

## MEDIA KIT

### **FROM ZION SHALL COME FORTH THE WORD - GREEN PILGRIMAGE NETWORK AND JERUSALEM**

The Green Pilgrimage Network (GPN) is one of Jerusalem's most recent green initiatives. The Green Pilgrimage Network harnesses the influence of pilgrim cities and faith leaders to effect positive change in the environmental issues that threaten our planet.

Based on the idea of bringing environmental awareness into the religious pilgrimage experience, the Green Pilgrimage Network links Jerusalem's ancient identity as a holy city for Christians, Jews and Muslims with its most recent aspiration - to become identified as a green metropolis. Initiated by Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Naomi Tsur and coordinated by ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation), the GPN was officially launched in Assisi, Italy at a November 2011 meeting of representatives from pilgrim cities in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. This event was a follow-up to an interfaith commitment for environmental action made by representatives of nine major world religions at Windsor Castle in 2009.

Greening pilgrimage routes entails promoting more sustainable tourism practices, identifying and developing eco-tourism attractions and providing an opportunity for pilgrims to "leave a more positive footprint" at the places they visit. This initiative aims to redirect existing tourism to include a focus on environmental awareness and protection, and to generate investment in sustainable urban infrastructure. Pilgrim cities and sites are using the **Green Pilgrimage Network Handbook** [Handbook](http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Green_Pilgrimage_Network_Handbook.pdf) to create an action plan on what the vision of Green Pilgrimage entails: [http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Green\\_Pilgrimage\\_Network\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Green_Pilgrimage_Network_Handbook.pdf)

### **Jerusalem – a Green Pilgrim City**

Jerusalem as a Green Pilgrim City hopes to create a platform for those of different faiths to draw from experience within both their religious traditions and their local communities to work towards shared environmental goals.

*“A green pilgrim city treasures its spiritual and historical heritage but uses the tools of the future to create sustainable infrastructure and green hospitality, engaging as stakeholders all the local faith communities and the residents themselves”.* Naomi Tsur, Deputy Mayor, City of Jerusalem

Jerusalem, unique in its status as a spiritual destination for all three monotheistic religions, assumes both great responsibility and humility for setting green pilgrimage standards. The city is working on developing eco-tourism, conserving and greening historical and religious sites,

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encouraging green practices in the hotel/conference industries, expanding accessibility and addressing accessibility issues, engaging visitors and residents in environmental actions.

Examples to date:

**Old City Conservation:** The Old City of Jerusalem, recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, comprises more than 600 ancient archaeological sites such as the Western Wall, the Temple Mount, the City of David, remnants of Herodian palaces and authentic Roman streets. In addition it contains a thriving market place, colorful shops and art galleries, attracting 2 million tourists a year including massive religious pilgrimages. Encompassing some 420 acres, the Old City is also home to over 35,000 residents including Moslems, Christian Arabs, Jews and Armenians, in neighborhoods that wind through a complex infrastructure of quaint cobblestone streets and narrow alleyways.

The City of Jerusalem, together with the Israel Antiquities Authorities, has commissioned a plan that would act as a guide for the conservation of many of the holy sites, culturally significant buildings and monuments in the Old City, while enabling sustainable continuation of the existing civil, religious, cultural, and institutional patterns. In addition to conservation, goals of the project include socio-economic development, improving the quality of life in view of population density, and upgrading infrastructure while investing in maintenance and comprehensive management.

The plan undertakes rehabilitation of housing and public open spaces, improving accessibility and making appropriate parking facilities available, as well as instituting traffic control with the aim of eventually excluding all but essential traffic from the Old City. Ongoing conservation works will be minimal in keeping with guidelines adopted by relevant international bodies. The plan aims to both improve economic conditions for residents and also provide additional opportunities for sustainable cultural tourism.

Falling under this category are examples such as the plan to restore the **Turkish drinking water fountains around the Old City**. Tap water in Jerusalem is clean and modern water fountains are available for residents and travelers throughout the Old City, however, the City hopes to restore to use the beautiful old Turkish drinking water fountains which will add extra accessible water points in the city and will hopefully cut down the use of more plastic water bottles as the amount of tourists increase.

**The Garden Tomb** has just recently finished restoring its 900,000 liter ancient water cistern. Not only does this look after one of the aspects of antiquity in the Garden Tomb but it also will

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help the Garden Tomb with water for irrigation creating it a more sustainable site. The project was done with the oversight of the Israel Antiquities Authority.(see separate backgrounder)

**The swift nests at the Western Wall** were first studied in 2002 by German avian researcher Ulrich Tigges and the late zoologist Heinrich Mendelssohn, one of the founders of Tel Aviv University. The map that they created of 88 nesting sites served as a guideline during subsequent work to conserve and strengthen the masonry of the 2,000- year-old retaining wall, enabling the bird homes to remain undisturbed. The swift birds migrate from Africa to their spring home at the Western Wall. Tel Aviv University ornithologist, Professor Yossi Leshem says that “ever since humans have started building cities, the common swift has found our buildings perfect for nesting sites, including ancient holy sites such as churches, synagogues, mosques and temples, and has become dependent on us”. According to Leshem, the Western Wall is one of the migrating birds’ oldest nesting colonies in the world. Amnon Hahn, Director of the Swift Association in Israel refers to the swift “as a pilgrim, flying from one sacred site to the other”. On April 24 at 18:30, the ceremony welcoming the swifts on their annual pilgrimage to the Western Wall will take place.

With the Green Pilgrim Jerusalem Symposium as a starting point, David Miron-Wapner has been appointed to lead and initiate the greening of practices for the **hospitality and conference industries in Jerusalem**. According to Miron-Wapner: “Greening is an ongoing process, a shift in the mindset of planners and system operators in consent with natural systems. In nature - nothing goes to waste. However, humans waste - and we have to relearn how to become part of creating and live inside the environmental limits”.

“To meet the greatest challenge facing human civilization today, Climate Change, demands a new way of doing business – Embedded Sustainability. Using its unique process, Photograph from the Future (PFF™) that allows organizations to design a strategy “from” the future and then fulfill it, the Yoyah Group will lead senior hotel and restaurant management in envisioning and then implementing their own sustainable operations to achieve eco-efficiency in energy, water, waste management and procurement, at the same time maximizing economic, social and environmental benefits.”

Source: Green Jerusalem – A Sustainable Future, by Helene Roumani, Jerusalem LAB