



Konark Sun Temple

Published On: 10-11-2025

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has prohibited tourist entry into the 'Nata Mandap' (dancing hall) of the Konark Sun Temple in Odisha's Puri district. The decision was taken due to structural vulnerabilities and conservation concerns, as parts of the Nata Mandap's floor and pillars show signs of stress and weathering.

| Aspect | Details |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Location | Konark, near Puri, Odisha coastline |
| Built by | King Narasimhadeva I (1238–1264 CE) of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty |
| Year of Construction | Around 1250 CE |
| Deity | Dedicated to Surya (Sun God) |
| Alternate Name | Surya Devalaya or Black Pagoda (by European sailors) |
| UNESCO Status | World Heritage Site (1984) |
| Architecture Style | Kalinga (Odisha) School of Temple Architecture |

Architectural Features

Design Concept: The entire temple resembles a **gigantic solar chariot**, symbolizing the Sun God's journey across the sky.

Structure:

- o Originally stood **227 feet high**, making it among the tallest temples ever constructed in India.
- o The chariot features **24 intricately carved wheels**, each about **12 feet in diameter**, drawn by **six stone horses**.

Orientation: The temple faces **east**, designed so that **the first rays of the morning sun** illuminate the main sanctum.

Material Used:

- o **Khondalite stone** – main structural material.
- o **Laterite stone** – for the boundary walls and flooring.
- o **Chlorite stone** – for door jambs and decorative elements.
- o **Iron clamps and dowels** – used to join massive stone blocks, some exhibiting **magnetic properties** (believed to attract ships).

Artistic Carvings:

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040
Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833**

o Depictions from **Hindmythology**, celestial beings, animals, daily life, and dancers adorn the temple walls.

o The **Nata Mandap** served as a hall for **devadasis** performing ritual dances.

Scientific Significance:

o The **wheels function as sundials**, capable of measuring time to within minutes.

Cultural & Religious Significance

Chandrabbhaga Festival (February): Annual celebration honouring the **Sun God**, involving rituals, music, and dance near the Chandrabhaga River.

The temple remains a **symbol of artistic excellence, solar worship, and maritime heritage** of medieval Odisha.

Conservation Concerns

Erosion, weathering, and past restorations have compromised parts of the structure, especially the **Nata Mandap** and **Jagamohana (main hall)**.

ASI employs **laser scanning, ground-penetrating radar (GPR), and 3D mapping** for non-invasive conservation.

The **Black Pagoda's** iron structure, while innovative, also contributed to **moisture-induced corrosion** over centuries.