



Newsletter 2: April 2012

Greetings from ARC.

We have some nice stories this time, coming in from our members, but first I'd like to draw your attention to the picture at the top of this page. It is rather large here, but it could also be a lot smaller: it was designed with Green Maps, which I wrote to you about last time, with a story that attracted quite a lot of attention (not only within this network but from absolute strangers who found it on a search and wanted their own friends and networks to be inspired by it).



Green Pilgrimage Network

We wanted a logo that could be used on Green Maps, and which would suggest greenness, places, and pilgrimage in one easy image that did not suggest any one faith or any one type of place. We've had a few goes at it; it's not an easy brief, and this is the third version, but Alison and I think it is rather good. **But before we adopt it formally we'd love to have your feedback. Would you send back to me by May 1st with any comments?**

1. Amritsar's Golden Temple going solar
2. Green canteen in Etchmiadzin, Armenia
3. Could all religious buildings in Europe and Middle East consider swift nesting boxes?
4. Staff in organic cotton, all food organic, cool furniture, green energy: the Conscious Hotel in Amsterdam a possible model for all hotels in pilgrim cities

### 1. AMRITSAR'S GOLDEN TEMPLE GOING SOLAR

A story in India's Tribune News Service yesterday (April 15) revealed that the Minister for New and Renewable Energy, had proposed a sophisticated solar cooking system to cook meals at Sri Guru Ram Das Langar hall at the Golden Temple complex, sacred to all Sikhs. The plan is for as many as 30 solar concentrating dishes to provide steam for cooking about a tonne of dal per day. The system would have a hybrid boiler to help generate



steam during cloudy and rainy days. The project would halve the consumption of LPG cylinders from 100 per day to 50.

Such systems had already been installed at Tirupati temple, Sai Baba Temple at Shirdi and Brahma Kumari Ashram at Mount Abu. The Bhumi Project's Gopal Patel has been in contact with Tirupati already this month in the hope that they will become a Hindu member of the GPN.

SGPC secretary Dalmegh Singh, who was at Assisi in November 2011, has studied the solar cooking system at Sai Baba temple at Shirdi. He told reporters that the entire energy requirement of the Golden Temple was around 300 kW. He said the Union Minister had assured that the entire Rs 1.40 crore cost (about USD \$270,000) would be borne by the Centre.

## 2. Green Canteen for Armenian pilgrims



Karine Baghdasaryan, Programme Officer of the Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table Foundation has sent us some inspiring news about the "Green Hospitality Project", a canteen for pilgrims at the Cross of Armenian Unity, an NGO which trains vulnerable children in skills that include traditional cookery as well as carpet weaving, painting, computer literacy, pottery, etc.

The "Green Hospitality" project is a small open air canteen where about 100 people at a time can get "green" traditional food. The interesting thing here is that 40 young girls and boys (some of them with disabilities) first got training in Armenian national cooking here. Then when Etchmiadzin joined the Green Pilgrimage Network, they started to include the targets outlined in ARC's GPN Handbook: 70 percent fresh or unprocessed, 50 percent local, 30 percent organic and 100 percent free-range eggs. Three of them proved easy to achieve, but the organic element was a problem.

"Organic certification body exists in Armenia, but small farmers cannot afford paying for certification. The way out was involving farmers who started with organic but stopped due to financial problems," Karine writes.

The centre includes five open air pavilions with tiled roofs, furnished with old fashioned tables and chairs. The canteen yard was improved by planting it with local varieties of trees including apricot, peach, pomegranate, walnut, trees and are being taken care of using only organic methods of land cultivation and plant treatment. It is worth mentioning that cooking in the traditional Armenian fireplace (tonir) was done using wood only from ecologically approved cuttings. Food is made according to the environmental standards set by ARC.

The project presentation ceremony was highlighted by local and national TV companies, as well as in ArmeniaNow.com information site. Booklets presenting "green hospitality" were published and distributed

among tourist companies, guests, etc. Contacts are established with 10 tourist companies to invite groups to eat in this new place, where food is both local and healthy.

