



## WORLD MONUMENTS FUND ANNOUNCES 2020 WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH

### *Bears Ears, Easter Island, Landscape near Machu Picchu among 25 At-Risk Sites*

**New York, NY, October 29, 2019**—World Monuments Fund (WMF) today announced the 2020 World Monuments Watch, a biennial selection of at-risk cultural heritage sites that combine great historical significance with contemporary social impact. The list's 25 sites are facing daunting threats such as encroaching urbanization, political turmoil, natural disaster, and violent conflicts, or present compelling conservation opportunities. The program will culminate next spring, when founding sponsor American Express will select a group of 2020 Watch sites to receive \$1 million total in funding for conservation initiatives.

The 2020 Watch includes **Bears Ears National Monument (United States)**, sacred land and sites of North American indigenous people that have been put at risk of desecration; **Sacred Valley of the Incas (Peru)**, a rich cultural landscape near Machu Picchu being threatened by a proposed airport construction; **Notre-Dame de Paris (France)**, a beloved cathedral and global icon nearly lost during a fire that reminds us of the depth of human connection to heritage places and the personal trauma that their destruction can bring; the **San Antonio Woolworth Building (United States)**, a landmark of the African-American Civil Rights Movement in Texas, at risk of being lost in a redevelopment plan; **Mam Rasha Shrine (Iraq)**, a Yazidi shrine destroyed in a genocidal campaign whose reconstruction can establish mutual respect and recognition for a minority community; and **Rapa Nui National Park (Chile)**, the iconic site popularly known as "Easter Island," whose indigenous community seeks control and new solutions to halt the loss of culturally significant rock carvings. In total, the 25 sites span 21 countries and date from prehistory to the twentieth century.

Every two years, communities, individuals, and other entities nominate heritage sites in need of urgent action that demonstrate the potential to trigger social change through conservation. The 2020 Watch received more than 250 nominations, and its 25 sites were determined through a series of extensive reviews, including an independent panel of heritage experts that was responsible for the final selection. World Monuments Fund will now partner with local stakeholders of each heritage site to design and

implement targeted activities—including advocacy, planning, education, and conservation interventions—that will ultimately improve the resilience of communities, enhance social inclusion, and build new capacities in the heritage conservation field and beyond. Since the program’s inception, more than 836 sites in more than 135 countries and territories—including those on the 2020 Watch—have been included. The international attention given to Watch sites provides a vital tool with which local entities may leverage funding from a variety of sources, including municipal, regional, and national governments; foundations; corporate sponsors; international aid organizations; and private donors. Since 1996, WMF has contributed more than \$110 million to Watch sites, while almost \$300 million has been allocated to Watch sites by other entities. In addition, Watch Day is a component of the program that aims to connect communities to their built heritage through public events.

“The 2020 World Monuments Watch includes iconic treasures like Easter Island and socially-significant sites like the San Antonio Woolworth Building, reminding us that cherished places are determined not just by their architectural value, but also by their impact on communities around the world,” said Bénédicte de Montlaur, CEO, World Monuments Fund. “These remarkable sites demand sustainable, community-led solutions that bring people together and fuse conservation with social change. We are excited for the World Monuments Watch to kick start that impact.”

American Express has played a vital role in supporting the growth of the World Monuments Watch since 1996, when it partnered with WMF to establish the program. To date, the company has provided \$18.5 million in grants for the Watch, helping sustain the future of 174 sites in 71 countries.

“A key way American Express backs the communities we serve is by helping ensure accessibility to and the sustainability of culturally significant places,” said Timothy J. McClimon, President, American Express Foundation. “The sites included in the 2020 World Monuments Watch each contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of their communities. Through our partnership with WMF, we are proud to provide a resource for these places to continue to thrive for generations to come.”

This year, a challenge grant from Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) led to the creation of a Watch Investment Fund, ensuring that each of the 2020 Watch sites are eligible for additional support based on their potential for social change. The 2020 Watch is also made possible with support from The Ford Foundation.

The sites of the 2020 World Monument Watch reflect a number of themes and opportunities, including:

### Elevating Indigenous Voices

Throughout modern history, indigenous voices have often been excluded from decision-making as it relates to their lands, resources, infrastructures, and heritage assets. The 2020 Watch brings attention to three indigenous communities who are reclaiming a role in the management of their heritage and demanding a seat at the table as it relates to decisions that impact their treasured places: the community of **Rapa Nui National Park, Chile**, which seeks control and new solutions to halt the loss of culturally significant rock carvings; the community of the **Sacred Valley of the Incas, Peru**, which demands inclusive and equitable solutions to a proposed airport construction; and the tribes of **Bears Ears National Monument, United States**, whose sacred land and sites have been put at risk by a government plan.

### Strengthening Historic Knowledge Systems

Traditional, centuries-old systems of building construction and infrastructure development offer invaluable and time-tested lessons for today's communities as well as an important historical and cultural record. But unless they are nurtured and supported, these systems are at risk of disappearing, leaving modern societies unable to benefit from their ancient wisdom. Three sites on the 2020 Watch demonstrate the power of historic knowledge systems to positively benefit today's communities: **Historic Water Systems of the Deccan Plateau in India**, traditional water management systems that, if revitalized, can help address the contemporary water crisis; **Koutammakou, Land of the Batammariba in Benin and Togo**, where the conservation process can help balance continuity and change for the land and livelihoods of the Batammariba people; and **Traditional Burmese Teak Farmhouses in Myanmar**, where desire for different living standards is causing the wholesale disappearance of a vernacular architectural typology, calling for study and documentation.

