



*Religious*  
**TRAVEL**  
PLANNING GUIDE

# *Essential Steps to Planning a Christian Pilgrimage*

How to reconnect with parishioners and strengthen their faith through experiencing the sights that are central to your faith.



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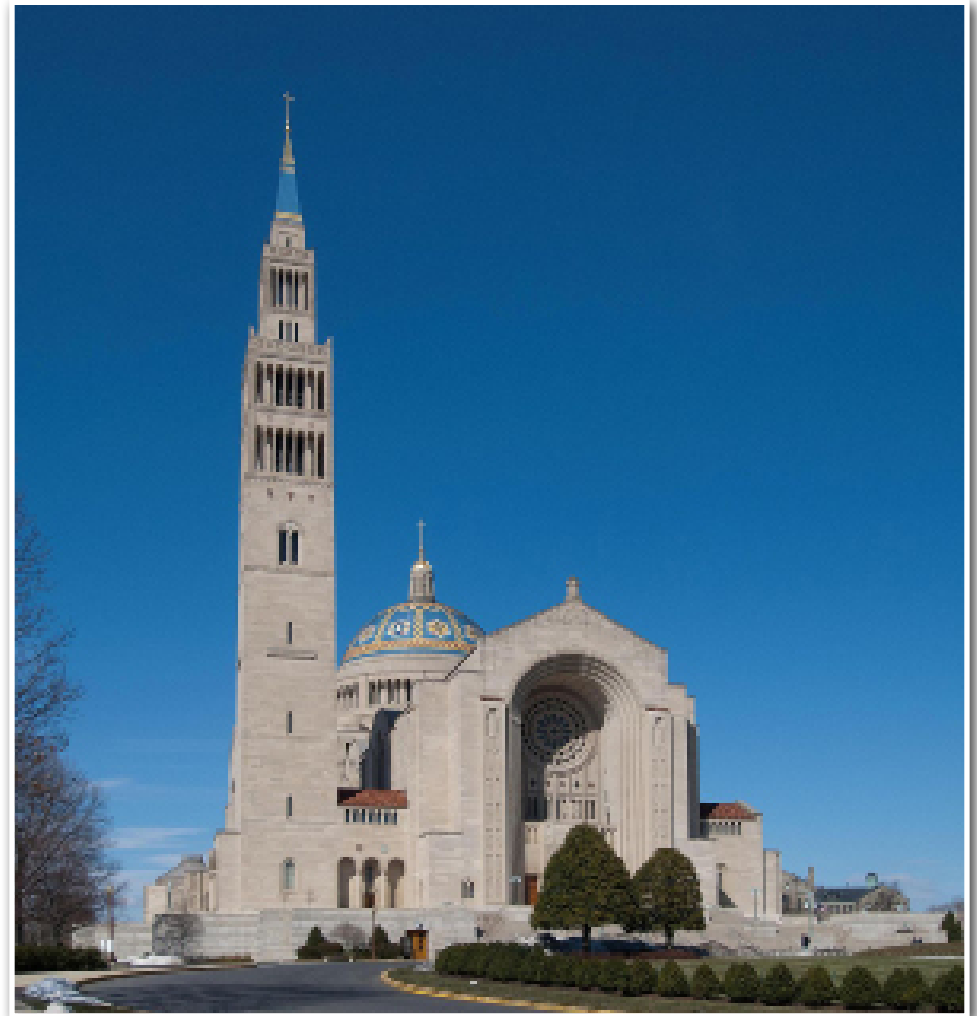
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# WHY YOUR CHURCH SHOULD PLAN A PILGRIMAGE

Certainly, there's no shortage of priorities at your church. But the need for togetherness should be of top importance, and there's no better way to foster community and build spirit in your congregation than a pilgrimage. It brings people together, it brings them closer to your church and to your mission.

Travel is also an excellent fundraiser. Proceeds from your pilgrimage can be used to pay for special projects or to help general church finances.

At no point in our history has travel been so popular and, according to *Tourism Review*, religious and spiritual tourism is on the rise. Spiritual journeys make it possible to discover a destination in a slower and a more immersive way, and to combine culture, spirituality and adventure into the same unique experience. 2017 was coined the year of the spiritual journey. It is only the beginning, as tourists of the future increasingly take an interest in the religious testimonies of destinations.