In 2011 they had about 2,300 visitors who made use of “green” national cuisine. In 2012 they have already received 300 guests, although the pilgrim season has not yet started. A very promising development is that the canteen was included in the Etchmiadzin city guide under the title of “green hospitality place”

### 3. SWIFT NESTING BOXES IN JERUSALEM

A couple of weeks ago we ran a lovely story that came in from Naomi Tsur in Jerusalem about the swifts coming back to the Western Wall. <http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=535>



a beautiful thing if boxes (under the blocked by ladders or trees) as part of how they plan buildings.

Since then I have been learning some great things about swifts, and about how they fly 7000 miles twice a year between Europe/ Middle East and Southern Africa. There are many pilgrimage places that are homes for swifts at the end of their journey, and it would be holy places of all kinds could naturally consider adding swift nesting eaves, some 5 metres from the ground, not in direct sunlight, or

The Swift Conservation website <http://www.swift-conservation.org/> has a guide to making your own nesting box or (if you are like me or Alison), links to ordering a nesting box from people who are more practical than we are. The cheapest boxes in the UK are about £15, which is affordable to most places of worship or faith schools.

I have spent a little time this morning playing a swifts computer game - <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/swift-academy/>. It is probably meant for children but it is charming and informative, and really fun pretending to be a swift flying 7000 into cross winds. Good for children in any country that the swifts pass through. My first score was 120 (so do share yours!)

**LATEST NEWS - St Albans has just bought some swift nesting boxes, which they hope will be in place ready for the arrival of this year’s migrant swifts.**

### 4.An Eco Hotel



In Amsterdam this weekend for a work trip, three of us stayed at the Conscious Hotel near Vondelpark. It was a charming place, quite reasonably priced, and had some really good ideas about how to be ecological - ideas which might be useful for Green Pilgrimage Network members as you try and encourage and inspire hotels in your

town or city to become more ecologically aware. Some of the things that they were doing include:

1. **Paper:** all stationery and brochures and entrance signage were FSC certified
2. **Lighting:** only LED and energy-saving lights

3. **Cleaning products:** eco-friendly detergents
4. **Clothing:** Staff wore clothes made from organic cotton
5. **Linen and towels** were washed in the most sustainable local laundry company AND there were signs in the rooms giving guests the option to have their linen and towels washed every day rather than this being the default.
6. **Food was organic** and almost all bar snacks were (except for Coca Cola and Heineken "which I stock because you like them).
7. **Furniture and fittings were fun and made of recycled materials**, with a desktop made from coffee cups (it looked quite normal, but also looked cool), wallpaper that was FSC certified with eco-friendly ink, the cushions in the bar were made from old embroideries, the beds were made from natural materials, and the countertop in the bathroom was made of pressed paper, though it looked like stone.



cups (it looked quite normal, but also looked cool), wallpaper that was FSC certified with eco-friendly ink, the cushions in the bar were made from old embroideries, the beds were made from natural materials, and the countertop in the bathroom was made of pressed paper, though it looked like stone.

8. **The showers** used a system that pumped air through the showerhead using 35 percent less water and yet it didn't feel any different. The shampoo and showergels were in refillable dispensers rather than little bottles. Needless to say they were an eco-label.

9. **There was also recycling, green energy (from wind, water, solar and biomass), green office supplies, eco gifts, a card-operated room energy saving system, a sedum grass roof (with flowers) AND a brochure in every room explaining in a fun way everything that the hotel was doing to stay conscious.**
10. **Transport:** There was a walking, bike and public transport guide to getting around and enjoying the city.
11. **What we loved about it was that it was fun and lovely and creative.**

<http://www.conscioushotels.com/about>

Do please let me know if hotels in your city have further ideas - we'll compile a list of cool ideas for eco hotels later on.

All best wishes,

Victoria Finlay [victoriaf@arcworld.org](mailto:victoriaf@arcworld.org) and Alison Hilliard [alisonh@arcworld.org](mailto:alisonh@arcworld.org)