

Green pilgrim cities



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

Download the Green Pilgrim Cities leaflet [HERE](#) (File size 6.2 MB)

The Network will inspire **Pilgrims** to:

- prepare mindfully for their pilgrimage...
- walk lightly and travel responsibly in the spirit of their faith...
- choose sustainable tourist agencies...
- eat and drink sustainably and ethically...
- minimise their waste and water use...
- dispose of their rubbish... and pick up after others...
- support a fund to green the city they are visiting...
- help local people in ecologically sensitive activities...
- share the art of green pilgrimage with the people they meet on the way...
- bring greener ideas for living home with them...

The Network will inspire **Pilgrim Cities** to:

- receive and accommodate pilgrim visitors sustainably...
- green their religious buildings, energy, infrastructure and open spaces...

- safeguard and celebrate their wildlife and parks...
- create a green pilgrim fund...
- create 'green maps', highlighting the environmental projects, achievements and opportunities for volunteering in their cities...
- bring faiths and local authorities together to create sustainable cities...
- provide clean, accessible drinking water ...
- improve sanitation for pilgrim routes and destinations...
- work with tour operators, airlines and other transport providers to provide carbon neutral travel...
- spread greener living habits among their own population...
- be proud of their status as Green Pilgrim Cities, and publicise it...
- celebrate their pilgrims and green their faith festivals ...
- work with, and support, each other in greening initiatives...

How will it work?



Most faiths have now identified their pilot cities. Plans to green these cities will be drawn up by each local faith community, in cooperation with the local authority, mayor or city council, starting with the question: "What would your city be like if it were a sustainable green city?" Faith leaders will commit to work with their own pilgrim cities and will also join a network to share information, support and technical knowledge. ARC will create a guidebook on how to be a green city, using examples from these pilot cities and elsewhere.

The first pilgrimage cities

Some of the pilot Green Pilgrim Cities are:

- Amritsar for Sikhs
- Assisi for Catholics

- Cities in Braj for Hindus, still to be confirmed
- Etchmiadzin for Armenian Orthodox Christians
- Jerusalem for Jews, Christians and Muslims
- Trondheim for Norwegian Lutherans and other Christians

What does a Positive

Footprint Involve?



A positive footprint requires pilgrims to leave every place more beautiful than it was when they arrived. On a simple level that can involve taking away your own litter and other people's; trying to avoid buying bottled water; choosing tourist agencies with a sustainable ethos; eating food that is local, organic and free-range; buying only sustainably sourced souvenirs; walking rather than driving.

On a more ambitious level it can involve engaging voluntarily with social and ecological programmes during your pilgrimage; financially supporting programmes to improve the city environment and biodiversity; sharing ideas and inspiration with other pilgrims and city residents; returning home with a greater sense of awe and wonder at the natural environment, and breathing life into that feeling, by doing something active to protect your hometown. **S**

Seeking partnerships

The network will only work if it engages secular partnerships as well as faith partnerships. From transport providers to solar power experts to local NGOs, local authorities, academic institutions, environmental organizations and other stakeholders will be encouraged to come into discussion and partnership with religious groups to promote all aspects of greening pilgrimages. It is vital for the Mayor and City Council in each city to commit to the goals of the network. One of the network's first secular partners is [ICLEI](#) – Local Governments for Sustainability, an international association of more than 1100 local governments in 68 countries taking responsibility in creating a sustainable society.

When will it happen?

The network will be launched at a meeting in Assisi in November 2011. Assisi is one of the pilot green pilgrim cities. **How did it come about?**



ARC and WWF have been working with the environmental side of sacred sites and pilgrimage routes for more than 20 years. In many countries this has also included sacred cities. In November 2009, in cooperation with the UNDP, ARC held a major event at [Windsor Castle](#), England. Nine major world religions launched long-term commitments to environmental action in what the UNDP described as “potentially the world’s largest civil society movement on climate change”.

Several of these commitments included greening pilgrimage cities and routes. The Armenian Orthodox Church, for example, proposes in its [Seven Year Plan](#) to green the holy city of Etchmiadzin; the [Muslims announced a plan](#) for a network of Al-Kher cities (cities which are “beneficial, wonderful and beautiful”) and that Medina in Saudi Arabia would become a Green Pilgrim City alongside nine other Muslim cities; the [Jewish Seven Year Plan](#) proposes greening Jerusalem so that a place that is holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims around the world becomes a model of sustainability.

At Windsor, several faith leaders responded enthusiastically to the idea of setting up a network of green pilgrimage cities and have been involved in the initial stages of this programme. The aim is to help faiths green their holy cities according to their own theology and understanding.