







Holy Mother Shrine



Christian Shrine



Jewish Shrine



Buddhist Shrine



Native Shrine



Swami Vivekananda

**1. Holy Mother Shrine:** Sri Sarada Devi (1853-1920), also known as Holy Mother was born in Jayrambati, Bengal, India. Sri Ramakrishna, Her spiritual consort and Guru invoked Divine Mother in Her person and worshipped Her. She is worshipped by many throughout the world as the embodied Divine Mother, personified compassion and love. She instructed Her devotees to perform their duties as service and to meditate on the Chosen deity. This shrine was built and dedicated to Her in 1974. Two trails, Karma and Dhyana representing Her teachings were dedicated near Her shrine.

**2. Christian Shrine:** This site was chosen by Swami Devatmananda (minister-in-charge, VSoP from 1932-54) for Easter sunrise service. This place also symbolizes Christ’s walk up to Calvary. Christianity teaches its adherents to have faith in God and to reach Him through the loving prayers to the Son of God, Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit. Christian and Vedantic traditions both acknowledge the path of devotion for spiritual realization. Sri Ramakrishna was looking lovingly at this particular image of Madonna and child when He entered spiritual union with Christ. The Shrine was dedicated in 1975. St. Francis of Assisi meditation site was dedicated in 2014.

**3. Jewish Shrine:** The three-dimensional Star of David was built as the primary structure then a carved, wooden box was centrally placed representing the Ark of the Covenant. According to Zohar, the symbol **Star** (God, the protector shield) of **David** represents the six male *sefirot* (attributes of God) in union with the seventh *sefirah* of the female (the center of the shape). The inscription around the box is from the Torah and the sacred name “Yahweh” is carved on top. According to Judaism God is believed to be transcendental who revealed Himself to Abraham, Moses etc. The shrine was dedicated in 1975 along with the meditation site on the Biblical Trail which has a quote from the Hasidic master Reb Nachman.

**4. Buddhist Shrine:** The ‘Four Noble Truths’, the ‘Eightfold Path’ and a compassionate approach to life of Buddhism have inspired innumerable people to lead spiritual lives. The concepts of Karma, reincarnation, practices such as meditation, and many teachings are common in Vedanta and Buddhism. This shrine was built and dedicated in 1975 to honor the Buddhist tradition. The meditation site with a quote from Buddha down the trail was dedicated in 2015.

**5. Native People’s Shrine:** According to the Native People, the Eagle is considered the most universal form of Great Spirit in North America. Its outstretched wings in a crouching position express protection for its children. The eagle is positioned overlooking the valley where some of the first Native People came to this part of North America. This unique shrine was dedicated on August 6, 1977 by Brave Buffalo and Swami Areshananda, two holy men from two different continents. It was rededicated in 2011 by Brave Buffalo’s nephew, John Brave Hawk. The Native People’s culture emphasizes harmony with nature, endurance of suffering, respect and non-interference toward others.

**6. Vivekananda Shrine:** Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) brought the teachings of Vedanta and the *Yogas* from India to the West in 1893. He participated in the Parliament of Religions as part of the famous Columbian Exposition in Chicago representing Hinduism. He taught the unity of existence, Divinity of Man and how this Divinity can be manifested in the day to day life of all human beings. The architectural lines and ratios represent the Orissa style, a common medieval Hindu temple style. The front pyramidal assembly hall symbolizes *Shakti* (relative reality) and the back sanctum sanctorum represents *Shiva* (Absolute Reality), thus, we enter the Absolute through the relative as the Swami taught to realize the Divine in mundane activities. The shrine and Jnana trail were dedicated in 1976.



