



## Lourdes

Lourdes is the most visited pilgrimage shrine in the Christian world. It is not an ancient site but of more recent development and is the place where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a young girl called Bernadette in 1858. Over that year there were a total of seventeen apparitions .

The site was originally a regional pilgrimage destination but since 1873, when healings at the spring began to take place, Lourdes became a national and international pilgrimage destination.

Four to six million pilgrims from around the world visit the shrine each year and it is estimated that more than 200 million pilgrims have come to Lourdes since 1860.

Pilgrims generally travel to Lourdes from April to October but 15th August, Assumption of Mary, is the main feast day in Lourdes and a very special day at the shrine.

The heart of the sanctuary is the Grotto of the Massabielle. Pilgrims from all over the world come to Lourdes to pray at the spot where Mary appeared to the young Bernadette Soubirous.

Many who travel to Lourdes drink or bathe in the water from the miraculous spring where there have been many instances of healing. There are three basilicas in Lourdes: Basilica of Immaculate Conception, also known as Upper Basilica dating back to 1871; the Underground Basilica of Pius X, built in 1958 to celebrate the first centenary of the apparitions; and the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary.

In addition, pilgrims can also visit the Crypt and Saint Bernadette's Church.

A beautiful candle light procession takes place every night at 9pm finishing at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Bernadette de Soubirous became Saint Bernadette in December 1933.