### Disaster Recovery

When disaster strikes – whether by the forces of nature or human conflict – the recovery process can be long and complex. The 2020 Watch brings attention to four sites where rebuilding and conservation can help heal communities: **Mam Rasha Shrine in Iraq**, destroyed in a genocidal campaign, where reconstruction can establish mutual respect for a minority community that has been denied equality and recognition; **Central Aguirre Historic District in Puerto Rico, United States**, where a training program in wood construction will pave the way for disaster recovery while opening new employment

opportunities; the **Gingerbread Neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti**, where investment in its historic houses will allow them to continue to shelter vital educational and cultural offerings in the Haitian capital; and **Notre-Dame de Paris, France**, where a careful and scientific process incorporating international expertise will ensure the beloved landmark can be returned to its community.

#### Allowing Multiple Stories to be Told

Layers of time and culture make up our world's most significant places, but those historical narratives are not always represented equally. The 2020 Watch seeks to elevate the prominence of historic narratives that have been underrepresented or overlooked by including two sites: the **San Antonio Woolworth Building in Texas, United States**, a Civil Rights site that is fighting for preservation against competing Alamo heritage interests; and **Traditional Houses in the Old Jewish Mahalla of Bukhara, Uzbekistan**, where documentation and assistance will highlight the history of Jewish presence in Central Asia following the migration of the community.

#### Reimagining Heritage as Community Assets

Iconic monuments are far from the only places where cultural significance can be found. Through a new vision or simply a renewed commitment to their upkeep, places of community attachment can become assets that sustain well-being, offer opportunities for recreation, and form the setting for our daily lives. The 2020 Watch includes six such sites: at **Alexan Palace, Egypt**, a local initiative can transform a grand historic residence, now shuttered, into a museum for citizens and visitors to Asyut; at the **Gingerbread Neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti**, where conservation will ensure its historic houses can continue to shelter vital educational and cultural offerings; at **Inari-yu Bathhouse, Japan**, the community behind one of Tokyo's fast-disappearing neighborhood bathhouses aims to address societal challenges through conservation; at **Canal Nacional, Mexico**, community stewards of the country's oldest man-made waterway demand a seat at the table as government plans for a new park push forward; at **Kindler Chapel, Pabianice Evangelical Cemetery, Poland**, reopening of the chapel as a cultural facility will give access to cultural opportunities for a community that expressly seeks them; and at **Bennerley Viaduct, United Kingdom**, local stewards of a rare survivor of the Industrial Age seek to revive it as a community asset promoting well-being and access to the natural environment.

## Challenges of Urbanization and Development

Urbanization is a growing, global phenomenon that manifests itself in different ways, including construction projects that alter communities' relationships to the cities in which they live and over-tourism that does not always allow local stakeholders a share in its economic rewards. The 2020 Watch includes five sites that are tackling the challenges of urbanization and development: **Tusheti National Park, Georgia**, whose community seeks to ensure that regional development will promote sustainable tourism and will not disrupt their livelihoods; the **Chivas and Chaityas of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal**, where urban growth has taken a physical toll on a vast number of votive shrines, prompting community members to take action; **Anarkali Bazaar, Pakistan**, where a community-led process can improve the quality of life for this urban neighborhood and legendary market in Lahore; **Sacred Valley of the Incas, Peru**, whose community demands inclusive and equitable solutions as construction of a new airport threatens the rich cultural landscape; and the **Courtyard Houses of Axerquía, Spain**, where new solutions are being sought to the challenges facing historic urban housing, including social change, gentrification, and the modern tourism economy.

## Full List – 2020 World Monuments Watch

1. Koutammakou, Land of the Batammariba, Benin and Togo
2. Ontario Place, Canada
3. Rapa Nui National Park, Chile
4. Alexan Palace, Egypt
5. Notre-Dame de Paris, France
6. Tusheti National Park, Georgia
7. Gingerbread Neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti
8. Historic Water Systems of the Deccan Plateau, India
9. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Stadium, India
10. Mam Rashan Shrine, Iraq
11. Inari-yu Bathhouse, Japan
12. Iwamatsu District, Japan
13. Canal Nacional, Mexico
14. Chojjin Lama Temple, Mongolia
15. Traditional Burmese Teak Farmhouses, Myanmar
16. Chivas and Chaityas of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal
17. Anarkali Bazaar, Pakistan

18. Sacred Valley of the Incas, Peru
19. Kindler Chapel, Pabianice Evangelical Cemetery, Poland
20. Courtyard Houses of Axerquía, Spain
21. Bennerley Viaduct, United Kingdom
22. Bears Ears National Monument, USA
23. Central Aguirre Historic District, USA
24. San Antonio Woolworth Building, USA
25. Traditional Houses in the Old Jewish Mahalla of Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Visit [wmf.org/2020watch](http://wmf.org/2020watch) for more.

Full press kit including hi-res imagery courtesy World Monuments Fund [available for download here.](#)

###

**World Monuments Fund** is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's treasured places. For more than 50 years, working in more than 100 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide. Visit [www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org) for more information, or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

###

**Press Contact:**

Hillary Prim, Director of Communications, World Monuments Fund, +1-646-424-9582 or [hprim@wmf.org](mailto:hprim@wmf.org)