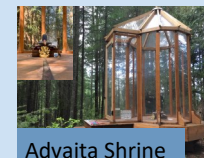
Sufi Shrine



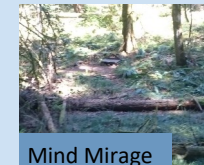
Ramakrishna Shrine



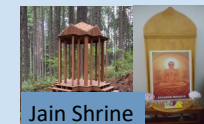
Sikh Shrine



Advaita Shrine



Mind Mirage



Jain Shrine



Torii Gate

**7. Sufi Shrine:** The five wooden columns holding up a stylized dome represent the five pillars of Islam- declaration of faith, prayers 5 times per day, alms giving, Ramadan fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca. The viewer of the plaque/shrine is facing east toward Mecca. The horizontal and vertical inscription on the hanging plaque is an Islamic prayer, “None exists but God”. Islam (submission) teaches that God is merciful, all-powerful, unique and “The Lord is All.” This shrine was built in 1976 and dedicated in 1977 in a joint ceremony with members of the Portland Vedanta and Sufi communities.

**8. Ramakrishna Shrine:** This shrine was built and dedicated in 1974 honoring the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886). Sri Ramakrishna performed much of His spiritual practices in the *Panchavati*, surrounded by five sacred trees, at Dakshineswar Temple garden in Kolkata, India on the river Ganga. The structure of this shrine has five sides and five poles surrounded by five trees. Sri Ramakrishna worshiped and realized the Divine as Mother both in the personal and impersonal aspects. Following various religious paths and attaining the highest realization with each path He declared, “As many faiths, so many paths”, and taught the harmony of religions to all. The Bhakti Trail behind the shrine symbolizes Sri Ramakrishna’s emphasis on the path of devotion.

**9. Sikh Shrine:** Sikhism grew from the teachings of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) who was born in India. His picture is placed in the shrine. The symbol on his hand and above his image is a version of the OM symbol. The core teachings of Guru Nanak are: meditation with devotion to the Creator, truthful moral living and service to humanity. His teachings appeal to Hindus, Muslims and people of many backgrounds. The shrine was dedicated in an interfaith celebration in 2016.

**10. Advaita Shrine:** *Advaita* (Literally ‘without a second’, aka nondualism) is one of the ancient Indian philosophies which teaches the highest state of Consciousness is the only Reality and all others are seeming and without any existence of their own. In this shrine a Shiva Lingam (symbol of the Absolute Auspiciousness) seated in the middle of a 12 sided outer structure representing 12 *Jyotirlingas* (effulgent symbols of the Absolute). Being the highest point at the Retreat, symbolically this shrine represents all. Advaita harmonizes the whole creation, all aspects of life and religions, because it is the experience of the Essence or the Background Consciousness of all. The shrine was dedicated in 2017.

**11. Mind Mirage Seat:** In the dreaming state the dream-world is projected and experienced in the mind. Similarly, according to Jnana Yoga, the world as experienced during the waking state is in fact, conceived in one's mind and though it may seem that there is a real world out there, no such world exists. In the dreamless sleep-state the mind is merged in *ajnana* (Ignorance) with all its pastimes and absence of objects is experienced. All these three states experienced on the Eternal Witness, the Substratum by the help of the mind. Giving us all these experiences the mind vanishes totally like a mirage at the dawn of Real Knowledge. The Mind-Mirage seat is dedicated to encourage the discovery of the changeless Eternal Substratum behind the changing mind. The water in this seasonal vernal pool comes and goes like the mind but the pool remains symbolic of the Eternal Substratum.

**12. Jain Shrine:** *Bhagavan* Mahavir Swami or Vardhamana was born in the early part of 6th century BCE, slightly preceded Bhagavan Buddha. He was the twenty-fourth *Tirthankara* and revived Jainism as an ethical, spiritual and philosophical religion. He attained the state of Omniscience and taught his followers to practice: truth, non-violence, non-stealing, continence, and non-attachment. By living these virtues with proper *darshana* (observation) and intense effort one is able to attain wisdom and character. The principles of many-sided reality, conditioned predication, and interpretation thesis are the unique contribution of Jainism.

**13. Shintoism:** A Torii gate was built and dedicated in 2021. It represents the traditional Japanese spiritual culture. The gate symbolically marks the transition from secular to sacred, finite to Infinity and from the limited to the Unlimited. In Shintoism, auspiciousness *Kami* is invoked by the priests with traditional rituals.