

Lourdes is one of the most famous centres of christian pilgrimage
essay sample



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Pilgrimage, meaning a journey to a holy place, is a trip many people of many faiths take often. It can be compulsory or through your own choice but it is always to do with faith and traditions. Many religious people don't go on pilgrimage and this doesn't mean they are not close to God, it may be for expense problems or they don't feel it will help them. Pilgrimage is often to a place where events have happened, relevant to what pilgrims believe, in the past and can alter someone's thoughts, beliefs or physical/mental being.

Many centuries ago a pilgrimage used to be a long and dangerous journey that was a challenge to a person's faith and only the fittest survived.

Nowadays it is a less demanding challenge which still tests a person's faith but aims to improve it. While very few pilgrims travel by foot nowadays, most travel by air, train or some other modern public transport. There are many questions as to why people go on pilgrimages and the main reason is to regain or improve a person's faith.

The pilgrim is devoting a small section of his or her life to helping those less fortunate than themselves. It may be a way to increase the strength of the pilgrims bond with God or re-build their faith. As they visit these places of pristine emotional splendour they can picture their faith clearer and feel the sense of being part of being a friendship worldwide. There are many places of pilgrimage for example Mecca for the Islamic believers (Muslims) and Lourdes for the Christians.

These are important for different reasons. In this case I am going to focus on the main Christian place Lourdes and why so many people are attracted there. There are many important places for Christians; Walsingham,

Jerusalem, Bethlehem each of which are important for their own reasons but Lourdes has the fastest growing population of visitors. In this small town at the foot of the Pyrenees many people gather overseeing their faith and showing their belief for God in the way they think right.

Lourdes is a popular place of worship because in 1858 the 'Immaculate Conception' or the Virgin Mary appeared to a young girl. This girl, called Bernadette Soubirous had not one but 15 images of our Lady appear to her. It is said that 'The Lady' Bernadette saw told her to dig nearby and if she did so she would find a small river, as Bernadette was a polite young girl she did as instructed and, as the Lady she saw had said, she found a small river.

Not until 1862 were Bernadette's visions declared authentic by the Pope and at this time it was said underground springs were found that had healing qualities to them. Since this day Lourdes has increased the number of pilgrims it accepts and almost six million people visit the grotto to pray every year. Many miracles have claimed to have happened in Lourdes and before the miracle is accepted as genuine it goes through a careful investigation.

When in Lourdes many people go through a very important process, each individual person has their own, where they plan to see places of importance to them. Many people visit the place where Bernadette saw her visions, the grotto. Here they see a statue of the Virgin Mary in the spot she appeared to Bernadette. Many Pilgrims pray at the grotto using their rosaries and light a candle. Many Pilgrims also go to a place of bathing, which is fed by the stream, where you can either bathe in the water or take a small sip.

This 'Holy Water' is said to bring healing to all those who bathe in it, whether it be emotional or physical healing. There are also Stations of the Cross you may visit in Lourdes village where you can make your own pilgrimage through Jesus' life recognising how he died and saved our civilisation. On a daily basis people would go to a mass to hear the word of their God and see many of the attraction of Lourdes. Each one would be an emotional experience bringing a person's faith to light. These are the things that attract most people to Lourdes.