

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



One and a half million Muslim pilgrims from West Africa come to Kano each year to visit the tombs of the local Qadiriyyah Saints for the annual Maukib festival.

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 pilgrimage centres, inspiring environmental care along all the great (and small) pilgrimage routes, and encouraging all pilgrims to leave a 'positive footprint' as they make their spiritual journeys.

WHAT IS A 'POSITIVE FOOTPRINT'?

A positive footprint requires pilgrims to leave every place more beautiful than 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 pilgrims: supporting programmes to improve the city's 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 their home place.

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Some 20 million Catholic pilgrims worship at the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City every year.

This paper is from FSC-certified woodlands.

GREEN PILGRIMAGE NETWORK (GPN)



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



Green Pilgrimage Network

WHAT DOES THE NETWORK DO?

The network inspires pilgrim places to:

- 👉 Bring faiths, local authorities and secular groups together to create sustainable cities
- 👉 Promote responsible tourism
- 👉 Serve local, ethical food
- 👉 Accommodate pilgrim visitors sustainably
- 👉 Get faith festival organisers thinking green
- 👉 Improve green energy and transport
- 👉 Green their faith festivals
- 👉 Work together to inspire and support
- 👉 Protect wildlife and parks
- 👉 Provide clean, accessible drinking water for everyone
- 👉 Create green maps and guides
- 👉 Work with tour operators and transport providers to be more sustainable
- 👉 Organise rubbish cleanups and recycling
- 👉 Be models of the world in which we want to live.



The Golden Temple in Amritsar installed solar panels for cooking, inspiring other Sikh temples around the world to do the same. This is a new installation at the Leicester Gurdwara. Photo: Leicester Mercury

WHO ARE WE?

The GPN launched in 2011 in Assisi, Italy. Over 20 pilgrim places in China, India, Europe, Africa and the Middle East are now members. We have the support of faith groups from Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Shintoism and Baha'ism. We work in partnership with ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) and R20 Regions of Climate Action. We are hosted by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation.



This temple is at the centre of India's Ranthambore National Park, home to 40 wild tigers. It is visited by millions of pilgrims, all going through the reserve, often leaving litter and traumatising wildlife.

KEY MEETINGS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Key meetings have been held in Trondheim in Norway and in Ise in Japan. A *Green Guide for Hajj* has been published. There are guides for greening mosques, churches, Hindu and Daoist temples and Sikh Gurdwaras. We have supported Hindu Environment Week and Sikh Environment Day and helped Confucianist and Daoist traditions in China commit to greening their cities on an unprecedented scale. You can find a handbook, resources, logo, ideas and examples on www.greenpilgrimage.net.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Pilgrimage is popular as never before. At least 220 million people go on pilgrimage each year. Sometimes it's more. In 2013, 100 million Hindus attended the 12-yearly Maha Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, India. Every year 30 million Sikhs visit Amritsar; 3 million Muslims go on Hajj. And those pilgrims take their journeys in order to be changed and to take that change home with them. That change can be reconnecting with nature and gaining a new understanding of caring for the environment as well as a new commitment to reduce the environmental impact of pilgrimage.

Often pilgrimage routes are littered by plastic bottles and rubbish. And sometimes the very act of going on pilgrimage increases pollution and carbon emissions, disturbs wildlife, and causes other environmental damage.



Every year 100 million plastic water bottles and water cooler bottles are left behind after the Muslim Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia.