



GUESTS TO WORLD MONUMENTS FUND 55th ANNIVERSARY GALA TRAVERSE THE GLOBE FROM HOME

Virtual Event Raises More Than \$835,000 for Protecting World Heritage

Empire State Building Illuminated Blue in Honor of Anniversary

New York, NY, December 3, 2020—Supporters of cultural heritage gathered online yesterday from around the globe to celebrate World Monuments Fund’s 55th anniversary with a sweeping journey to destinations of extraordinary beauty and meaning. Over the course of 12 hours, guests were transported for behind-the-scenes experiences at a range of cultural heritage sites, from the grandiose temples of Angkor Archaeological Park in Cambodia, the lush Mughal Gardens of Agra in India, to pivotal locations of the civil rights movement in the U.S. Providing unprecedented access to the diverse array of World Monuments Fund (WMF) projects, WMF’s global team of conservation experts, local representatives, and special guests—including the **Maharaja of Jodhpur, Her Royal Highness Princess Dana Firas**, Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition Executive Director **Patrick Gonzales-Rogers**, fashion designer **Stuart Weitzman**, and architect **Annabelle Selldorf**—engaged travelers in the incredible stories behind the world’s most significant cultural heritage sites.

World Monuments Fund’s 55th Anniversary Virtual Gala: Around the World in 12 Hours raised more than \$835,000 in support of WMF’s mission of working with local communities to safeguard the irreplaceable. In tribute to the anniversary, the Empire State Building—the location of WMF’s global headquarters—was illuminated in the organization’s signature blue color.

“Our new virtual lives under COVID-19 was an unexpected opportunity to bring our supporters closer to World Monuments Fund’s work than ever before,” said **Bénédicte de Montlaur**, President and Chief Executive Officer of World Monuments Fund. “Never in our history have we provided such an expansive look at the diversity of WMF sites that is fundamental to our mission of deepening cross-cultural understanding. At the same time, it was an unprecedented occasion to unite our global community of experts to facilitate intimate encounters with powerful symbols of our collective humanity.”

Before embarking on their virtual voyage, **Bénédicte de Montlaur** welcomed guests from atop the Empire State Building, where she spoke of the importance of heritage to pressing issues concerning quality of life, equity, and social justice. Her remarks were followed by a pre-recorded special message by **His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales** reflecting on the potential of humanity’s treasures to provide a sense of belonging and to revitalize communities. WMF Chair **Lorna B. Goodman** thanked supporters and bid travelers farewell, recounting WMF’s 55 years of safeguarding the irreplaceable at more than 700 sites in 112 countries.

The day’s itinerary spanned all corners of the globe, from the Alhambra to Alabama. Destinations included:

- **Angkor Archaeological Park**, the ancient seat of the powerful Khmer Empire in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Dr. Ginevra Boatta, Representative for Southeast Asia, led travelers through this monumental complex of Hindu and Buddhist temples partially overtaken by vegetation from the

encroaching jungle. In an in-depth virtual tour, guests explored Angkor's grandiose temples and sophisticated artwork, and learned more about WMF's three-decade-long project there.

