



Pilgrimage and the Anthropocene

Through a phenomenological and internationally comparative approach, this project will research the history and archaeology of religious experience through the lens of pilgrimage. By investigating the routes and their termini, as well as walking the routes themselves, we will explore three key themes of pilgrimage:

- **Landscape:** building on our theme of 'Landscapes of Conversion' including transformations of landscape, land ownership, archaeology, architecture, ecology and ecological mythology.
- **Infrastructure:** transport, lodgings, food and drink, industry and commerce.
- **Social, physical and spiritual benefits of pilgrimage:** women and pilgrimage, social care, physical, wellbeing, and the commonalities of human experience.

For questions and more information, please email
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Nara to Norwich pilgrimages



The project will focus on two comparative pilgrimage routes: Norwich to Little Walsingham (UK) and Hase Temple to Ise Grand Shrine (Japan), at either end of Eurasia.

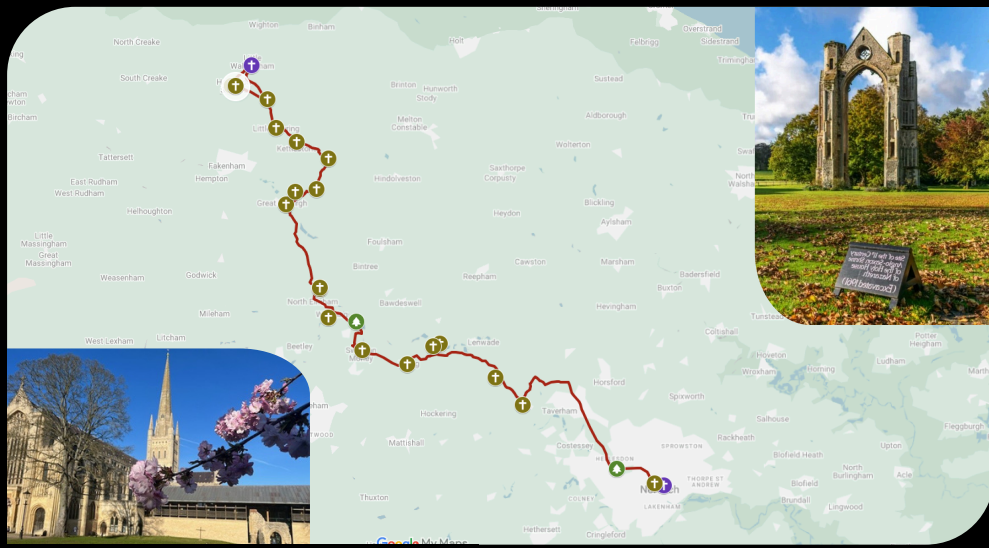
A core project team will carry out an initial survey of the routes along with detailed research of these sites of pilgrimage, and will include workshops with an international team of researchers. A larger public pilgrimage will then be undertaken at each location, inviting scholars and the public to attend and provide feedback.

Layered maps of the routes will be created from the research, showing the histories of the respective landscapes, including their ecology, paths, buildings and other structures and archaeological remains. Data capture along the route including photography, soundscapes, and 360 video will also record the experience of pilgrimage within the landscape today. The research about the routes and their termini (Norwich, Walsingham, Hase Temple and Ise Grand Shrine) will also be published. Public events will be held in:

- **Norwich to Walsingham** – June 2026
- **Hase Temple to Ise Grand Shrine** – Autumn 2027



Scan to visit our Pilgrimage project page

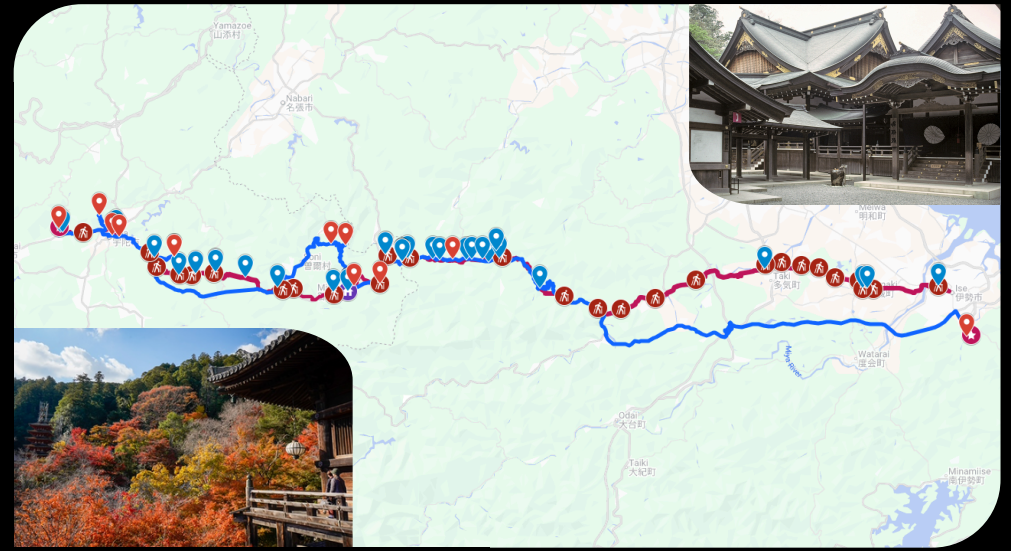


The Walsingham Way

Walsingham became a significant pilgrimage destination around the end of the 12th century with pilgrims travelling to visit the shrine of the Virgin Mary. In 1061 the Lady Richeldis de Faverches had a series of visions of the Virgin Mary telling her to build a version of the Holy House of Nazareth in Walsingham and dedicate it to the annunciation. It is one of the earliest known visions of Mary in England, and the associated Holy House that was built was later incorporated into Walsingham Priory. The shrine attracted pilgrims from all over Europe during the medieval period and was the second most visited in England after the shrine to Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. Pilgrimage was not only a religious, spiritual experience but also provided a way for non-elite members of medieval society to legitimately travel.



Scan to visit the map of our initial UK survey



Hase Temple to Ise Grand Shrine

This is the route between Hasedera, a Buddhist temple in southeast Nara prefecture, and the Shrine of Ise, the most venerated Shinto shrine in Japan. Hasedera has long been regarded as the principal place for religious practice and purification by the early imperial court. Its importance increased along with the growth of the ritual significance of the Ise shrine, as it lay on the route to Ise. The association of Hasedera and Ise can be found in the *Nihon shoki*, where in 673 an imperial princess was sent from Asuka to perform ablutions in Hase before moving on to serve at the Ise shrines. Pilgrimage itself is associated with both Buddhism and Shinto in Japan. Its history can be traced back to Ennin's trip to Wutaishan in northern China in the 9th century but may well actually date from an earlier period. The popularity and infrastructure for pilgrimage in Japan dates from the end of the 16th century with the provision of *ekiroji* (temple lodgings for pilgrims) and other support for pilgrims.