

Summary for Pilgrimage.. Religious and other, an opportunity to share experiences and perspectives.

May 20, 2026

The meeting focused on sharing experiences of pilgrimage across different faith traditions. Chris discussed pilgrimage from a **pagan/magical** perspective, emphasizing the transformative journey rather than just reaching a destination. Vandana shared her experience of a **Hindu** pilgrimage to Varanasi in India, describing how it connected her to divine energy and spiritual consciousness. Adeel introduced himself as a new member and spoke about his **Hajj** pilgrimage in 2022, explaining the rituals and how it humbled his ego and transformed him spiritually. Doug shared his **Christian** pilgrimage experience on St. Cuthbert's Way with his father, noting how the journey helped repair their relationship. Peter described organizing a **climate pilgrimage** from Yarmouth to King's Lynn ahead of COP26, where participants slept in churches and experienced spiritual connections to medieval faith spaces. The group explored **themes of hardship, transformation, community, and healing** associated with pilgrimage across different traditions. Daphne described her and David's pilgrimage to **Israel** in 2018, describing the experience as mixed, noting the **division in the country** and feeling unsafe in Jerusalem due to armed teenage soldiers, though she found inspiration at Lake Galilee. David explained the **geographical and historical significance** of their journey, visiting northern sites related to Jesus's young life and later 3 year public ministry including Lake Galilee and the River Jordan, and then south for his last days in Jerusalem. **Tourists and visitors come from round the world** using their own languages to combine in prayer where Jesus prayed. He described being jostled in narrow market streets as Jesus was on his way to be crucified. They also visited a **university in Bethlehem where Jews, Muslims, and Christians now study together**. Rose and Bridget shared insights about **Baha'i** pilgrimages to Israel, describing them as well-organized experiences with beautiful sacred sites that focus on unity and spiritual reflection rather than hardship. The discussion included perspectives on pilgrimage as a **potentially arduous journey**, with Gayatri explaining how some Hindu pilgrimage sites require physical preparation and health testing due to high altitude conditions. Peter referenced research on ritual suffering, explaining how physically **demanding religious practices** can provide neurological **benefits** through collective devotion. Doug linked modern pilgrimage concepts to secular journeys like **football tournaments and music festivals**, noting how such challenges can develop personal resilience and understanding. The group discussed different types of pilgrimages, with participants sharing personal experiences from events like the Aldermaston March and Greenham Common protests. The discussion explored how any pilgrimage can provide physical and emotional benefits, healing, and a sense of community. **It was agreed that there were common themes and aims across all faiths, including a greater awareness of self, increased spiritual consciousness, and transformation through companionship, with a renewed commitment to appreciation of one's own life journey.**