

In 2013, more than 80 million Hindu pilgrims attended the 12-yearly Maha Kumbh Mela, held in Allahabad, India. This was the largest human gathering in recorded history. Every year more than 200 million people become pilgrims, whether for hours, days, weeks or even months. Each person is undergoing this journey to experience something sacred. It is as if whole cities are on the move, waiting to be transformed.



Imagine what could be achieved if pilgrims and pilgrim cities were to become models of care and respect for the environment, reflecting the deep values of the world's faith traditions.

Imagine the good that could be done for people and places on pilgrimage routes, and cities and sacred places at the end of the journeys.

Imagine a network of Green Pilgrim Cities and Sacred Sites, inspiring environmental care along the great pilgrimage routes, and encouraging all pilgrims to leave a 'positive footprint'.

WHAT IS A 'POSITIVE FOOTPRINT'?

A positive footprint requires pilgrims to leave every place more beautiful than it was when they arrived. That can involve taking away your own litter AND other people's; not buying bottled water; choosing tourist agencies with a sustainable ethos; eating food that is local, organic and free-range; going to hotels with strong environmental policies; buying only sustainably sourced souvenirs; walking, cycling or taking public transport rather than driving.

On a more ambitious level, it can involve: supporting programmes to improve the city environment and biodiversity; sharing ideas and inspiration with other pilgrims and city residents; returning home with a sense of awe and wonder at the natural environment; and breathing life into that feeling by becoming active in protecting your home town.

See www.arcworld.org for more details.

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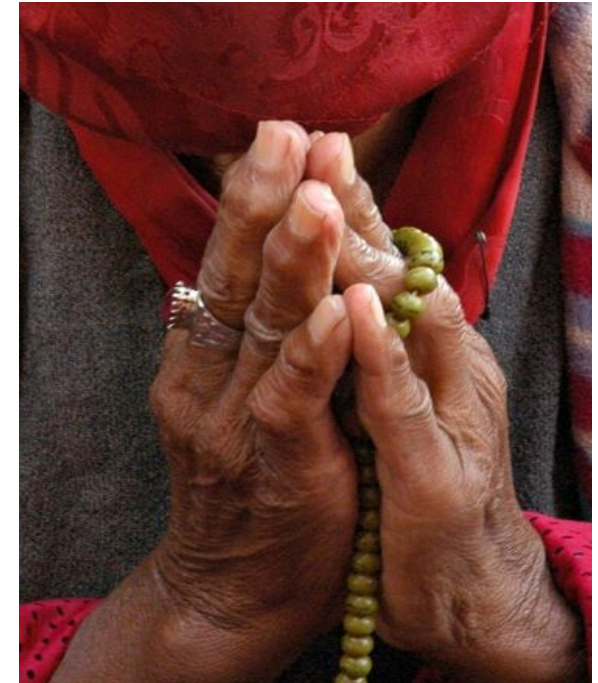


ALLIANCE OF RELIGIONS AND CONSERVATION
launched in 1995 by HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh KG KT

Photos: Praying hands, Wonderlane; Pilgrim pack, Victoria Finlay; Pilgrims' shoes, Neil Cummings; Birdhouses, See Minglee

This paper is from FSC-certified woodlands.

GREEN PILGRIMAGE NETWORK (GPN)



*A global network of green
pilgrim cities and sacred
sites of all faiths*



WHAT WILL THE NETWORK DO?

The network will inspire pilgrims to:

- 👉 Prepare mindfully for their pilgrimage
- 👉 Travel responsibly in the spirit of their faith
- 👉 Choose sustainable tourist agencies
- 👉 Eat and drink sustainably and ethically
- 👉 Minimise waste and water use
- 👉 Dispose of their rubbish responsibly and pick up after others
- 👉 Support a fund to green the sacred places they visit
- 👉 Help local people in eco-sensitive activities
- 👉 Bring home greener ideas for living
- 👉 Share the sense of green pilgrimage with those they meet on the way

The network will inspire pilgrim places to:

- 👉 Accommodate pilgrim visitors sustainably
- 👉 Green their religious buildings
- 👉 Assess their energy, infrastructure and open spaces
- 👉 Green their faith festivals
- 👉 Work together on greening initiatives
- 👉 Safeguard wildlife and parks
- 👉 Provide clean, accessible drinking water
- 👉 Create Green Maps
- 👉 Bring faiths and local authorities together to create sustainable cities
- 👉 Improve sanitation
- 👉 Work with tour operators and transport providers to be more sustainable
- 👉 Spread greener living habits for all
- 👉 Celebrate and publicise their status as members of the Green Pilgrimage Network.
- 👉 Be models of best practice for other cities and places in their country or region

WHO IS IN THE NETWORK?

Founder cities include Amritsar, India, for Sikhs; Assisi, Italy, for Catholics; Etchmiadzin, Armenia, for Armenian Orthodox; Haifa, Israel, for Baha'is; Kano, Nigeria, for Islam's Qadiriyyah Sufis; Louguan, China, for Daoists; St Albans, UK, for Anglicans; and Trondheim in Norway for the Lutheran Church. The city authorities of Jerusalem have joined to green the city for all Jewish, Christian and Muslim pilgrims.



Others include: the Church of Scotland and the Pilgrimage Pathway in Luss; the Coptic Orthodox Church for St Pishoy Monastery in Egypt, visited by 100,000 pilgrims each year; Rishikesh in India for Hindus; Nanded in India for Sikhs; and Jinja Honcho, the Association of Shinto Shrines in Japan, with 80,000 shrines.

KEY MEETINGS

The Green Pilgrimage Network was launched in Assisi, Italy, in November 2011. There were meetings for the India chapter in late 2012, with a regional meeting in Jerusalem, April 2013. The next major meeting is in Trondheim, Norway, in July 2013.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The faith bodies and local authorities of these holy places have joined to draw up plans, starting with the question: "What would your pilgrimage place be like if it were a sustainable pilgrimage place?"

Members share information, support, technical knowledge and inspiration. A newsletter is sent every quarter. The network engages secular as well as faith partnerships – academic institutions, NGOs, entrepreneurs, local authorities, community leaders and others.

A vision of pilgrims on all continents, and the pilgrim cities that receive them, leaving a positive footprint on the Earth