# THE HISTORICAL RELEVANCE OF RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGES

Pilgrimages date back over 5,000 years when Jewish settlers in rural areas were required by law to travel to Jerusalem twice during the year on High Holy Days. On Yom Kippur, a time for atonement, their pilgrimage was a cleansing of one's spiritual self. They returned for Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of a new year, breaking bread and celebrating.

In Luke 2:41, Mary and Joseph return to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover, making a pilgrimage. This was the time that Jesus was missing and they found him three days later speaking in the temple. So the spiritual act of a pilgrimage was an event that Jesus himself participated in. Can you think of a better reason to travel on a pilgrimage with your congregation?

Of course today's pilgrims use a much different means of transportation than back in ancient civilizations. Instead of by foot, donkey or camel, we use modern buses, cars, trains and airplanes. But the purpose is still the same:

***To reconnect with fellow parishioners and strengthen one's faith by experiencing those sights and activities that are central to our faith.***



# A FEW REASONS WHY PEOPLE TODAY GO ON PILGRIMAGES

There are many reasons today's travelers want to experience a pilgrimage. For many it provides the chance to take a break from the day-to-day of their lives and seek out a time for reflection, reconnect with their spiritual nature and cultural heritage, and socialize with like-minded pilgrims.

It is a good approach to remind your congregation of these opportunities when describing your pilgrimage. A few specific reasons you could focus your trip on might be:

- To set aside time for God and feel closer to him
- To seek guidance during times of difficulty or transition
- To venerate Mary or a beloved saint that personally moves you
- As an act of devotion or penance



# PICKING THE PILGRIMAGE GROUP LEADER

The pilgrimage group leader is the person in charge of orchestrating the logistical components of the trip and is vitally important to the successful outcome of the event. The leader arranges all aspects of the trip such as transportation, accommodations, sightseeing and meals. They set the trip schedule, ensuring there is a balance between spiritual activity and leisure time. If a trip is too heavy on spiritual without any time for fun, group members may lose interest. If the trip is all fun without enough spirituality, the trip fails to fulfil the mission of the pilgrimage.

## Some Responsibilities of the Group Leader Include:

- 1) Establish a trip itinerary. Either by making arrangements on your own or through a local tour operator.
- 2) Creating promotional materials and sign-up forms.
- 3) Cheerleading the trip at all parish activities and communication vehicles, making sure parishioners are aware of the details and deadlines.
- 4) Coordinating all payments from travelers and to vendors.
- 5) Leading the group while on tour.



Though a clergy member may be the spiritual leader, the group leader is the schedule coordinator. While they can be the same person, sometimes it is beneficial to separate the two roles, allowing the clergy member to focus on tending to the spiritual needs of the group, without worrying about schedules and logistics.

# SELECTING THE RIGHT DESTINATION

The most important part of your journey is the beginning – finding the right destination. While there are hundreds of potential pilgrimage sites across the United States from which to choose, you'll need to find one that supports your mission, is desirable to visit and not too close or too far.

Too close and you risk the “been there, done that” mentality that travelers tend to take on. Too far and it may become difficult to garner enough interest.

## Start Local Before Going International

While international pilgrimage sites like Lourdes, The Vatican and Israel are once-in-a-lifetime, bucket-list trips for devout travelers, there are many spectacular pilgrimage sites in the United States. The primary advantage of a domestic destination is that while not everyone can afford a big-ticket international trip, shorter group journeys will appeal to more community members and have a greater likelihood of success. Having successfully run a domestic pilgrimage, your members will be primed for an international journey!

***Twenty of our favorites are included in the appendix of this paper and will help you get started on deciding where to take your group.***



# CHOOSING THE PERFECT DATE

Once the destination is decided, pick a date on the calendar that is far enough in advance to sufficiently promote the trip, without being too far out in the future. Consult a spiritual and holiday calendar and try to match spiritual holidays with activities that are taking place at the pilgrimage site.

