Sacred place — sacred space
from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for Human Geography

Activity
Explore the location and distribution of religiously sacred sites around the world.

APHG Benchmarks
APHG: III.B. Compare and contrast the geographic patterns of ethnic and universalizing religions and their geographic patterns.
APHG: III.C. Explain how language, religion, ethnicity, & gender are essential to understanding landscapes symbolic of cultural identity.

Learning Outcomes
• Students will be able to compare and contrast the locations of sacred sites related to Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.
• Students will be able to identify and explain where Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism originated.

Map URL: http://esriurl.com/humanGeolnquiry7

Ask

What are sacred sites?
? What makes a site or place sacred? [It is worthy of respect and dedication, and believed to be holy.]
? What impact do sacred sites have on their religion’s followers? [People care for and protect them, and they also make pilgrimages to worship and celebrate.]
→ Click the URL above to launch the map.

Acquire

Where are the sacred sites for the world’s major religions located?
→ With the Details button underlined, click the button, Show Contents of Map (Content).
→ Check the box to the left of the layer name, Sacred Sites.
? In which regions of the world are these sacred sites located? Where are they not located? [They are located in the Middle East and Asia but not located in the Americas, Europe, or Africa.]
→ Zoom in and click a few of these sites. Read the pop-up information.
? What makes these sites sacred? [They were the location of important events to the founder’s life or had important natural features like rivers, mountains, and so on.]

Explore

Where are the hearths of these religions?
→ Click the button, Basemap. Select National Geographic.
→ Filter the Sacred Sites layer. Set to show: Religion is Buddhism. (See Tooltips on page 2.)
? Where is Buddhism’s hearth located? [India and Nepal.]
→ Repeat the filter process for Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism.
? Where is Christianity’s hearth? [Israel, Eastern Mediterranean]
? Where is Hinduism’s hearth? [India]
? Where is Islam’s hearth? [Eastern Mediterranean and the Arabian Peninsula]
? Where is Sikhism’s hearth? [Eastern Pakistan and India.]
→ Remove the filter to make all sites visible.
**Analyze**

How close are some of the sacred sites to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity located?

- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select Jerusalem.
- Where is this city located? [Israel, near the convergence of Asia and Africa]
- Choose the Old City of Jerusalem bookmark, and change the Basemap to OpenStreetMap.
- Turn on the layer, Old City of Jerusalem.
- Using the Measure tool, calculate the area of the Old City. (See the Tooltip below for info.)
- What is the area of the Old City? [It is 0.40-0.50 square miles.]
- Choose the Temple Mount bookmark.
- Turn on the Jerusalem’s Sacred Sites layer and make sure the legend is visible.
- To which faith are the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock sacred? [Islam.]
- To which faith is the Western Wall sacred? [Judaism.]
- To which faith is Church of the Holy Sepulchre sacred? [Christianity.]

**Act**

How do these sites impact politics and society?

- Change the basemap to National Geographic.
- Select the bookmark, Sacred Sites.
- How do these sacred areas and sites take on political significance? [Borders cross over some of the areas; governments sometimes favor one religion over another.]
- How do these places become part of a community’s identity? [They are symbols of pride, tourist destinations, part of the laws, and so on.]

**MEASURE**

- Click the Measure tool.
- Select Area or Distance and choose unit of measurement.
- Click once to start measuring, click once to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.
- *Tip – if the measure tool is blocking your view, click on map and drag it.

**FILTER**

- In the Contents pane, click the map layer name.
- Click Filter icon.
- Set the filter parameters (e.g. Religion is Buddhism).
- Choose Apply and Zoom To.

**Next Steps**

**DID YOU KNOW?** ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at http://www.esri.com/schools.

**THEN TRY THIS...**
- Have students research and add point data related to other important religious locations, and then use the Hot Spot Analysis tool to look for expected and unexpected patterns.

**REFERENCES**

- Human Geography by McGraw Hill – Chapter 8
- The Cultural Landscape by Pearson – Chapter 6
- Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture by Wiley Press – Chapter 7