



Building stones can be of geoheritage significance

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Building stones have generally been assigned values according to their cultural, aesthetic, and rarity significance, amongst other criteria, but they also may have geoheritage significance. This is akin to the geoheritage significance ascribed to minerals and fossils housed as ex situ specimens in museums. We proffer the notion that building stones can be of geoheritage value particularly where they comprise permanent buildings, they illustrate significant windows into the history of the Earth, and they can be visited as an ex situ museum locality (e.g., the “Blue Granite” of Iceland) for education as part of building-stone tours. For some rocks the quarries that supplied the building stone are no longer in existence and hence the building stones provide the only record of that type of material; for other rocks, the building stone may illustrate features in the lithology no longer present in the quarry itself (e.g., rare and large xenoliths). Building stones are particularly significant as they are often polished and manifest structures, fabrics, and textures not evident in outcrop.

We illustrate here examples of building stone of geoheritage significance using Australian and International examples. Australian designated stones could include the “Sydney Sandstone” or “Victorian Bluestone”. For international examples, there is the famous “Carrara Marble” in Italy and the widely known “Portland Limestone” from southern England, the latter having been utilized for St Pauls Cathedral in London and the UN building in New York City.