While you don't want to travel over Holy Days, a pre-Christmas trip is a great way to get one into the spirit of Christ and witness Christmas celebrations at your destination. It's similar with Easter. Above all, avoid times that conflict with other events that are held at your parish or in the local area.

For overnight trips, a **minimum of five months advance planning is recommended**. The longer the trip you have planned, the longer advance planning you'll need. If your church operates on an annual calendar, a year or more isn't unreasonable. After all, there's lots to be done!



# RESERVING GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Contact three local bus companies for competitive quotes on your trip. They'll tell you how long it will take you to get there, what stops are needed along the way and give you a rate for the bus charter.

This rate will be divided by the anticipated number of members you'll expect to have onboard. We suggest 30-35 is a reasonable number. If you do better, the church makes a little extra money. If you don't, you may need to decide whether there is enough interest in running the trip.

**When comparing quotes, be sure that all companies are apples-to-apples.** Quotes should include tolls, parking and driver accommodations. Also, ask the age of their equipment - there's a lot of difference between today's \$500,000 motorcoaches and ones built in the 1980s (Yes, some companies are still using buses built in the 80s!). Modern coaches have plush reclining seats, Wi-Fi and entertainment screens. Truly the way to travel in style!



# SECURING HOTEL ROOMS

While there are dozens of brands from which to choose and you likely have your favorites, it's smart to choose properties that meet the following criteria:

- **Affordable** – Members of your group come from all walks of life, and budget is important to many of them. Understand the community you live in and pick a hotel that matches the demographic of your area.
- **Location** – While you'll have a coach to take you to and from the pilgrimage site and area attractions, a hotel that's nearby restaurants, shopping or a downtown area will allow your guests to explore
- **Renovated** – All hotel properties are not created equal, nor are they renovated on the same schedule. Ask your sales manager for renovation details and check independent third-party review sites for guest comments on hotel conditions and cleanliness.
- **Refundable** – You should be able to hold hotel rooms on a good-faith basis without putting up large amounts of money in the form of non-refundable deposits. Once reservations start coming in and your group is solid, good-faith deposits may be in order.

- **Amenities** – We're not talking Ritz-Carlton fresh-cut flowers and gourmet chocolates on the pillow, but does the property have an indoor pool? Workout facilities? In-room coffee? Included breakfast? These amenities are important to travelers and should be to you as well.



- **Comps** – Short for complimentary reservations, it's customary for hotels to provide a free room based on X number of rooms sold. Standard policies are one free for 15 or 25 rooms occupied. This IS negotiable, like all things when working with a hotel, so it never hurts to ask.
- **Group amenities.** Some hotels will do a nice welcome reception, drink in the bar, small welcome gift from that hotel or city and discount coupons for local merchants.

**Note:** When you price hotels into your trip cost, divide the room + tax price by two, since most people book in pairs.

# ORCHESTRATING GROUP MEALS



This is probably the trickiest aspect of trip planning. After all, how do you keep all those stomachs happy? With a little advance preparation, however, meal planning can be a cinch.

- **Let the hotel handle breakfast** - Seek out hotels that have included breakfast, preferably the hot kind (versus cereal and bagels). Pilgrimage members can eat breakfast at their leisure and choose exactly what they like to eat.
- **Free lunch time** - It's recommended you NOT include lunch, unless it's a special event, say at the pilgrimage site. Instead, find an area where multiple restaurants are located, such as a downtown or suburban mall and provide time for lunch and mingling. This keeps the cost of the trip down and gives people options.
- **Go local for more culture** - Whenever possible, dinners should be organized at group-friendly local establishments

versus national chain restaurants. This adds to the uniqueness and charm of your trip and should provide more memorable dining experience.

- **Menu selection** - While restaurants try to drive you into pre-selected menus, balk at this. You don't want to force-feed chicken down someone's throat if they have a taste for beef – this will certainly become a bone of contention. Perhaps do a limited menu of three house specialties, or if pre-selection is required, do it after lunch that day so people can hone in on entrees they have a taste for.
- **Verify the total cost** - Make sure meal prices are inclusive of food, beverage (typically non-alcoholic), tax and gratuity and that you're building this into your trip cost.
- **Meet the locals** - Another possibility is to set up a pot luck dinner and meet & greet with a church in the area you're visiting. Members may appreciate the opportunity to meet parishioners from another congregation and share stories. If local members are preparing the dishes, a donation can be made to the church.
- **Catering** - Alternatively, all or part of the meal can be catered often for less than the cost of a sit-down restaurant meal, but you'll need to find a suitable location at which to host the meal.

