

## Media Inquiries

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## BACKGROUND

The World Monuments Fund (WMF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving endangered architectural and cultural sites around the world, rescuing irreplaceable human heritage before it disappears forever. Since its founding in 1965, WMF has acted as a trailblazer in the field of cultural heritage preservation, helping save more than 450 significant historic structures in over 90 countries, including the vast temple complexes at Angkor, Cambodia; the iconic modernist A. Conger Goodyear house in Old Westbury, New York; and the extraordinary 18th-century Qianlong Garden in Beijing's Forbidden City.

But WMF's work is never done. Today, hundreds of fascinating, important historical structures that tell unique tales of our shared past stand under threat of imminent ruin from war, flooding, vandalism, pilfering, decay, and plain indifference.

From its headquarters in New York City, and offices and affiliates in Paris, London, Madrid, and Lisbon, WMF works closely with conservation professionals in the field, and local partners and communities to identify and save important places through innovative programs of project planning, fieldwork, advocacy, grant-making, education, and on-site training.

One of the organization's most effective programs is the **World Monuments Watch**, launched in 1995 to be a platform for international concern about disappearing cultural heritage sites. Every other year, WMF issues its **World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites**. The Watch List acts as a potent call to action on behalf of structures in urgent need of immediate help, and so far more than 75% of Watch sites—from the famous and familiar to the unexpected and remote—have been saved or are now out of danger, thanks to timely intervention. For many of these places—which are selected by an independent panel of leading cultural heritage experts—inclusion on the Watch List is their only hope for survival.

In addition to the World Monuments Watch, WMF also supports field conservation work through a range of grant programs devoted to specific areas, such as the **European Preservation Program** supported by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and the **Jewish Heritage Program**.

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The **Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage** provides funds to WMF for major international partnerships co-supported by WMF and non-U.S. partners around the world.

More recently, WMF has developed a number of initiatives to address conservation challenges in specific areas. These include the **Traditional Building Arts Training Initiative**, which is designed to help prepare the next generation of skilled craftspeople to carry out restoration work, and the **World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism at Risk** program, launched in response to the ever-increasing destruction of great works of modern architecture, and helping to raise awareness of the special threats to modern buildings and garnering support for their protection.

WMF has initiated projects to help save sites in countries in or emerging from war, such as the **Iraq Cultural Heritage Conservation Initiative**, through which WMF and the Getty Conservation Institute are working to provide conservation training for members of the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and develop a database of cultural heritage sites in Iraq, and the **Sites in Conflict** program, through which WMF is helping provide funding and technical assistance for sites in areas engulfed by, or emerging from, armed conflict. Through all of these programs, WMF pushes to overcome the political indifference and economic interests that often isolate these sites and their stewards from the international community of support.

The World Monuments Fund is led by Bonnie Burnham, president, and a Board of Trustees chaired by Marilyn Perry. **WMF Europe**, located in Paris, was established in 2003 to coordinate the work of the organization's affiliates in France, Portugal, and Spain, and to expand WMF's activities in Continental Europe; **WMF in Britain**, founded ten years ago and based in London, focuses on WMF's agenda in the United Kingdom. For more information on WMF, please visit [www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org).

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