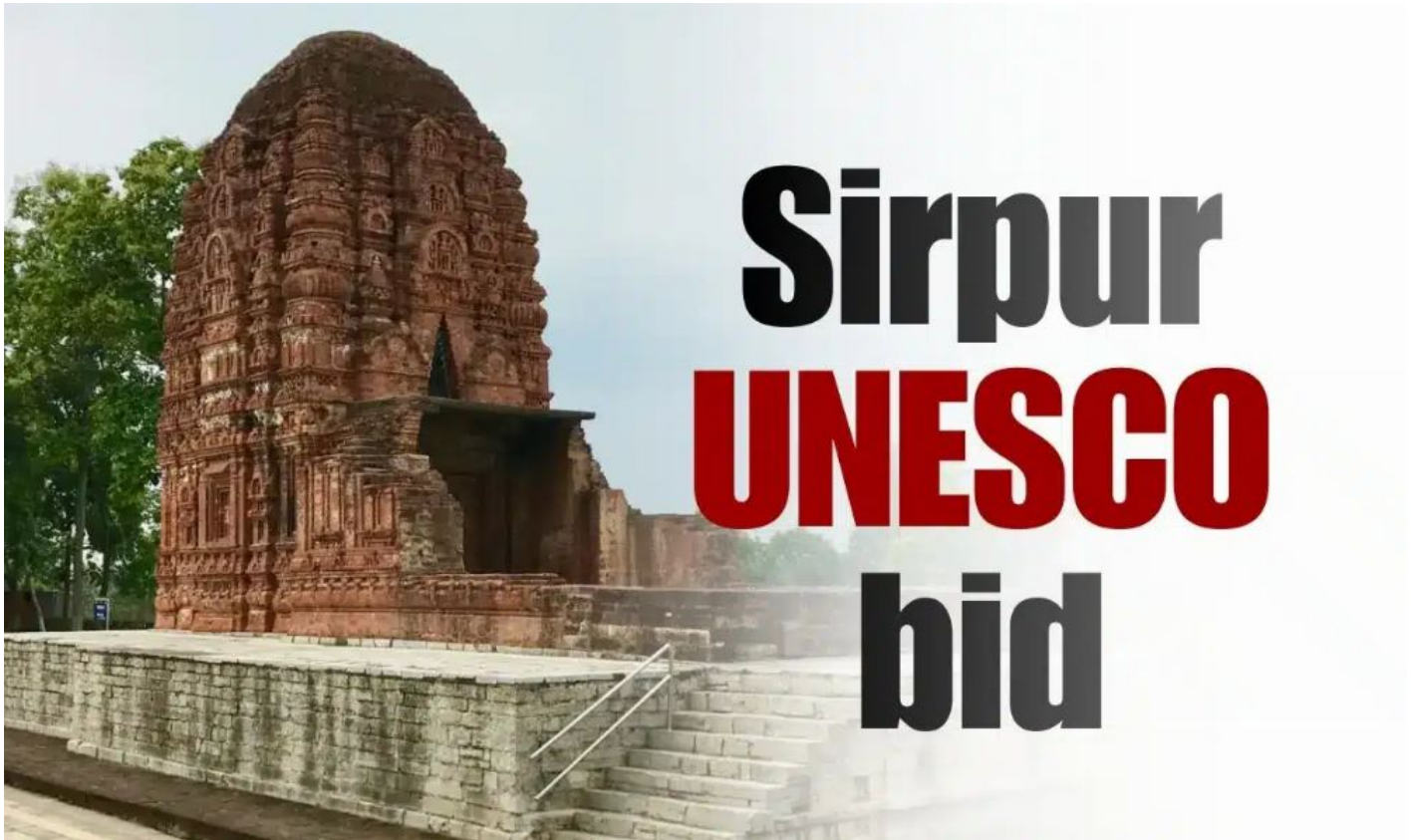


Sirpur UNESCO Bid: India's Plan to Transform the 5th Century Heritage Site

November 29, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com



Sirpur UNESCO Bid Latest News

- Sirpur, a 5th–12th Century archaeological site in Chhattisgarh, is undergoing a major upgrade as the government seeks **UNESCO World Heritage** status.
- A recent joint inspection by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Sirpur Special Area Development Authority (SADA) marks a significant step in advancing its nomination.
- Located two hours from Raipur on the banks of the **Mahanadi**, Sirpur hosts 34 Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist monuments.
- The planned facelift includes battery-operated golf carts, digital exhibits, and immersive storytelling modules to enhance visitor experience and strengthen the site's UNESCO credentials.