# INCLUDING SIGHTSEEING AND TOURS

While the main attraction of the trip is the pilgrimage site, it's good to work in other sightseeing activities and tours to fill out your trip. Some things to consider:

- What's popular, unique and trending in the area you're visiting?
- Are there other spiritual sites members would enjoy?
- Perhaps a tour of local churches or iconic museums, unique tours or activities that fit the personality of your group?

The local visitor's bureau should be of help in pointing you in the right direction. Ask for the group sales manager and provide them as much information as possible about your group to get the best ideas.

While most activities will take place while you're "in destination," don't ignore sights and activities along the way. A short selfie-stop at the world's largest ball of twine, or off beat museum will invigorate your travelers and get them talking on social media, spreading the positive virtues of your pilgrimage and building future demand.



# A QUICK NOTE ON SCHEDULING

Any place you're visiting will give you a recommended duration of stay. Anytime you're traveling with a group it's going to take you longer to get in and out.

In some situations this is made up for by shorter travel time between stops. The bus drops you off at the front door, while the cars park way in the back.

Understand this going in so you can pad your itinerary so as to not overcommit to the number of activities you can partake in and nobody's stressed out because you're constantly behind schedule.



# PRICING THE PILGRIMAGE

Having all components together allows you to price your trip. Here's a sample calculation of how this might break out.

- Bus - \$3,000/30 passengers = \$100 per person
- Hotels - \$80 per night x 2 nights / two per room = \$80 per person
- Meals – Two dinners @ \$25 per person inclusive = \$50 per person
- Sightseeing – museum admission \$10, guided tour - \$5 = \$15 per person
- Miscellaneous costs (snacks, water, tips, gifts, donations) - \$3 per person, per day - \$ 9 per person

Your Sample Cost = \$254, per person, based on double occupancy. To arrive at a single occupancy rate, double the hotel portion. In this case, your single occupancy rate is \$334.

If you decide to run this trip for a profit for the church, add a percentage of profit you wish, or flat dollar amount in coming up with your final trip price. There's no set formula that applies, and you'll get a feel for this the more you do it.

## A Couple Notes on Pricing Trips

- 1) The bus cost is a fixed amount. We used 30 passengers as the break even, so if you sell more than 30 seats your per-person cost noses dives. If you get less than 30, you will fall short of meeting your revenue projections, so be aware of this to avoid distress.
- 2) Spreadsheets are the easiest way to track expenses and price out your trips.
- 3) If you, the group leader or pastor will be accompanying the trip on a complimentary basis, you will have to build this in as a cost.
- 4) Hotels will often provide free, or comp rooms provided you meet the projected number of rooms. It's also customary for attractions to provide a free reservation for the group leader/ tour escort.

# HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR PILGRIMAGE - BAKER'S DOZEN IDEAS

Having done all the preliminary planning of your trip, promotion is where the rubber meets the road, so-to-speak. It's critical to the success of your trip that you get the word out to as many people as possible. You never know where your next tour member is coming from, or how they prefer to consume media.

A colorful, two-sided flyer with a sign-up form will suffice as a promotional document. Solicit the help of whomever does the church bulletin or look to free design resources like Canva. Don't be short on the adjectives and hype up what you are going to see and do, plus why it's important for your church.

Be sure to have a PDF electronic copy so you can put it on your website and email to patrons if they are interested in learning more. If you plan to hold promotional events around your trip, your pilgrimage site may be able to supply materials about their location, or the local visitor bureau may have brochures and promotional materials from their city.

