



Chankillo Archaeoastronomical Complex Named UNESCO World Heritage

July 27, 2021, New York, NY – World Monuments Fund (WMF) celebrates the announcement that the Chankillo Archaeoastronomical Complex has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Built over 2,300 years ago, Chankillo lies in the coastal desert of Peru, near the Casma-Sechín river basin, and is considered the oldest astronomical observatory in the Americas. Since its inclusion on the 2010 World Monuments Watch, WMF and the Instituto de Investigaciones Arqueológicas (IDARQ) have collaborated on preserving this unparalleled record of ancient society and contributed to the preparations for its listing as World Heritage. The Chankillo Archaeoastronomical Complex was officially designated a World Heritage site by the World Heritage Committee on July 27, 2021.

The site features a plaza, thirteen towers that align on a ridge, and a fortified temple surrounded by barricades and defensive walls with false entrances to deter unwelcome visitors. When viewed from one of two observation platforms positioned on either side, the towers and the notches between them span the entire annual rising and setting arcs of the sun, indicating the precise day of the year. Most likely abandoned in the early first century CE, the site was largely forgotten until the nineteenth century.

Centuries of strong winds, humidity, and temperature fluctuations in the **desert's** inhospitable climate, combined with earthquakes and other major weather events have hastened deterioration of the astronomical complex. After calling international attention to these threats with the 2010 Watch, WMF supported efforts to excavate, research, and document Chankillo, and to establish its legal boundaries.

More recently, WMF provided essential support for conserving five towers and performing preventive measures where needed. And in 2021, work began at the fortified temple to conserve one of its gates. These efforts, made possible in part by the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) and Selz Foundation, lent support to the nomination, which was bolstered further by the preparation of a site management plan.

The decision by UNESCO affirms the priceless nature of Chankillo as a resource for helping understand the worldview of ancient societies and their advancements in tracking the cyclical passage of celestial bodies, ensuring this exceptional heritage continues to benefit all of humanity.

“When World Monuments Fund began working at Chankillo more than a decade ago, its importance was relatively unknown, its deterioration was unaddressed, and protections were nearly nonexistent,” said Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of WMF. “We are incredibly honored that Chankillo was listed as World Heritage. **Today's** announcement marks the progress of so many who worked tirelessly to safeguard this extraordinary heritage as the inheritance of all of humanity.”

“We are pleased that Chankillo has received recognition as World Heritage by UNESCO. WMF has been committed over the past 11 years to conservation efforts in Chankillo, which continue today with our

project to preserve the magnificent fortified temple,” said Martha Zegarra, Executive Director of WMF Peru. **“We must thank all the local, national, and international allies that have contributed to earning this global designation, including the Ministry of Culture, the Municipality of Casma, the U.S. Embassy in Peru, the Selz Foundation, among others.”**

“We are proud that the Chankillo solar observatory has been recognized as a World Heritage site by UNESCO for being a masterpiece of human creative genius, and from the Chankillo project we thank World Monuments Fund and the Selz Foundation for the support received to achieve this goal,” said Dr. Iván Ghezzi, Chankillo Program Director.

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About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the **world’s most treasured places to enrich people’s lives and build mutual understanding across cultures** and communities. The organization is headquartered in New York City with offices and affiliates in Cambodia, India, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. Since 1965, our global team of experts has preserved the world’s diverse cultural heritage using the highest international standards at more than 700 sites in 112 countries. Partnering with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF draws **on heritage to address some of today’s most pressing challenges: climate change,** underrepresentation, imbalanced tourism, and post-crisis recovery. With a commitment to the people who bring places to life, WMF embraces the potential of the past to create a more resilient and inclusive society.

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