Sacred place — sacred space

**Audience** – High school human geography  
**Time required** – 15 minutes

**Activity**
Students will explore the location and distribution of religious world heritage sites around the world.

**APHG Benchmarks**
- **Unit 3, B**: Compare and contrast ethnic and universalizing religions and their geographic patterns.
- **Unit 3, C**: Language, religion, ethnicity, and gender are essential to understanding landscapes symbolic of cultural identity (signs, architecture, sacred sites)

**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/humanGeouroInquiry7

### 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.*

### Acquire

**Where are the sacred sites for the world’s major religions located?**
- Turn on the Sacred Sites layer.
  - 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.*
- Click a few of these sites to 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?**
- Filter the Sacred Sites layer so that Religion is Buddhism. (Choose Apply and Zoom To.)
  - Where is Buddhism’s hearth located? *India and Nepal.*
- Repeat the filter process for Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism.
  - Where is Christianity’s hearth? *The Holy Land and Israel.*
  - Where is Hinduism’s hearth? *India.*
  - Where is Islam’s hearth? *The Holy Land, the Arabian Peninsula, and Saudi Arabia.*
  - Where is Sikhism’s hearth? *Eastern Pakistan and India.*
- Clear the filter to make all sites visible.
Analyze

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

- Choose the Jerusalem bookmark, and show the Map Overview (top-right corner of map).
- Where is this city located? [*The Holy Land in Israel, at the convergence of Europe, Asia, and Africa.*]
- Choose the Old City of Jerusalem bookmark, and change the Basemap to OpenStreetMap.
- Using the Measure tool, calculate the area of the Old City.
- What is the area of the Old City? [*It is 0.40-0.50 square miles.*]
- Choose the Temple Mount bookmark, and make sure that the legend is visible.
- To which faith is 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 and choose the Sacred Sites bookmark.
- 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 Distance, and then choose the unit of measurement.
- Click once to start measuring, click once to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.

**FILTER**

- In the Contents pane, near the map layer name, click Filter.
- Set the filter parameters.

Next Steps

**DID YOU KNOW?** ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to U.S. public, private, and home schools as a part of the White House ConnectED Initiative. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at [http://connected.esri.com](http://connected.esri.com).

**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.

**TEXT 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