**Here are 13 different tactics you can employ to help ensure a full motorcoach of happy parishioners.**

- 1) Your parish picnic, homecoming and other special celebrations
- 2) A press release delivered to local news media - papers, magazines and online media sources
- 3) First Communion, confirmation or graduation
- 4) Election days
- 5) Large community celebrations, parades and events
- 6) Special holidays when parishioners will be with their families
- 7) Through the weekly bulletin and a table hosted by the group leader after mass
- 8) In pastor sermons (it would also help greatly if he accompanies the trip as the spiritual leader)
- 9) During small group meetings with a pre-delivered script
- 10) On the church website and e-newsletter
- 11) On the church's social media page
- 12) Neighboring parishes that may be interested in joining you
- 13) Clubs and organizations such as Knights of Columbus, Knights of St. John, Daughters of Isabella, women's clubs, Junior Service Club, Catholic Knights and Ladies, Catholic Daughters of America.

# BUILDING MOMENTUM

This guide should give you a solid foundation upon which to launch your first domestic pilgrimage. Once that first trip is under your belt, positive word will spread throughout your community which will spur additional trips in the future, domestic and international. If you're experiencing success with your first trip, don't be afraid to put another one on the calendar. The best time to book that second one is when people are charged up by their first experience.

Follow these steps and you'll be well on your way towards adding a pilgrimage element to your local church. You'll be helping your congregation grow, build new friendships while you're building fellowship and spread the positive virtues of Christ through the outstanding shrines, monuments and churches that have been erected to honor him.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Travel ministries are a powerful tool in communicating the word of our Lord. We are with you every step of the way to provide guidance and planning inspiration. Feel free to utilize these resources.

[ReligiousTravelPlanningGuide.com](http://ReligiousTravelPlanningGuide.com) includes the latest in destination information and organizational advice on all aspects of faith-based travel.



The print edition of Religious Travel Planning Guide - our annual print edition is full of helpful information for planning your next pilgrimage. Request a copy here: <http://religioustravelplanningguide.com/order-print-copy-religious-travel-planning-guide/>

Every month we collect inspiring content and deliver it to 30,000 faith-based organizations like yours with the InSite on Religious Travel e-newsletter. Subscribe for free by visiting our website.

# 20 PILGRIMAGES SITES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES WORTH VISITING

WHILE THIS LIST IS BY NO MEANS INCLUSIVE, HERE ARE 20 POPULAR PILGRIMAGE SITES SPREAD ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.

## **Ava Maria Grotto and St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, Alabama**

Known throughout the world as “Jerusalem in Miniature,” Ava Maria Grotto is a beautifully landscaped, four-acre park designed to provide a natural setting for the 125 miniature reproductions of some of the most famous historic buildings and shrines in the world. The masterpieces of stone and concrete are the lifetime work of Brother Joseph Zoettl, a Benedictine monk of St. Bernard Abbey. Brother Joseph re-created some of the greatest edifices of all time.

Located less than an hour from Birmingham and Huntsville, Alabama, two hours from Nashville and three from Atlanta.

[www.avemariagrotto.com](http://www.avemariagrotto.com)



## **Our Lady of the Sierras, Hereford, Arizona**

Located near the Mexico border roughly an hour's drive south of Tucson, the shrine consists of a 75-foot-tall cross, a statue depicting Our Lady, chapel, stations of the cross and Mary's Knoll at the foot of the hill. No matter your faith or beliefs this is a peaceful spot to reflect, to gain your perspective and take in the amazing views of the Huachuca Valley and Mexico.

[www.ourladyofthesierras.org](http://www.ourladyofthesierras.org)



## California Missions Trail - San Diego to Sonoma, California

There are 21 missions making up the California Historic Missions Trail, stretching from San Diego to Sonoma. The first mission was built back in 1769 and the last mission was built in 1823. Most are still active Catholic parishes and have regularly scheduled services your group can attend.

The missions include San Diego de Alcalá, San Luis Rey de Francia, San Juan Capistrano, San Gabriel Arcángel, San Buenaventura, San Fernando Rey de España, Santa Barbara, Santa Inés, La Purísima Concepción, San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, San Miguel Arcángel, San Antonio de Padua, Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo, San Juan Bautista, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara de Asís, San José, San Francisco de Asís Mission Dolores, San Rafael Arcángel and San Francisco Solano.