UNESCO World Heritage Tag

- The **UNESCO World Heritage** tag is an international recognition awarded to cultural or natural sites of “outstanding universal value” — places considered important for all humankind, transcending national boundaries.
- Sites may include ancient monuments, historic cities, natural landscapes, ecosystems, or mixed cultural-natural heritage.
- The designation is given by the **UNESCO World Heritage Committee**, which evaluates nominations submitted by member countries.
- Once inscribed, a site gains global visibility, higher tourism potential, and improved opportunities for funding and technical assistance.
- Importantly, the tag also obligates governments to ensure stronger protection, conservation, and sustainable management of the site.
- Overall, the UNESCO tag serves as a powerful tool for safeguarding heritage while boosting international prestige, research interest, and local development.

Sirpur’s Historical Significance

- Sirpur — also known as Shripur or Sripura — was a vibrant multi-religious urban centre first documented in 1882 by Alexander Cunningham, ASI’s first Director-General.
- Excavations from the 1950s to the 2000s uncovered a rich tapestry of monuments dating back to the 5th Century AD, showcasing the city’s cultural and architectural splendour.

A Multi-Religious Heritage Hub

- The site contains 22 Shiva temples, five Vishnu temples, 10 Buddhist viharas, and three Jain viharas.
- It flourished as the capital of **Dakshina Kosala** under the **Panduvanshi** and **Somavamshi** dynasties.
- Archaeological remains include palace complexes, markets, residences, stupas, brick temples, meditation cells, and ancient water systems.

Remarkable Monuments and Architecture

- **Lakshmana Temple** (7th Century) is one of India’s finest brick temples, dedicated to Vishnu.
- **Surang Tila** stands on a high terrace with a steep staircase of 37 steps and features a dramatic **panchayatana** layout.
 - The Panchayatana layout is a temple architectural style featuring a central shrine surrounded by four smaller subsidiary shrines at each corner of a square, making a total of five shrines
- Large **Buddhist viharas** and stupas point to Sirpur’s role as a major Buddhist centre, including the Tivaradeva Mahavihara with its notable Buddha statue.

A Sacred Riverine Cultural Landscape

- Sirpur’s location along the **Mahanadi River** enhances its spiritual and cultural significance.
- The presence of ghats, temples, and ancient settlements forms a rich riverine landscape that aligns with UNESCO’s vision of combined natural and cultural heritage — strengthening Sirpur’s case for World Heritage

status.

What the Govt Plans To Do

- Tourists currently spend nearly three hours navigating scattered village tracks to see Sirpur's monuments.
- The Chhattisgarh government plans to reduce this by an hour through paved heritage pathways and battery-operated vehicles, enabling smoother and eco-friendly movement across the site.

Thematic Clusters and Integrated Pathways

- Sirpur naturally divides into four heritage zones:
 - Buddhist Monastic Cluster
 - Hindu Temple Cluster
 - Civic-Administrative Zone
 - Riverine Sacred Landscape
- A primary pathway will link all four thematic clusters, while a secondary pathway will provide last-mile access to each monument, ensuring a coherent visitor experience.

Land Transfer for Unified Site Management

- To strengthen conservation and streamline administration, the ASI has requested 30 hectares of state land around the site.
- This includes land near major monuments, approach routes, buffer zones, and areas needed for heritage management infrastructure.
- Identified archaeological mounds and zones with high potential will undergo **fresh surveys and excavations**, allowing ASI to uncover more structures and strengthen Sirpur's bid for UNESCO World Heritage status.

Source: IE | UNESCO

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/sirpur-unesco-bid-indias-plan-to-transform-the-5th-century-heritage-site/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.