

# Why you might want to consider a pilgrimage for your next holiday or day trip

January 21 2022, by Jaeyeon Choe O Regan

---



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

We have been living in a COVID-19 pandemic world for two years—and almost everything about our lives has been affected. Travel and holidays in particular have been constrained through border closures

and lockdowns. It's too early to say what effect this may have on overseas travel long term. But [one form of travel](#) that is forecast to grow in popularity is [pilgrimage](#).

Often described as "a journey with a purpose or [a journey with an intention](#)", a pilgrimage is different from a plain old walk or hike as it tends to be about following a particular path with religious, spiritual or historical significance.

Pilgrimages are a way of finding spiritual solace and a chance to connect with the great outdoors. Indeed, since the pandemic began, many of us have spent more time close to [mountains](#), rivers, waterfalls and [parks](#), for [psychological recovery](#), [spiritual recharge](#), and as a form of [meaningful travel](#).

New and repurposed pilgrimages have also emerged in many destinations including [Scotland](#), India, [Japan](#), [England](#) and Italy. While some routes have historical origins, others are modern, newly developed or resignified—such as the [Ancient Connections](#) project linking St David's, Pembrokeshire, in Wales to Ferns, County Wexford, in Ireland. The project aims to revive and celebrate the [medieval connections](#) between the two Celtic lands.

Pilgrims walk these trails for different reasons. For some, the experience has [religious significance](#), but for others, it's about [finding some quality time to think](#), breathe, heal and discover oneself, during a [a simple walk](#).

## **Walking the path**

[The restrictions](#) imposed on religious sites during the earlier phase of the pandemic did little to curb pilgrims' enthusiasm. Indeed, increasing numbers of [South Koreans](#) have walked the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain. Meanwhile, [alternative ways](#) of meeting pilgrims' needs

have also emerged, including the [virtual pilgrimage](#).

Fitness [apps](#) and [virtual guided tours](#) of the Camino have been popular. [The Church in Wales](#) also created an online pilgrimage [route](#) where e-pilgrims could explore some of Wales' historic churches, while Japan's [Shikoku pilgrimage](#) started offering real-time online pilgrimages for those unable to participate in a physical pilgrimage.

Some of the pilgrimage routes also provide distinctive cultural experiences such as Japanese traditional cooking and art and craft classes, or Welsh tea and cakes. The new [Michinoku \(the ancient name of Tohoku\) coastal trail](#) in Japan, for example, has already spurred interest from national and international travellers, and it is expected to become an iconic hiking route, while it is hoped that the [new Wales-Ireland pilgrimage](#) walking route will help to boost [local economies](#)—and is forecast to attract around 5,000 people a year.

Of course, maintaining pilgrimage sites and routes is crucial for cultural heritage and protection. This also has the potential to create new livelihoods and bring much-needed tourism to rural or remote areas. In [central India](#), for example, a Buddhist pilgrimage site in Nagarjuna is being developed as part of an effort to revitalise Buddhist heritage in the region.

[In Bhutan](#), a sacred hiking trail, that fell into disrepair because of highway construction, is reopening after 60 years with trail tourism programmes packaged to support local homestays, guesthouses and hotels. In the 16th century, the trail—which follows the route along the ancient Silk Road—was the only way of getting between the east and west of the country. And it served as the pilgrimage route for Buddhists in the east to travel to sacred sites in western Bhutan and Tibet.

## Where to start

As [mental health issues](#) have come to the fore during the pandemic, walking—with its [proven psychological and therapeutic benefits](#)—has been a popular activity for many as a way of coping with stress and anxiety. And [during pilgrimage walks](#), people often observe and appreciate simple things more keenly, feel the spiritual connection with their surroundings and gain new, enriching life perspectives.

So if you're keen to get your walking boots on, for those based in the UK, there is an array of new pilgrimage routes to explore. Many of these were established during the pandemic such as the [Northern Saints Trails](#) in the north-east of England, the [Walsingham Way](#) in East Anglia, [St Patrick's Way](#) in Northern Ireland, the [Kentigern Way](#) in Scotland, and the [Way of St Hild](#) in Teesside. While the [Devon Pilgrim](#), part of the [Growing the Rural Church project](#), which aims to connect rural churches with local communities and landscapes, launched no fewer than three new pilgrimage walks in the summer of 2021.

The Church of England promotes many Christian-themed pilgrimages, and information about some of these can be found on the [Centre for Christian Pilgrimage website](#). Organisations such as the [British Pilgrimage Trust](#) and the [Scottish Pilgrims Ways Forum](#) also offer guided pilgrimages and advice on self-guided walks.

Pilgrimages, however, need [not necessarily entail long hikes](#). [Micro pilgrimages](#) and [visits to pilgrimage places](#) are also a great way to find some time for quiet contemplation. And for those looking for a relatively stress-free experience, there is, of course, always the option of virtual pilgrimage allowing you to travel the world from the comfort of home.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

## Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Why you might want to consider a pilgrimage for your next holiday or day trip (2022, January 21) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-01-pilgrimage-holiday-day.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.