[www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=22722](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22722)



## Mother Cabrini Shrine, Golden, Colorado

Located less than an hour west of Denver, Mother Cabrini Shrine is a shrine in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Francis Xavier Cabrini. Originally a summer camp for the girls from the Queen of Heaven Orphanage, the property became a place of prayer, pilgrimage and devotion after the canonization of St. Cabrini in 1946. The shrine offers retreat facilities that accommodate up to 28 guests in the Stone House and a private chapel. Daily Mass is offered, and the facility is open every day for visitors and pilgrims to come and pray and explore.

[www.mothercabrinishrine.org](http://www.mothercabrinishrine.org)



## Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC

Designated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as a National Sanctuary of Prayer and Pilgrimage, the basilica is the nation's pre-eminent Marian shrine, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The basilica is the largest Roman Catholic church in the US and one of the 10 largest churches in the world. It is considered one of foremost centers of worship, pilgrimage, evangelization and reconciliation, welcoming more than 1 million visitors per year.

With over 70 chapels and oratories that relate to the Blessed Mother and people from countries around the world, visitors can virtually make a pilgrimage to many of the great Marian shrines of the world and receive their same graces and indulgences by visiting this facility.

[www.nationalshrine.com](http://www.nationalshrine.com)



## Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche, St. Augustine, Florida

In the early 1600s, the Spanish settlers of St. Augustine established the first Shrine to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the United States. As you walk through the historic grounds at the mission, you will be re-tracing the steps of America's first founding fathers more than 400 years ago.

The present chapel was reconstructed in 1915 and enshrines a replica of the original statue of Nuestra Señora de la Leche y Buen Parto – Our Lady of the Milk and Happy Delivery. Throughout its existence, the Shrine has remained a comforting place of prayer for mothers-to-be, for families, for special intentions and for those seeking to strengthen their faith.

[www.missionandshrine.org](http://www.missionandshrine.org)



## Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, Georgia

The Monastery of the Holy Spirit is a community of more than 40 monks spanning several generations who live, work and pray together. The monastery has facilities to accommodate any group need you may desire. Classrooms for a lecture, meeting space for a business meeting or rooms for overnight stays are all available and can be used alone or in combination depending on your needs.

Monks are available to speak with your group to talk about their life and the Monastery.

The expansive visitor center features interactive displays including videos about the monastic tradition while the new 17,000-square foot Heritage Center incorporates both new and renovated historic Monastery structures and integrates elements of learning and hands-on activities to create a unique welcoming environment.

[www.trappist.net](http://www.trappist.net)

