Chhattisgarh's Sirpur Cultural and Archaeological Landscape added to UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List

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News

The 'Sirpur Cultural and Archaeological Landscape' on the banks of the Mahanadi in Mahasamund district, Chhattisgarh, has been added to UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List. India's Permanent Delegation to UNESCO submitted it on 28 Sept 2026; the Sirpur Special Area Development Authority (SSADA) announced it on 21 Oct 2026. It is proposed in the cultural category under criteria II and IV. With the Karst–Mud-Volcano Complex of Baratang and the Andaman Subduction Volcanoes also added, India's Tentative List now has 81 properties.

Key facts

Site	Sirpur (ancient 'Shripur') – Mahasamund district, on the Mahanadi; about 78 km from Raipur
Submitted / announced	28 Sept 2026 / 21 Oct 2026 (SSADA)
Criteria	Cultural – criterion II (exchange of human values), IV (outstanding architecture)

Core zone (9)	Lakshmana, Rama, Gandheshwar temples; Anandaprabhu Kuti & Swastika viharas; market complex; royal palace; Harshagupta & Tivaradeva viharas; Baleshwar group
Also added	Baratang karst–mud-volcano complex; Andaman subduction volcanoes (Barren, Narcondam islands)
India's list	81 properties on the Tentative List

Background

- History: from the 5th to the 12th century CE Sirpur was the capital of 'Dakshina Kosala' (South Kosala). Copper-plate grants of the Sharabhapuriya kings Pravararaja and Mahasudevaraja attest its antiquity. The Panduvamshi king Mahashivagupta Balarjuna ruled for about 57 years; a Shaiva, he also patronised Buddhist monasteries.
- Architecture: the 7th-century Lakshmana temple (Vishnu) is built of brick – among India's earliest and best-preserved brick temples. It was commissioned by Queen Vasata, widow of Harshagupta and mother of Balarjuna. Alexander Cunningham visited and reported on it in 1882.
- Religious harmony: Shaiva, Vaishnava, Buddhist and Jain traditions flourished together. In the 7th century the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang recorded its Buddhist tradition. The Anandaprabhu Kuti and Swastika viharas are notable.
- UNESCO process: a site must first be on a country's Tentative List before it can be nominated for the World Heritage List. ICOMOS evaluates cultural sites and IUCN natural ones. The World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972; India joined in 1977. Next, the ASI and SSADA will prepare the full nomination dossier.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's 'Chettinad, Village Clusters of the Tamil Merchants' and the 'Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam' have been on India's Tentative List since 2014. The Mahabalipuram monuments, the Great Living Chola Temples and the Nilgiri Mountain Railway are already World Heritage Sites.

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