Turn the Korea’s DMZ into UNESCO World Heritage Site...

Geographically and historically speaking, each UNESCO World Heritage Site is unique in that it symbolizes part of its nation’s storied tale. However, taken as a whole, the World Heritage Site system represents cultural and ecological treasures important to us all. Preserving these significant areas is one of the greatest gifts we can give to future generations. With this goal in mind, the DMZ Forum’s journey of making Korea’s DMZ into a UNESCO World Heritage Site began. It is our responsibility as global citizens to preserve and pass along the unique biological and cultural significance of the DMZ.

Unfortunately, many people worldwide are unaware of the value of such sites. Many are still being destroyed through war and natural disasters. There is a phrase, “You see as much as you know,” and we believe that if more people know about the various World Heritage Sites around the globe, together we can contribute to conservation and preservation efforts in Korea and elsewhere. With that in mind, we at the DMZ Forum developed this series of newsletters to introduce 25 UNESCO World Heritage Sites to our supporters and friends.

Thank you in advance for your interest in preserving our shared historical and ecological treasures.
Greetings

I sincerely would like to thank DMZ Forum for their effort on preserving DMZ and making it known globally. I am especially pleased with the fact that other international monuments will be introduced in weekly DMZ newsletter.

In order to protect significant historical sites, UNESCO formed World Heritage Protection pact in 1972. Cultural sites and heritages are significant to not just one nation, but to all nations, as those represent world’s history. As of today, 190 nations are members of the pact and Korea joined in 1988 and works together with other countries to preserve history.

Historical items include arts, construction, and anything that represents a culture and history. Natural treasures include the nature, significant place in terms of geography. Currently, there are 890 sites recognized by UNESCO.

As shown, world heritage has connected significance of natural inheritance and cultural inheritance. From 1992, natural sites that can show cooperation between human and nature are being considered as world heritage sites. These sites show significant connection between history and people, history and nature, and finally, significance between people and nature.

DMZ possesses unique natural beauty due to the fact that human traffic has been prohibited from entering for the past 60 years. The nature’s recovery can be seen but at the same time unexpected wildfire that delays recovery can be seen occasionally. Also, DMZ is a somber place that represents cold war of 20th century and indifference in politicalideals.

I fully expect DMZ’s weekly newsletter will teach international society about significance of DMZ and help DMZ become one of UNESCO’s world historical sites.

Dr. Taeck-soo Chun
Secretary-General
Korean National Commission for UNESCO

Turn the Korea’s DMZ into UNESCO World Heritage Site... www.dmzforum.org
The Value of the DMZ as a potential World Heritage Site

The DMZ is an important symbol of the Cold War, but one that promises peace instead of continued conflict. Due to nearly 60 years without human intrusion, the area's biodiversity has thrived, creating a place that is both ecologically and culturally significant. In order to efficiently manage such a precious place, North and South Korea should agree to register the DMZ as a candidate for UNESCO World Heritage Site listing and to cooperate for systematic conservation of the DMZ. Through this effort, people around the world will be able to recognize the real value of the DMZ and will have the opportunity to help conserve the DMZ.

+ Natural, Ecological Value

The DMZ on the Korean peninsula inherently conveys the value of biodiversity and nature conservation.

- The DMZ clearly demonstrates how nature can restore itself after the destructive effects of war.
- 67% of Korea’s natural ecosystem is represented in the DMZ. The DMZ is a crucial fly-way for migratory birds on their journeys between Mongolia, China, Russia, Japan, and other parts of North-east Asia and Taiwan, Philippines, Vietnam, and Australia.
- After fierce battles during the 1950-1953 war, the western part of what is now the DMZ was a wasteland. Now, it is covered with lush vegetation. The ravaged woodlands of the mountainous areas to the east are today a grand sight of healthy, mixed-species forest.
- There are rare and endangered species like black bear, leopard, Eurasian lynx, goral, musk deer, and elephant seal that find security and sustenance in the DMZ.
- Protected migratory birds such as blackfaced spoonbills, red-crowned cranes, and white-naped cranes also thrive in the DMZ and recently it is reported that the tiger has survived in the DMZ.
- Geological features in the DMZ such as a columnar joint located in the Hantan river and near the Imjin river and Cheorwon’s lime rock cave have geologically high value for conservation.