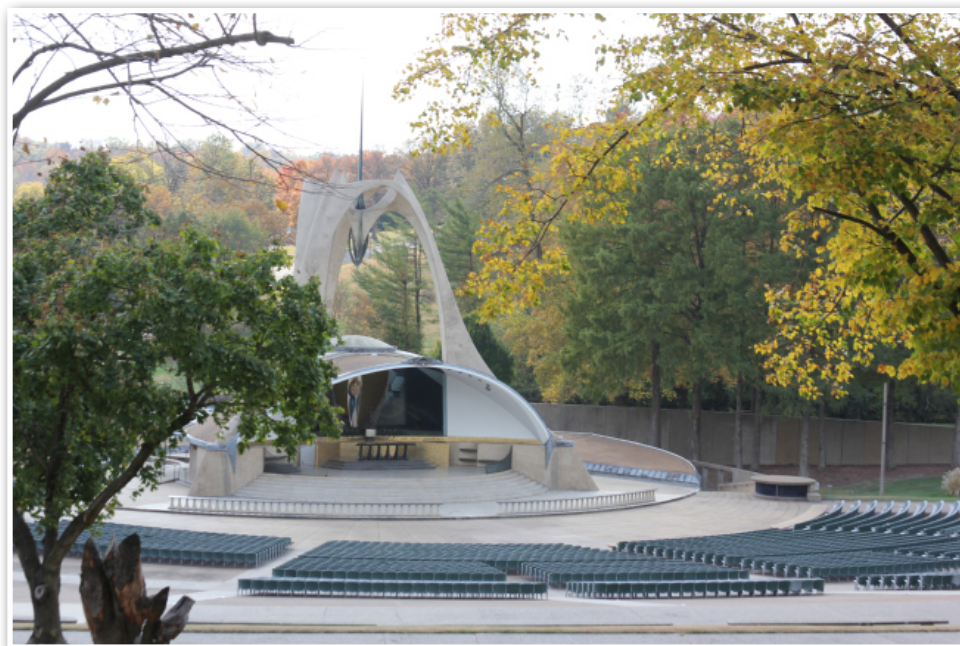


## National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois

One of the most popular shrines in North America with over one million visitors each year, the shrine is run by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. With over 200 acres of land it is also one of the largest. The expansive church, completed in 1990 features Icon of Mary, The Living Waters Font and a brilliant alter back-dropped by a 15'x20' Aurora Borealis window.

Onsite hotel accommodations envelop groups in the experience.

[www.snows.org](http://www.snows.org)



### Shrine of Christ's Passion, St. John, Indiana

The Shrine of Christ's Passion is a multi-media, interactive religious attraction in Northwest Indiana, just outside of Chicago. The main attraction is half-mile winding prayer trail that depicts the last days of Jesus Christ's life. Forty life-size bronze sculptures in a tranquil setting, complete with beautiful music and sculptured gardens, allow visitors to experience the story of the crucifixion and resurrection as never before.

The newly opened Moses at Mount Sinai puts you directly in scene with Moses himself. The path leads you on a journey with his 10 Commandments and has music, voice over, lighting, and sound effects. It took over 160 semis full of boulders, clay and dirt, and 3 years of constant work to complete.

An impressive gift shop features hundreds of faith-inspired items, perfect for souvenirs, or gifts for love one's back home.

[www.shrineofchristspassion.org](http://www.shrineofchristspassion.org)



### Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Baltimore, Maryland

America's first cathedral. The church is a national shrine, Marian shrine and national historic landmark. Over 100,000 people visit the Basilica each year, making it one of Baltimore's top tourist activities.

Guided tours are offered Monday through Saturday. The hour-long tour includes all areas of the church including Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Crypt, Museum and the Pope John Paul II Prayer Garden.

[www.americasfirstcathedral.org](http://www.americasfirstcathedral.org)



### **Madonna Queen of the Universe Shrine, Boston, Massachusetts**

Overlooking Logan Airport in Boston is a 32-foot statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Located at the national headquarters of the Order of Don Orione it is a replica of one of the Don Orione Center in Rome.

[www.catholicshrines.net/states/ma3.htm](http://www.catholicshrines.net/states/ma3.htm)



### **National Shrine of the Cross in the Woods, Indian River, Michigan**

This Northern Michigan facility is an expansive wooded complex features six shrines and monuments including the Shrine of St. Francis, Our Lady of the Highways Shrine, the Holy 28 Stairs and The Man on the Cross. Built originally for Catholic summer visitors, the shrine has developed a year-round following.

The Shrine is the home for the largest collection of dolls dressed in traditional habits of men and women religious communities in the United States.

[www.crossinthewoods.com](http://www.crossinthewoods.com)



## National Shrine of St. Odilia, Onamia, Minnesota

In 1952, a major relic of St. Odilia was brought to the Crosier community in Onamia, located 90 miles north of the Twin Cities. A shrine in her honor was set up in the priory chapel, where the reliquary is currently housed.

St. Odilia has promised her intercession on behalf of the Crosiers and all those who invoke her aid. For centuries it has been the practice of the Crosiers to bless water in honor of St. Odilia, dipping her relic in it and asking God to give it “power against all diseases and bodily infirmities.” Many have been cured through her intercession.

There are three “stations” in the national shrine. The religious icon of St. Odilia and two of her relics help pilgrims “look through” the icon designed as a window into heaven and pause for prayer in the presence of the relics. The stained glass windows tell the story of St. Odilia’s life: her martyrdom, her appearance to Brother John Novelan and the Crosiers and how the story of this saint and the history of the Crosiers became entwined. The altar reliquary is a replica of the original one in Belgium that honors St. Odilia’s memory and remains.

