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## AFTER TWO DECADES OF WORK, WORLD MONUMENTS FUND CELEBRATES PROJECT COMPLETION AT JERÓNIMOS MONASTERY AND CHURCH

New York, NY – May 7, 2024 – [World Monuments Fund \(WMF\)](#) announced the completion of WMF Portugal’s restoration work at the sixteenth-century [Jerónimos Monastery and Church](#) in Lisbon during a commemoration yesterday. The massive effort to remedy the natural degradation of the church caused by water infiltration problems and the continuous wear of tourism was led by WMF Portugal in partnership with the Património Cultural Instituto Público (PCIP) (formerly the Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage). WMF and PCIP have intervened and restored the church’s damaged walls, facades, exteriors, and stained-glass windows. The project completion at Jerónimos marks another milestone in WMF Portugal’s three-decade-long history in the country. Further restoration work at Jerónimos Monastery and Church will continue into 2026.

“One of WMF’s largest projects, it is with great pride that we mark the conclusion of our preservation work at Jerónimos Monastery & Church,” said **Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of World Monuments Fund**. “This site holds immense significance to Portugal as one of the country’s most treasured heritage sites and is a remarkable testament to Portugal’s history, identity, and architectural prowess. Its restoration is emblematic of WMF’s commitment to safeguarding our world’s shared cultural heritage and ensures that future generations can continue to be inspired by its historical and artistic legacy.”

Considered one of Portugal’s most important heritage sites, Jerónimos Monastery and Church began construction in the sixteenth century by King Manuel I in dedication to the Order of Saint Jerome, which had a strong connection with the royal powers of the Iberian Peninsula. The site has also become emblematic of the Manueline style, another name for Portuguese late Gothic architecture. It is notable for its use of maritime and natural motifs, as well as influences from the various cultures Portugal encountered during its Age of Exploration. Several notable components of the structure, such as its vaulted ceilings, botanical motifs, and sophisticated decorative images from the Passion and the Order of Christ Cross, have long testified to the site’s religious and royal significance. As the most visited monument in Portugal, the site has suffered from water infiltration problems and the continuous wear of tourism prior to WMF’s involvement. The degradation of the church’s domes and walls, evidenced by the fall of joint mortars and small fragments of stone, raised awareness of the monastery and church’s overall deterioration.

Five hundred years after the ground-breaking for Jerónimos, WMF Portugal embarked on its first campaign between 2000 and 2002, restoring the cloister to its former glory. This monumental task included sealing the terraces against water infiltration, repointing destabilized masonry, cleaning, and consolidating the fragile and deteriorating bas-relief. More than a decade after the restoration of the cloister, the WMF Portugal, in coordination with PCIP, conducted survey work that documented significant structural issues in the Santa Maria de Belém Church. The results led to the development of a ten-phase conservation-restoration plan consisting of six interior and four exterior phases, allowing the monument to remain open for public visitation and religious and state events.

Conservation work began in 2013 and covered three distinct areas of the Church: the main altar, the north side altar, and the vaults on the south side of the high choir. The subsequent phase of the interior work took place in 2014, with WMF focusing on conserving the interior north wall and the corresponding row of vaults in the central nave. In 2016, the exterior work began with significant support from the Annenberg

Foundation and focused on the monastery's west facade, axial portal, and bell tower. Thanks to contributions from The Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage, the project expanded to the monastery's south facade and portal in 2017. That phase included the construction of a new drainage system to prevent water infiltration issues. Work in 2019 was reoriented to the interior of the church and concentrated on preserving the south wall, the south row of vaults, and two central vaults of the upper choir.

In parallel with the restoration of the structure, WMF Portugal was also involved in the restoration of stained-glass windows and mural paintings, was responsible for performing an extensive condition survey of the monument's exterior, and commissioned research to the University of Lisbon to document the building's history. Additionally, WMF Portugal commissioned to the Faculty of Science and Technology of the Nova University of Lisbon academic and scientific research concerning the impact of mass tourism on the church's interior microclimate.

A commemoration was held at Jerónimos Monastery and Church on Monday, May 6, 2024, to celebrate this chapter in Jerónimos Monastery and Church's incredible history. WMF President and CEO Bénédicte de Montlaur and Executive Director of WMF Portugal Teresa Veiga de Macedo were in attendance and gave remarks highlighting the immense work over the past two decades.

*World Monuments Fund's work at Jerónimos Cloister, led by our Portugal office in partnership with the Public Institute of Cultural Heritage, has been made possible, in part, by support from Cimpor; EDP; Fundação Millennium bcp; Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento; Galp Energia; SGC SGPS; The Navigator Company; The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust; and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.*

*World Monuments Fund's work at Jerónimos Church, led by our Portugal office in partnership with the Public Institute of Cultural Heritage, has been made possible, in part, by support from The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust; GRoW @ Annenberg, a philanthropic initiative of the Annenberg Foundation led by Gregory Annenberg Weingarten; Richemont International S.A.; EDP; Fundação Millennium bcp; ACP - Automóvel Clube de Portugal; Team Quatro Lda.; and Grupo Brisa.*

## **About WMF**

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, France, 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 adaptation, inclusive heritage, balanced 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.