

Christian Pilgrimages: **Walsingham**

Walsingham is a small village in the Norfolk, UK. It became a pilgrimage site after an alleged appearance by the Virgin Mary in 1061.

Known as the 'Walsingham Legend', it is believed that Mary appeared to Richeldis de Faverches, a local noblewoman. Richeldis claimed that Mary took her to the house in Nazareth where she was first told she would give birth to Jesus. Mary then instructed her to build a copy of the house in Walsingham. Richeldis tried to do this, but her builders struggled with the construction. She prayed overnight and when morning came, she found the building miraculously completed. It became known as Holy House.

In the years that followed, Walsingham became a popular pilgrimage location with British and European Christians. However, the pilgrimages stopped after the Reformation under Henry VIII.

The pilgrimages were revived in the 1930s. Nowadays, it is estimated that 250,000 pilgrims visit Walsingham each year. These pilgrims pray in one of the local churches and remember the importance of Mary to the Christian faith. Many describe this as a deeply spiritual experience.

Walsingham is viewed as pilgrimage site by both Catholics and the Church of England and each denomination has a church there. These churches will often work together to express a message of Christian unity.



The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham

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Christian Pilgrimages: Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. It is a holy city to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Christians may perform a pilgrimage to Jerusalem due to the city's importance in the life of Jesus. In the week before his death Jesus entered Jerusalem to great celebration. However, the people of Jerusalem would later turn against Jesus and he was crucified just outside the city walls. All the key events at the end of Jesus' life occurred in the city, including the Last Supper, his betrayal by Judas and, most importantly, his resurrection. These events are celebrated each year by Christians in Holy Week, the festival that ends with Easter Sunday.

During a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Christians will likely visit the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus is believed to have prayed the night before he died. They may also visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which some Christians believe to have been built on the site of Jesus' burial place.

A pilgrimage to Jerusalem will allow a Christian to feel closer to Jesus. It will remind them of the sacrifice that he made for humans by being crucified and how he overcame death through his resurrection. These events, Christians believe, allow their sins to be forgiven.



The Garden of Gethsemane, Jerusalem

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Christian Pilgrimages: Lourdes

Lourdes, in southern France, is an important pilgrimage for Catholic Christians. They believe that the Virgin Mary appeared to St Bernadette here.

In 1858, Bernadette, then aged 14, claimed that the Virgin Mary had appeared to her multiple times in a cave outside Lourdes. During these appearances, Mary is thought to have instructed Bernadette to build a chapel there. In another vision, Mary placed her foot in the waters that flowed through the cave, making the muddy water clean. Bernadette went on to become a nun as a result of her experiences.

Since 1858, many Catholics have visited the shrine and chapels around the cave in Lourdes. Pilgrims believe that visiting Lourdes can cleanse people of their sins. They also believe that the water touched by Mary has the ability to cure illnesses. The Catholic Church claims that 69 people have been miraculously cured by this water.



Pope John Paul II visiting Lourdes.

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Christian Pilgrimages: Iona and Taizé

These two pilgrimages involve visiting monasteries. A monastery is a place where monks or nuns live, having dedicated their lives to God.

The island of Iona, in Scotland, is the site of a monastery founded by St Columbo in 563. He and thirteen followers travelled to the island to live a secluded life where they could focus on God. They lived a simple life of prayer and study. Because of this, Iona became a centre for learning at the time and came to possess a huge library of religious works.

Like many monasteries, Iona was abandoned after the Reformation under the rule of Henry the VIII. However, the monastery was rebuilt in 1938 and continues to exist to this day. The island remains a quiet, secluded place.

Taizé is a monastery in France. It was founded in 1940 as an ecumenical monastery. This means it consists of monks from both the Catholic and Protestant denominations.

Taizé is famous for its meditative style of worship. This involves long periods of reflective silence and repetitive chants set to music. These are believed to help people focus on God.

Pilgrims may visit these locations to escape modern life and focus on their religion in a unique way.



A view of Iona from the sea.



People praying in the church at Taizé.

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