural and natural sites of exceptional universal value**. This idea took form when the temples of Abu Simbel were saved.

To this day, **the world heritage list** consists of 936 sites in more than 150 countries. The most famous of these include: Versailles, Machu Pichu, the Great Wall of China, Robben Island in South Africa where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, the National Park of Iguazu in Argentina and Brazil, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, the Taj Mahal, the Medina of Marrakesh, Stonehenge, Katmandu.

<http://whc.unesco.org/>

Eleven Swiss sites are included on the World Heritage List: the Old City of Berne, Saint Gallen Monastery complex, the convent of St John in Münstair, the three castles in Bellinzona, the Jungfrau-Aletsch Alps, Monte San Giorgio, Lavaux terraced vineyards, Sardona tectonic mountain range, the Rhaetian railway in the countryside of Albula and Bernina, La Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle watchmaking centres and the Palafitte sites around the Alps.

www.patrimoinemondial.ch

2. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

Intangible Cultural Heritage is defined in the **UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage** ratified by Switzerland in 2008.

The intangible heritage is the expression of the identity of communities, groups and individuals. It takes the form of traditional legends and stories, songs, dances, music and theatre, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices relating to nature and craft know-how. Communities and individuals are both the creators and the guardians of this heritage, which is transmitted from generation to generation.

International lists

The **representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of mankind drawn up by UNESCO** includes the tango, Tibetan opera, the pastoral traditions and ox carts of Costa Rica, lacemaking in Croatia, Kabuki theatre and drawings in the sand in Vanuatu.

The representative list now includes about 250 forms of expression from around 100 countries.

In addition to this representative list, there is a list of ICH elements urgently requiring safeguarding and a list of good practice.

The elements on the international lists are referred to as the **intangible cultural heritage of mankind and not as world heritage**.

[UNESCO ICH list](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/) (www.unesco.org > culture > intangible heritage)

Lists in Switzerland

> At the invitation of the Federal Office of Culture, the cantons have identified the elements of their intangible cultural heritage in a list of 387 entries.

The elements on this list are living cantonal traditions.

> On the basis of cantonal lists, the Federal Office of Culture has established a **list of living traditions in Switzerland**.

The elements on this national list are referred to as living traditions in Switzerland or as intangible cultural heritage in Switzerland. They are not part of the world heritage, the world intangible heritage or the UNESCO heritage.

[Swiss list](http://www.bak.admin.ch/themes/patrimoine-culturel-immateriel/) (www.bak.admin.ch > thèmes > patrimoine culturel immatériel)

> In 2012/2013, Switzerland will propose a number of elements on this national list for inscription on the representative list established by UNESCO.

Only these elements, once they have been formally accepted by UNESCO, can be referred to as **intangible cultural heritage of mankind**.

To sum up...

- The 167 elements on the Swiss list of living traditions are not part of the UNESCO world heritage.
- The representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of mankind established by UNESCO does not include a single Swiss element.
- The world heritage list of UNESCO includes 11 Swiss sites: 8 cultural sites and 3 natural sites.
- World Heritage refers to what is important for the whole of humanity.
- The Intangible Heritage refers to what is important for the individual and the community.