- **Mughal Gardens of Agra**, a recently restored sixteenth-century landscape situated along the banks of India's Yamuna River. WMF India Executive Director Amita Baig highlighted how WMF's preservation efforts support a broader strategy for sustainable community development while guiding guests through the "Moonlight Garden" and the Tomb of I'timad-ud-Daulah. Guests were then joined by the **Maharaja of Jodhpur**, who spoke of his involvement in preservation projects throughout India and his decades-long relationship with WMF.
- **Castle Howard, Strawberry Hill, and Stowe House**, three monumental British estates dating from the eighteenth century. Making his way across the English countryside, WMF Britain Executive Director John Darlington invited guests to step inside some of the world's finest examples of Georgian, baroque, and Gothic Revival architecture, and to experience their surrounding landscapes. **William Cavendish, Earl of Burlington**, remarked on the opportunity to expand educational opportunities at these large country homes. **Her Royal Highness Princess Dana Firas** joined the conversation to provide insight into WMF's stonemasonry training initiative in partnership with Petra National Trust and the tourism challenges facing heritage sites.
- **Erbil and Babylon**, two ancient wonders of Iraq experiencing threats to their survival. Tours led by WMF Regional Directors Alessandra Peruzzetto and Jeff Allen provided guests the unique opportunity to examine up close the remains of Babylonia's capital and explore more than 6,000 years of history at the Erbil Citadel, considered one of the longest continuously inhabited sites on Earth.
- **Chankillo**, an ancient Peruvian observatory whose thirteen towers and two observation platforms allowed inhabitants to determine the date with an accuracy of two or three days. Guests heard from WMF Peru Vice President Martha Zegarra, and Chankillo Program Director Dr. Iván Ghezzi, about what Chankillo reveals about life in South America more than two millennia ago and the challenges of safeguarding the site against environmental effects.
- **La Garma and the Alhambra**, two of Spain's most remarkable heritage sites. Guided by Executive Director of WMF Spain Pablo Longoria with special guest **Stuart Weitzman**, travelers plunged into the depths of the earth in Cantabria to explore the extraordinary rock art and archaeological remains inside the cave of La Garma before being transported to the iconic Alhambra palace to experience its intricate designs and rich ornamentation.
- **The Qianlong Garden**, the private retreat of the Qing Dynasty's fourth emperor, located in the heart of Beijing's Forbidden City. On the special occasion of the Forbidden City's 600th anniversary, WMF Field Representative Dr. LIU Chang took guests behind the scenes to experience the extravagant interiors and rich history of the Juanqinzhai and Fuwangge pavilions. **Annabelle Selldorf**, who designed the Interpretation Center that will open in 2021, joined to discuss her approach for designing within the historic fabric of this unparalleled destination.
- **Bears Ears National Monument and Alabama Civil Rights Sites**, places that are at the forefront of public debates over the issue of underrepresented heritage in the United States. WMF Regional Director for North America Frank Sanchis, Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition Executive Director **Patrick Gonzales-Rogers**, and The Friends of Cedar Mesa Executive Director **Josh Ewing** shed light on the movement to protect sacred sites of Native Americans. They were joined by **Priscilla**

Hancock Cooper, Director of the Alabama African American Civil Rights Heritage Sites Consortium, who discussed the legacy of the civil rights movement and the work being done to save pivotal sites in Alabama.

WMF welcomed more than 300 supporters from all over the world in intimate, interactive Zoom sessions, including notable guests **Prince Ayn Khan, Veronica Bulgari, Elizabeth Eveillard, Agnes Gund, William Griswold, Carol Jenkins, Kate de Rothschild Agius, and Jack Wasserstein.** As they traveled to WMF sites, guests were joined by hosts Brook and Roger Berlind, and Melissa Stewart (Angkor Archaeological Park, Cambodia); Monika McLennan and Dr. Marilyn Perry (Mughal Gardens of Agra, India); H  l  ne Marie and Jake Shafran, and William Loschert (Castle Howard, Strawberry Hill, and Stowe House, United Kingdom); Deborah Lehr, the WMF Junior Board co-chairs Henry Iseman and Annie Liang-Zhou, and Winnie Ma from Chanel (Erbil and Babylon, Iraq), Lisa and Bernard Selz, Fernanda M. Kellogg and Kirk Henckels, and Nora and Jack Kerr (Chankillo, Peru); Linn and Robert Feidelson (La Garma and the Alhambra, Spain), Lorna and Edwin Goodman (The Qianlong Garden, China); and Pauline Eveillard and Douglas Gould (Bears Ears National Monument and Alabama Civil Rights Sites, USA).

Public Programming

The public is invited to join these behind-the-scenes tours as part of a new WMF program series launching in February 2021. Kicking off with a trip to Erbil and Babylon in Iraq, each program will spotlight a different WMF site and the conservation experts dedicated to preserving its unique history and craftsmanship. Additional program details will be announced in 2021.

Sponsorship

World Monuments Fund's 55th Anniversary Virtual Gala: Around the World in 12 Hours was generously sponsored by the **Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), Chanel, and Champagne Taittinger.**

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About World Monuments Fund

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 the World Monuments Watch—a biennial, nomination-based program—WMF uses cultural heritage conservation to empower communities and improve human well-being. In partnership 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 wmf.org for more information, or connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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