



WORLD MONUMENTS FUND DEEPENS EFFORTS TO ADDRESS PRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES THREATENING CULTURAL HERITAGE

2022 World Monuments Watch to Drive Worldwide Action Around Climate Change, Underrepresented Heritage, And Imbalanced Tourism at Cultural Sites

February 23, 2021, New York, NY – World Monuments Fund (WMF) today announced a renewed commitment to addressing some of today’s most urgent issues through its work protecting humanity’s irreplaceable heritage. Recognizing climate change, underrepresented heritage, and imbalanced tourism as key challenges, WMF seeks to build a movement that fosters greater inclusivity, protection, and resilience among heritage places worldwide. A centerpiece of this wide-ranging initiative is the 2022 World Monuments Watch, which will include an emphasis on sites that intersect with these three global challenges and provide a springboard for WMF interventions. The deadline for Watch nominations has been extended to May 1, 2021. The application is available at wmf.org/nominate.

“Cultural heritage preservation is at a turning point. New methods of working have to be explored to ensure humanity’s treasures are not lost to climate change, undermined by marginalization of specific communities, or threatened by lack of visitation due to the pandemic and unfettered tourism, once travel has resumed,” said Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of WMF. “What’s at stake is the rich legacy of places that give insight into the human condition in its many forms. They shape how we experience the world, orienting our understanding of history and its relevance today.”

“While rooted in the past, we believe strongly that preservation plays a critical role in building sustainable futures by uniting us in the shared recognition of humanity’s achievements,” said Jonathan S. Bell, Vice President of Programs at WMF. “As a global organization, we have a responsibility to meet today’s greatest challenges with sound practices that help safeguard heritage places and bolster the communities who care for them.”

The 2022 Watch will be announced in March 2022. Among the 25 chosen sites will be places that present opportunities for interventions that build on WMF’s engagement across three areas:

Climate change will continue to intensify, testing communities around the world and causing more frequent damage to the built environment. While the pandemic surged, 2020 became the second-hottest year ever recorded with an unprecedented 30 named storms during the Atlantic hurricane season and catastrophic wildfires raging in the U.S. and Australia. Either through recovery work in the wake of Hurricane Katrina or addressing sea level rise at historic sites in Kilwa, Tanzania, WMF has been exploring ways to manage the impacts of climate change and the devastation caused by extreme climate events. By focusing its expertise toward developing locally specific adaptation strategies, WMF seeks to establish global models for heritage places in need. At the same time, WMF will use its platform to communicate the urgency for climate action and bring attention to how heritage can contribute to climate change mitigation through the reuse and retrofit of buildings.

Underrepresented heritage is an outcome of the historic marginalization of groups whose stories have been overlooked or erased from public memory. The impact of colonialism, racism, and oppression on communities must be addressed to ensure the built environment is not just representative of power and privilege, but inclusive of all groups. WMF renews its commitment to amplifying all voices and narratives to tell a more nuanced and representative story of the human experience. This work builds on past initiatives including *Voices of Alabama*, which showcased individuals and places pivotal to the civil rights movement in the U.S., and WMF's Jewish Heritage Program, founded in 1988 with the underlying mission of promoting a culture of tolerance.

Imbalanced tourism encompasses unsustainable visitation that results in cultural heritage sites either overrun by visitors or left without the minimal level of visitation to support operations. Its impacts are wide-ranging. Popular destinations sustain physical damage caused by the constant onslaught of tourists. This is compounded by the negative influence of crowds on the quality of life of communities, who rarely share the economic benefits of the local tourism industry. At the other extreme, insufficient visitor numbers mean minimal revenue and result in deferred maintenance and the potential abandonment of sites that deserve greater recognition.

WMF aspires to promote tourism approaches that minimally impact sense of place, while bringing increased benefits and decision-making power into the hands of communities. This includes fostering regional approaches that better distribute visitation and draw attention to lesser-known heritage places, a model currently being explored in WMF projects at the Bennerley Viaduct, UK and Canal Nacional, Mexico.

About the World Monuments Watch

The World Monuments Watch seeks to discover, spotlight, and catalyze action to safeguard cultural sites under threat with the opportunity for contemporary social impact. Announced every two years, the Watch brings visibility to 25 heritage places nominated by residents and community-based organizations from around the world and selected by an outside panel of experts. Together, they represent a cross section of issues confronting heritage conservation globally. Through the Watch, WMF contributes thought leadership on pressing challenges and collaborates with local partners on targeted conservation programs—including advocacy, planning, education, and physical interventions in the historic built environment.

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About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's significant cultural places to enrich lives and build mutual understanding. For more than 55 years, working at more than 700 sites in 112 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. wmf.org

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