

{ WORLD HERITAGE SITES }

# Salkhan Fossil Park makes it to UNESCO tentative list

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**VARANASI:** Set amidst idyllic surroundings, Salkhan Fossil Park in Sonbhadra—one of the oldest fossil sites in the world—has been included in UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage Sites. Detailed information about the park is now made available on the official UNESCO website. This milestone is expected to significantly boost Uttar Pradesh's



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global tourism profile.

Following the chief minister's directives, the Uttar Pradesh eco-

tourism development board is preparing a comprehensive dossier to support the park's nomi-

nation for UNESCO's permanent World Heritage status. The dossier will soon be submitted to the

government of India and officials are optimistic that the park could attain full World Heritage status within the next two years.

Principal secretary of tourism, Mukesh Meshram, highlighted that CM Yogi Adityanath has consistently undertaken key initiatives to promote tourism, especially eco-tourism, across the state. One such recent initiative includes the introduction of Vistadome coaches on tourist trains, connecting Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary and Dudhwa Tiger Reserve with scenic rail routes.

The inclusion of Salkhan Fossils Park on UNESCO's tentative list marks another major accomplishment. Located near Salkhan village, about 15 km from Rob-

ertsganj in Sonbhadra, the park has been the focus of dedicated efforts by the tourism department over the past year.

A key development in this journey was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on June 26, 2024, between the UP eco-tourism development board and the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, Lucknow.

Under CM Yogi's leadership, the institute conducted detailed scientific studies of fossil-bearing rocks in the park. These studies revealed the presence of 1.4 billion-year-old stromatolites and algae fossils—some of the earliest known evidence of life on Earth.

This scientific foundation

played a critical role in the park's nomination to UNESCO.

Tourism director Prakhya Mishra explained that inclusion in the tentative list is the first step in the UNESCO World Heritage nomination process. This is followed by the submission of a detailed dossier and an on-site evaluation by a UNESCO team—typically a year-long process. Mishra confirmed that the dossier for Salkhan Fossils Park is currently being finalised and will soon be forwarded to UNESCO via the central government.

"This recognition will not only bring international acclaim to Uttar Pradesh but also position the state as a major destination for eco-tourism and scientific research," he said.