

Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area is among China's 50-plus UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

# Landmark Destinations

Add an up-and-coming UNESCO World Heritage Site to your next itinerary

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**F**ROM AFGHANISTAN TO ZIMBABWE, the World Heritage Committee has honored cultural and natural greats across the globe, designating and protecting them as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

To be considered for the World Heritage List, these destinations must meet at least one of 10 criteria, perhaps hosting threatened species or being a "masterpiece of human creative genius." Of the 1,073 properties

currently on the roster, most are found in Europe and North America.

Some UNESCO sites are wonders threatened by modern development and other dangers, like Vienna's historic center, Florida's Everglades National Park and war-torn locales in Afghanistan and Syria. A few are well-known and boast the tourist traffic to match — the canals of Venice and the waters surrounding the Galapagos Islands, for instance.

The following, however, are six must-see sites without the instant

name recognition that leads to hordes of international visitors. Pick an underrated UNESCO stop for your next excursion, from the Chinese forest that inspired "Avatar" to ice age caves in Germany, and you might encounter an uncrowded escape as well as a new cultural experience.

For information on escorted tours, resort stays or tropical cruises with connections to these world wonders, contact the travel discounters at Vacations To Go through the provided websites. ►

View the massive, retreating Upsala Glacier during a Lake Argentino catamaran cruise on Natural Habitat Adventures' "Peaks, Lakes & Glaciers of Patagonia" tour.



## Los Glaciares National Park

*Santa Cruz Province, Argentina*

**Head south**, almost to the tip of the Americas, for some dramatic scenery. The Patagonian Andes offer snow-capped peaks, shining lakes and blue-tinged icebergs encompassed by Los Glaciares National Park, added to UNESCO's roster in 1981.

Around half of the park's 2,800 square miles is covered by glaciers, but the crown jewel is the 97-square-mile Perito Moreno bordering Lake Argentino. It is one of the world's few glaciers that still is advancing, rather than retreating due to climate conditions. Its position occasionally blocks a narrow channel that upsets the lake's water level and fragments chunks of ice,

sending them hurtling into the lake below and creating spectacular photos.

On Natural Habitat Adventures' 11-day "Peaks, Lakes & Glaciers of Patagonia," tourists get close-ups of glaciers over four days spent at Los Glaciares. Embark on a boat ride on Desert Lake, overlooking cascades, glaciers and two mountain ranges, before donning crampons (slip-proof spikes you attach to your shoes) for a short glacier hike. Another day offers a chance to visit Lake Argentino's residents — flamingos and black-necked swans — before moving on to the 200-foot-high Perito Moreno Glacier.

The Argentina portion of the trip ends with a visit to a sheep farm for a peek into the traditional gaucho way of life. Guests also spend time in Chile's Torres del Paine National Park,

a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, before ending their travels in Punta Arenas, one of the southernmost cities in the world. Two departures in February and December, months when the region experiences the most favorable weather, are priced from \$8,995, [www.TourVacationsToGo.com/NHA](http://www.TourVacationsToGo.com/NHA).

## Caves and ice age art

*Swabian Alps, Germany*

**Some 43,000 years ago**, modern humans arrived in Europe for the first time and created settlements in southern Germany's Swabian Jura mountain range, also known as the Swabian Alps. The region now is sparsely populated but riddled with 2,000 caves, six of which hosted homo sapien residents. ►