+ Historical, Cultural Value

- Within the DMZ, there are numerous historical and archeological treasures, including Gungye, an ancient capital city near Cheorwon, which have yet to be explored and preserved for posterity.
- Important sites from the Choson period also exist in the DMZ, awaiting study and preservation.
- Many battlegrounds and other sites from the Korean War are located inside the DMZ. These, too, need to be examined and preserved for future cultural and historical study.
- The DMZ has great cultural value to Koreans and to all the world’s peoples. It is a living symbol of the costs of war, one that can inspire us to strive for peace. It serves as an educational site, teaching us that sacrifice need not be in vain, and that if we work together, we can bring peace, prosperity, and ecological sustainability even to those places most damaged by the ravages of war.
Background Information on UNESCO & World Heritage Sites

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established on 16 November 1945 in order to promote international collaboration and “to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.” With 193 Member States and seven Associate Members, it is a truly global organization. (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/)

One of the most visible ways UNESCO achieves its goals is through the establishment of World Heritage Sites, which protect and promote areas of cultural and natural significance. Currently, there are 890 such properties, of either cultural, natural, or mixed (cultural and natural) significance. To determine which sites deserve protection, UNESCO established 10 criteria, both cultural and natural, to evaluate a proposed site; sites must meet at least one of the ten to become a World Heritage Site.
(For the complete list of criteria, see http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria.)

According to the World Heritage Centre website, “Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. ...What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.” (http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/)

The DMZ Forum shares this philosophy and hopes that by highlighting some of these important sites, we can inspire you to learn more and to help us in our efforts to see the DMZ become a World Heritage Site.
**Tassili-n-Ajjer**

**Nation**: Algeria  
**Name**: TassiliN’Ajjer National Park  
**Area**: 7,200,000ha  
(ICOMOS, 1981; Algerian National Committee for MAB, 1986)  
**Record year**: 1982 (Natural criteria VII + Cultural criteria I, III)

**Mixed Heritage Site**

**Selection criteria for TassiliN’Ajjer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Heritage Site</th>
<th>Cultural Heritage Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VII. to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance</td>
<td>I. to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

Tassili n’Ajjer (Tamazight, “Plateau of the Rivers”) is a mountain range in the Sahara desert in southeast Algeria, North Africa. Much of the range, including the cypresses and archaeological sites is protected in a National park, Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site named the Tassili n’Ajjer National Park.

The range is composed largely of sandstone. Erosion in the area has resulted in nearly 300 natural rock arches being formed, along with many other spectacular landforms.

The range is also noted for its prehistoric rock paintings and other ancient archaeological sites, dating from neolithic times when the local climate was much moister, with savannah rather than desert.
Tassili-n-Ajjer

**Conservation Value**

The Tassili N’Ajjer has one of the world’s great collections of prehistoric art, outstanding for its long record of Neolithic rock art and artifacts which documents climatic and social changes over 8000 years or more (Soleilhavoup, 1978, 1994). The area is also important for its geology, fauna and flora. These include a geology which records a fossil hydrographic system from fluvial to hyperarid conditions as well as yielding striking scenery; and wildlife which includes 28 plant species rare in Algeria. One of these, Cupressus dupreziana, is one of twelve critically endangered plants chosen the rare endemic cypress by the Species Survival Commission of the IUCN to highlight serious threats to species around the world (Dobr, 1988). There are at least five endangered mammal species and the region is important for resting migratory birds. In 1987 a large area of the nearby Ahaggar Mountains was also declared a National Park.

(The source: http://www.unep-wcmc.org)