



Buddhist monks pass halfway mark on 2,300-mile Walk for Peace through US

Despite injuries, walkers and pet dog continue trek to promote ‘peace, loving kindness and compassion’ in the US

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A group of [Buddhist](#) monks has passed the halfway mark on a 2,300-mile Walk for Peace, as they seek to raise awareness of “peace, loving kindness and compassion” in the US and the world.

The 18 monks, two of whom are following a Buddhist practice of never lying down during the three-month journey, were in [North Carolina](#) on Saturday, their 83rd day on the road. Led by the Venerable Bhikkhu Paññākāra, who is conducting the walk barefoot, they have already overcome a serious injury to one member of the group as they head towards [Washington DC](#).

The monks set off on 26 October from a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Fort Worth, [Texas](#), before passing through Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The monks stop at the capitol of each state they pass through, frequently drawing crowds of thousands of people, while [their social media](#) has attracted more than a million followers. When they arrive in Washington DC they will ask Congress to recognize [Vesak](#), the Buddha’s day of birth and enlightenment, as a federal holiday.

“We are planning to go to Washington DC, because Washington DC is the heart of the nation. By reaching to the heart of the nation, we believe that we can reach to the heart of all Americans across the United States, and by being able to deliver the peace message from there, we think that we can reach to all these American people across the United States,” said Neeraj Bajracharya, government liaison and press coordinator for the walk.

Bajracharya said Buddhist monks had undertaken peace walks for 2,000 years. Paññākāra undertook a 112-day walk across India in 2022, also barefoot, but has found the American roads to be more challenging. Each day, his feet are heavily bandaged to treat injuries from stepping on rocks, nails and glass.

Paññākāra is not the only one suffering. Two of the monks are adhering to dhutanga – a set of practices taught in [Buddhism](#) – during the march, which means they are only allowed to adopt three “postures” during the walk, specifically walking, standing or sitting, never lying down, even to sleep.

“They sit down in a meditation position, and they meditate all night. And that’s how they replenish their energy,” Bajracharya said.

The monks have already had to overcome adversity. Three weeks after setting off, a truck hit the group's escort vehicle, propelling it into two of the monks, one of whom lost his leg. That reduced the number of walkers to 18, Bajracharya said, although he stressed that the amputee was "doing fine".

That isn't the only time a member of the group has been stricken.

Aloka, a dog who was rescued by Paññākāra in India in 2022, set out with the monks in October, but aggravated a pre-existing leg injury. Aloka, whose name means "divine light" in Sanskrit, underwent surgery in South Carolina on Monday, and rejoined the monks in Charlotte, [North Carolina](#), on Thursday.

Bajracharya said Aloka will be eased back into the action, walking for 10 minutes or so six times a day as he continues his recovery. A video shared on the monk's Instagram showed Aloka being reunited with the monks, tail wagging as he greeted his walking companions.

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"Even on his journey of recovery, his bond with the venerable monks remains so strong. This brief visit has brought so many smiles and a wonderful sense of peace to the whole team," a caption under the video read. In a sign of the monks' growing popularity, the post was liked by more than 200,000 people.

"It's amazing how, how the response has been. We are getting calls from all over the world," Bajracharya said.

"The core, foundational stone of this initiative is peace, unity, compassion and healing. And we want to reach out to each and every individual in America."

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