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The opening of the 13th edition of the International Workshops on Religious Tourism was marked by calls for solidarity and resilience within the sector in the wake of the storms, as well as by the announcement of the launch of a pilgrim certificate.

The Shrine of Fatima will issue a Fatima pilgrim certificate to mark National Pilgrim Day, celebrated on 13 October. The announcement was made by the Rector of the Shrine of Fatima, Father Carlos Cabecinhas, on 19 February, at the opening of the 13th edition of the International Workshops on Religious Tourism, held at the Paul VI Pastoral Centre.

“Fatima is Portugal’s most important religious tourist destination,” said Father Carlos Cabecinhas, adding that the issuing of an official Fatima pilgrim certificate meeting certain pilgrimage criteria was “a request that has been made repeatedly to the Shrine.”

The institution’s services are already working on the development of this document,

which is scheduled to be presented and launched on 12 October, at the start of the year's final major pilgrimage to the Shrine of Fatima.

The rector also emphasised that "this initiative aims to promote the practice of pilgrimage, to highlight the Fatima routes, which have received special attention from the National Centre for Culture and numerous local authorities involved, and to promote Fatima as a destination of these routes."

Father Carlos Cabecinhas recalled that "2025 was, in Fatima, a year of growth in the number of pilgrims and visitors," whilst stressing that these promising figures must not make us forget the storms that left a trail of destruction in their wake. Also in his opening address, the priest proposed that "each organisation, within its specific sphere of action, should strive to minimise this impact," so that "religious tourism may be the driving force behind the recovery of this disaster-stricken region."

The number of pilgrims who visited the Shrine of Fatima in 2025 and took part in at least one celebration stood at 6,478,323, representing an increase of 241,913 faithful compared with the previous year.

Since 2023, the year of World Youth Day in Lisbon, which saw Pope Francis visit Fatima, the annual number of pilgrims has exceeded six million.

Data for 2025 indicates that not only has attendance at the Shrine of Fatima remained above this threshold, but it has also exceeded the 6.3 million recorded in 2019, a benchmark year as it predated the Covid-19 pandemic and by which time the impact of the centenary of the apparitions, celebrated in 2017, had already faded.

The overall number of worshippers is calculated based on attendance at, at least, one service, as many people visit Cova da Iria without participating in the Shrine's festive activities.

The "unique experience" of Fatima

This year's edition of the International Workshops on Religious Tourism also featured a presentation by the director of the Fatima Shrine Museum, Marco Daniel Duarte, entitled "Places of Faith — Memory, Spirituality and the Pilgrim's Experience in Fatima."

The speaker began by recalling the early history of Fatima, noting the gradual establishment of the site of the holm oaks as a "place of faith" and its rapid internationalisation. He shared a letter from a Portuguese soldier on the battlefields of France, who wrote to António, the father of one of the three children, in September 1917, and talk about Fatima. He showed how, in 1917, the number of pilgrims rose from three children in May to around 70,000 people in October, drawing on photographs and historical archives from the period which bear witness to a crowd present at Cova da Iria on 13 October; a day he described as "one of the founding days of this immense influx of people who have been coming to Fatima since that date."

Marco Daniel Duarte described the internationalisation of Fatima as a process that originates from the place itself, but simultaneously from a message that becomes a pilgrim in its own right across the world. He mentioned the importance of the journeys

of the Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima, which, since 1947, have taken the statues of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima to every continent and into diverse cultural contexts, carrying with her a message of peace.

Regarding the Fatima experience, he stated that, although it is a collective experience, replicated and amplified in other parts of the world, it remains a “unique experience, one that is not experienced anywhere else.” He described it as a “multifaceted” experience, lived in a unique way by each pilgrim.

As for the idea of pilgrimage, which he also explored, Marco Daniel Duarte highlighted it as a metaphor for life itself. “The very specific path of the pilgrim” has been recorded or described, over time, through various art forms, from literature to painting and photography. Finally, he described the arrival in Fatima as a “celebration of brotherhood”.



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www.fatima.pt/en/news/the-shrine-of-fatima-will-launch-a-pilgrim-certificate-in-october