

18 April - International Day for Monuments and Sites Theme 2019: Rural Landscapes

About the day

In 1982, ICOMOS established 18 April as the International Day for Monuments and Sites. UNESCO approved it the following year during its 22nd General Conference. Since then, 18 April has been a day to celebrate and promote cultural heritage, and an opportunity to raise awareness about its diversity, its relevance, how vulnerable it can be and what the needs and benefits of its conservation are. Every year, ICOMOS proposes a theme for the celebrations and activities to be organised by the ICOMOS National and International Scientific Committees and by other organisations that wish to participate. In 2019, the theme is **Rural Landscapes** – which is linked to the theme of the 2019 ICOMOS Scientific Symposium on Rural Heritage to take place in October in Marrakesh, Morocco (see [our page](#) about the Symposium and the call for proposals).

This year's International Day for Monuments and Sites offers the opportunity for National and International Scientific Committees to raise awareness about the relevance of rural landscapes, the challenges that encompass their conservation, the benefits that these efforts provide, and how rural landscapes are intrinsically related with sustainable development. The Day represents an unparalleled opportunity to foster communication and build links with communities while acknowledging their involvement in the creation, existence, evolution and richness of these rural landscapes, and no doubt, in their conservation.

What are rural landscapes?

In the ICOMOS "[Principles concerning rural landscapes as heritage](#)", adopted by the ICOMOS General Assembly in 2017, rural landscapes are defined as *"terrestrial and aquatic areas co-produced by human-nature interaction used for the production of food and other renewable natural resources, via agriculture, animal husbandry and pastoralism, fishing and aquaculture, forestry, wild food gathering, hunting, and extraction of other resources, such as salt. Rural landscapes are multifunctional resources. At the same time, all rural areas have cultural meanings attributed to them by people and communities: all rural areas are landscapes."* Rural landscapes encompass an increasing accumulation of tangible and intangible heritage which is in constant adaptation to environmental, cultural, social, political and economic conditions. They are the most common type of continuing cultural landscape.

For centuries, even for millennia, rural landscapes have maintained a balance between human activity and their environment. A myriad of everyday actions have in some cases resulted in moderate evolution, and in other cases in dramatic transformations due to changes in production methods, technological advances or economic and political changes. The resulting heritage features evidence from different periods, constituting a rich and complex ensemble of tangible, intangible and living heritage, in which change, transformation and evolution remain ongoing, and continue as long as the rural landscape is alive.

The role of communities in the conservation of rural landscapes

Whilst the urban population rate is growing and has reached a global figure of 54.82% in 2017, the population of rural areas also continues to grow, despite its decline in terms of percentage share. This has a twofold effect in rural areas and, while some areas are being abandoned, others are suffering from human pressure. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the ecological footprint that urban areas have on rural zones, and the changes in the rural landscapes that this footprint induces, as well as the consequences for both the environment and communities.

Some of the main features that define rural landscapes are its fragility and use. While any changes in the conditions that sustain the living and evolving landscape might involve a dramatic transformation, or even a complete abandon or loss of a landscape, it is the conservation of its use which enables its tangible and intangible heritage to survive.

Rural landscapes may well be the principal domain in conservation practice in which communities and participation are the most relevant. The conservation of rural landscapes puts an emphasis on the relation between heritage and society, and on the obvious and direct benefits that heritage conservation has not only on the communities that have created, modified and actually bear those rural landscapes, but also on the society whose ecological footprint these landscapes sustain – that is to say the benefits for all of us. This is what makes the conservation of rural landscapes not only important, but fascinating.

How ICOMOS Committees can participate

ICOMOS Committees are invited to organise activities on 18 April related to the ***Rural Landscapes*** theme, with the aim of raising awareness of its values and conservation. Possible activities include conferences, lectures, poster sessions, interviews, press releases, round tables, visits to heritage properties, heritage walks, social media campaigns, etc. ICOMOS Committees are encouraged to invite local communities to participate actively in this celebration.

Sharing via Social Media

18 April is one of the best channels for disseminating ideas for the protection of cultural heritage and communicating on the activities of the day. It allows all of our members and friends to participate in raising awareness and in sharing in the great enthusiasm the 18 April generates.

Committees and organisers of events dedicated to 18 April are invited to post information on their activities on their social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) and to associate these with the following hashtags:

#18April

#ICOMOS

#rurallandscapes

#IcomosIDMS2019

When appropriate, you can also translate the hashtags into your local languages!

This will allow the International Secretariat to identify your posts and share a selection on the official ICOMOS social media accounts:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)

You can post photos and information on your events, on rural landscapes in your countries, and the heritage or practices associated with these, short slideshows or videos (under 30 seconds) or even livestream your events. Make sure to include descriptions, quotes or facts to accompany any image, as well as the hashtags.

Upload your images of rural landscapes, and associated heritage or practices, to the ICOMOS [Photobank](#) (if you do not already have one, you first need to [create an account](#) to do so). In all cases, please make sure that you retain the rights to any images you post.

Let us know about your events!

Please inform the ICOMOS International Secretariat of planned 18 April events at the latest by 17 March 2019 so that we can publish them on the ICOMOS website and share your activities among the members of the worldwide ICOMOS family. Even if you miss the deadline – send us the information.

Please send the information to: calendrier@icomos.org using the format below (please use short sentences to enable a concise presentation and mention “18 April event – your Committee” in the email subject line):

Title of your event

Who? **Organizers**

What? **Short presentation of the event**

When?

Where? **Country, town, address**

Official contact

Official website

Attachments: **Poster / leaflet**

Contribute to our annual giving campaign

This year on 18 April, when we celebrate our heritage and the volunteer work of over 10 000 ICOMOS members to protect and conserve it, we wish to invite all of you to make a donation to support ICOMOS in fulfilling its important mission. Every gift counts – small or large. ICOMOS is full of ideas and people willing to donate their time and knowledge – and often only a small sum is needed to jumpstart an activity that benefits many.

Click [here](#) to access our online crowd funding campaign.

We hope to raise at least 25 000 € this year from our members and friends who wish to help ICOMOS have an even greater impact on cultural heritage conservation.

We would be grateful if you share our appeal in your networks and social media!