[www.crosier.org/index.php/en/st-odilia/shrine](http://www.crosier.org/index.php/en/st-odilia/shrine)



## Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri

The Cathedral Basilica is known for having the largest mosaic collection in the Western Hemisphere which took nearly 80 years to complete. The mosaics cover 83,000 square feet, comprising 41 million glass pieces and more than 7000 colors. They depict various scenes and passages from the Old and New Testament of the Bible, archdiocesan events and the narthex, the life of King Louis IX of France. There is a chapel dedicated to the souls of former leaders of the archdiocese, and several cardinals are buried in the crypt of the cathedral. Guided tours are available weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

[www.cathedralstl.org](http://www.cathedralstl.org)



## Shrine of Our Lady of the Island, Long Island, New York

Sitting on 70 acres the shrine is designed to give pilgrims ample opportunity to reflect and pray. The Shrine of Our Lady of the Island was established by the Missionaries of the Company of Mary in order to be a center of authentic Marian spirituality and devotion, and to renew Catholic life through liturgy, preaching & pilgrimages.

On its expansive grounds you'll find an 18-foot statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and baby Jesus, an outdoor Stations of the Cross, a Rosary walk, a Pope John Paul II memorial, a Blessed Sacrament Chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Island, and numerous statues and areas for prayer.

[www.ourladyoftheisland.com](http://www.ourladyoftheisland.com)



## The Sorrowful Mother Shrine, Bellevue, Ohio

Founded in 1850, it is the oldest Marian shrine in the Midwest and east of the Mississippi River. A missionary priest of the Most Precious Blood, Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner built a small red brick chapel to the Sorrowful Mother because of his great devotion to Mary.

There are over 30 grottos amongst the 120 acres that are open to visitors. Paved walkways winding among tall trees lead to Stations of the Cross and replicas of Lourdes and the Sepulchre Grotto and are favorite places of prayer and meditation. One can see various wildlife such as turkeys, deer and birds.

[www.sorrowfulmothershrine.org](http://www.sorrowfulmothershrine.org)



## National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, Doylestown, Pennsylvania

An hour outside of Philadelphia, the shrine sits on 170 acres on Beacon Hill overlooking Peace Valley in Doylestown. The National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa welcomes pilgrims of all nationalities and faiths to visit and take part in the religious and cultural activities held at the Shrine throughout the year.

In the lower church below the main church is a replica of Our Lady's Chapel at Jana Gora Monastery in Czestochowa, Poland where the original icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa resides. There are four side chapels dedicated to St. Paul the First Hermit, Our Lady of Nazareth, Divine Mercy and Our Lady of Guadalupe. There is also an outdoor Stations of the Cross and an outdoor Rosary Garden.

Retreats are offered year-round at the Ave Maria Retreat House.

[www.czestochowa.us](http://www.czestochowa.us)



## House of Mary Shrine, Yankton, South Dakota

Located on the picturesque shore of Lewis & Clark Lake, six miles west of Yankton, SD. Its panoramic provides spectacular views of area wildlife. You can walk the Way of the Cross that winds up Calvary Hill, which features three 50-foot wooden crosses at the 13th station. Other peaceful places for prayer and reflection include a beautiful rosary pond, a rosary way, Mary's Entrance, Little House of Mary and a meditation area with several small shrines honoring various saints.

[www.thehouseofmaryshrine.org](http://www.thehouseofmaryshrine.org)



### Shrine of the True Cross, Dickinson, Texas

Located between Houston and Galveston, Texas, this 1936 relic of the True Cross was obtained for the shrine from the Basilica Church of Santa Croce in Jerusalem (Holy Cross in Jerusalem) in Rome, where a large piece of the Holy Cross resides. The relic of the Holy Cross is available in the church year-round for veneration with mass daily.

[www.truecrosschurch.org](http://www.truecrosschurch.org)



### Our Lady of San Juan del Valle National Shrine, San Juan, Texas

The Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle has drawn people from all over the world. Attracting over one million visitors each year it's become one of Texas' most popular attractions. The shrine abounds with diversity and recognizes and honors all faiths, paths and beliefs. Pilgrims, visitors and tourists are welcome to experience a spiritual journey in the Basilica grounds, with free tours available daily. Onsite hotel accommodations with 92 comfortable rooms provide convenient access to any pilgrimage group.

[www.olsjbasilica.org](http://www.olsjbasilica.org)

