



ALLIANCE OF RELIGIONS AND CONSERVATION

launched in 1995 by HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh KG KT

PILGRIMAGE STATISTICS – ANNUAL FIGURES



It is impossible to get fully accurate figures for the number of pilgrims to most sites as records are not necessarily kept. While the major sites have reasonably accurate estimates of annual visitor numbers, many of these are tourist destinations as well as pilgrimage sites. Figures used for this document are also not all for the same time period due to lack of available contemporary statistics.

That said, it is possible to be reasonably confident that the numbers quoted (and especially the total) are most likely to be an underestimate, given the enormous numbers of shrines and sacred sites that we have not been able to include.

GLOBAL TOTAL: 155 MILLION PILGRIMAGES PER ANNUM (BASED ON FIGURES BELOW)

- 30 million pilgrims Ayyappan Saranam, India (Hindu)
- 20 million pilgrims – Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe (Christian)
- 13 million pilgrims – Amritsar (Sikh)
- 10 million pilgrims – Hindu Mela (takes place every three years, with some festivals attracting 10 million and others 50, 60 or 70 million)¹ (Hindu)
- 10 million pilgrims – Tirupati, India (Hindu)
- 10 million pilgrims - Arba'een, Karbala, Iraq (Muslim)
- 8 million pilgrims – Lourdes (Christian)
- 6.6 million visitors – Brazil, Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida (Christian)
- 8 million pilgrims – Western Wall in 2009 (Jewish)
- 5 million pilgrims – Dwarka (Hindu)
- 4-5 million pilgrims – Portugal, Fátima (Christian)
- 3 million pilgrims to the Qadiriyyah shrine in Kano
- 2.3 million pilgrims – Hajj (Islam) (including 1.8 million from overseas)
- 2.1 million pilgrims – Wutai Shan (Daoist)
- 1.7 million – World Youth Day (Christian), 4 million pilgrims every two to three years
- 1.5 million pilgrims – Santiago de Compostela, Spain (Christian)
- 1 million pilgrims – Varanasi (Hindu)
- 635,000 Amarnath Cave, Kashmir (Hindu)
- Over 500,000 pilgrims – Taishan (Daoist)
- 500,000 pilgrims – Vrindavan, Braj (Hindu)
- Over 0.3 million pilgrims – Hua Shan (Daoist)
- Around 0.3 million pilgrims – Qingcheng Shan (Daoist)
- 250,000 pilgrims – Emei Shan (Daoist)
- 250,000 pilgrims – Iona (Christian)
- Over 100,000 pilgrims – Taize (Christian)
- 100,000 pilgrims – St Bishoy Monastery, Wadi El Natroun (Coptic Christian)
- 100,000 pilgrims – Walsingham Shrine of Our Lady (Christian)
- 50,000 pilgrims – Malaudi celebrations, Lamu, Kenya (Muslim)
- 43,000 (roughly) pilgrims – Lumbhini (Buddhist)
- 20-25,000 pilgrims – Etchmiadzin (Armenian Apostolic Christian)
- 8,000 pilgrims – Lough Derg (Christian)
- 2,500 pilgrims – St Albans, UK (Christian)

Total: Around 140 million pilgrimages a year to these 32 destinations alone.

To reach the 155 million figure we calculated a modest extra 10 percent to account for all other pilgrimages (including short day visits to shrines and pilgrim places all around the world including Africa, Spanish-speaking Latin America, Russia, Greece, many Indian shrines and Australia). We believe the total figure to be higher.

¹ It's complicated: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kumbh_Mela. The normal Kumbh Mela is celebrated every three years, the Ardh (half) Kumbh Mela is celebrated every six years at Haridwar and Prayag, the Purna (complete) Kumbh takes place every 12 years, at four places (Prayag (Allahabad), Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik). The Maha (great) Kumbh Mela which comes after 12 'Purna Kumbh Melas', or 144 years, is held at Allahabad. The last Ardh Kumbh Mela was held over a period of 45 days beginning in January 2007, more than 70 million Hindu pilgrims took part over that time. The previous Maha Kumbh Mela, held in 2001, was attended by around 60 million people, making it at the time the largest gathering anywhere in the world in recorded history. The 1998 Kumbh Mela saw over 10 million pilgrims visiting Hardwar, to take a dip in the holy Ganges river. So we calculated that every three and nine years there are up to 10 million, then every six and 12 years there are up to 50 million. Adding to 120 million every 12 years = average 10 million a year.

Compiled by ARC. December 2011