

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

October 19, 2006

For more information: Pilgrim's Tales, Inc.

760-494-7537

pilgrimstales@yahoo.com

Brandon Wilson, Hawaii Author, Plants Seeds for Peace on 2,700-Mile Trek to Jerusalem

Hawaii author/photographer Brandon Wilson knows what it means to take "roads less traveled." He recently returned from a five-month, two-continent, 2700-mile (4350-km.) pilgrimage trek for peace from Dijon, France to Jerusalem. His historic route along the old Roman road was similar to one walked a millennium ago by pilgrims, merchants and soldiers in their quest to reach the Holy Land. Leaving France along its canals, he then traced the Danube Valley through Germany, Austria and Slovakia to Budapest, Hungary then headed south through Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey and the Middle East.

Faced with bombings in Lebanon and Israel, tensions in Syria, and an outbreak of Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever in Turkey's Anatolia, he modified his route from its original plan. After crossing the Bosphorus into Asia, he headed south 750 km. through the high desert to coastal Antalya and then east to Alanya, Turkey where he crossed to Cyprus. Because of a recent fortunate change in policy, he was allowed to walk across the infamous Green Line to the coast of southern Cyprus and then continue his crossing to Haifa, Israel. From there, he trekked the new Israeli National Trail for the last 200 km. arriving at Jerusalem's Jaffa Gate on September 29, 2006.

Wilson is certainly no novice to these types of journeys. He has walked three of the most important trails in early European history: the Camino de Santiago 500-miles across northern Spain (twice), the St. Olav's Way 450-miles across Norway, and he was the first American to walk the 1150-mile Via Francigena from Canterbury, England to Rome. However, the latest was the most difficult this master trekker had attempted.

There were the physical challenges. He crossed a variety of challenging terrains, from Germany's snowy Black Forest with its near-freezing temperatures to Turkey's high desert in August at nearly 100 degrees (F). Still, this modern pilgrim walked 30-55 kilometers daily, traveling "ultra-light" with no more than fifteen-pounds on his back during his five-month odyssey.

Then there were the mental challenges. Walking the equivalent of a marathon each day and a distance greater than crossing the continental US, there are times when one's mind just says "Enough," but Wilson continued, at times walking as far as 58 km. a day over the shadeless steppes of Turkey. At night, true to the "pilgrim" tradition, he slept in monasteries, churches, modest hostels or pensiones—or depended on the kindness of strangers.

All along his journey Wilson encountered what he calls "angels," people who assisted his quest by providing food, water, a night's lodging or friendship—all without asking. Their random acts of kindness kept him going and rekindled his belief in the basic goodness of people and their sincere desire for an end to war.

Asked why he set-off this grueling trek, Wilson replied, "It was a trek for peace. Yes, I'm only one person, but I still believe that one person can make a difference. In today's world it is far too easy for nations to declare war, invade another country, or lob missiles at faceless targets below. As citizens, unfortunately, we are presented with a sanitized view of war, the fireworks of "shock and awe," and see nothing of the aftermath and huge civilian casualties. We have reached a tipping point where the world can no longer continue on this path of recklessness. We must realize that the destruction of a nation's infrastructure only creates more poverty, despair and a people left with nothing to lose. In the name of fighting "terrorism," western nations continue to create a new generation of "terrorists" through our actions."

Wilson's message found wide acceptance along the trail. At every opportunity he spoke to ordinary people throughout ten countries, Christians, Muslims and Jews, who without exception agreed with his call for peace.

He also attracted the attention of major newspapers and television stations throughout Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Israel, spreading his message to millions.

“If anything,” Wilson explained, “I hope I was successful in planting seeds of peace along a trail once used for sending soldiers to Jerusalem during the Crusades.” He added, “I would like to see this same route developed for other walkers and pilgrims like the Camino de Santiago in Spain. I envision a path that is open to people of all cultures, faiths and nationalities—an international trail of peace. Once people walk a path together and share food and drink around a table at night, they will realize how much alike we are. Time and time again people from each nation told me that they are all seeking the same things: safety, health and a better life for their children. Well, this simple act of walking together helps dispel fear and hatred. They will find solitude when they disconnect from an ever-more chaotic world and return home more at peace and enlightened. Then it’s only natural that they will share this serenity and inspiration with their families, friends and co-workers. This is the way we will attain peace. War will become unconscionable—one person at a time. Darkness will be dispelled with light.”

These journeys for Wilson began with his 650-mile walk across Tibet on an ancient Buddhist pilgrimage route with his wife Cheryl and their horse Sadhu in 1992. As the first Western couple to walk this path from Lhasa, Tibet to Kathmandu, they felt the pain from brutal temperatures, 17,000-foot altitudes, illnesses, slow-starvation, sandstorms, blizzards and Chinese bullets. Staying with local Tibetan families, they also re-learned the meaning of faith and to never accept “Impossible” as an excuse. Their inspiring trek is intimately detailed in Wilson’s 2005 IPPY award-winning book, “**Yak Butter Blues: A Tibetan Trek of Faith.**”

He recently followed it up with another travel adventure book. “**Dead Men Don’t Leave Tips: Adventures X Africa**” details the joys and pains of crossing Africa on a seven-month odyssey.

Mayra Calvani of *Midwest Book Review* recently said, “What’s striking about Wilson’s books is that his journeys are not only physical but highly spiritual as well. His are journeys of body and soul in every sense of the word.”

Wilson will write another book about his experiences along this trail to Jerusalem and perhaps convince others that their own particular peace may be achieved one-step-at-a-time—no matter where they wander. It is due for release in 2007.

He is a member of the prestigious Explorers Club and Artists Without Frontiers. Montrail, a division of Columbia, provided his footwear for this journey; LEKI USA donated his trekking poles.

For a look at Wilson’s books, photos and articles, please visit: <http://www.PilgrimsTales.com>.

#