

THE SECRET OF THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

The Temples of Humankind in Italy

Esperide Ananas

The Temples of Humankind are dedicated to universal spirituality, to the union between human beings and Divine Forces.

Italy is renowned for its history and beauty, and everybody knows the beautiful buildings of Rome, Venice or Florence. Probably not too many, though, know that in northern Italy there is an extraordinary contemporary sacred site, a complex of Temples built by hand inside a mountain. A structure as impressive as the pyramids, with the difference that its builders are still alive! It is called the Temples of Humankind, and it has been created by the citizens of the Federation of Damanhur, one of the largest intentional communities in the world.

Established in Valchiusella, a beautiful valley 45 kilometers north of Turin, Damanhur was born of a dream, the vision of a society based on optimism and the idea that human beings can be the masters of their own destiny. Damanhur numbers 40 small communities, each one built around approximately twenty people. Approximately 400 other supporters live nearby and participate regularly in its activities. Together they are creating a new social model based upon solidarity, volunteering, a respect for the environment and the sharing of ethical and spiritual values. Damanhur has centers in Italy, Europe and Japan and maintains contact with spiritual groups worldwide in order to spread a culture of peace and respect for human, cultural and natural diversity.

The Federation has internal schools for boys and girls up to 13 years of age, a daily paper, a publishing house, a Constitution, its own complementary currency system and a University open to researchers from all over the world. Thanks to its innovative social system and its sustainable model Damanhur has been awarded a UN recognition in 2005, and its citizens are now actively endorsing the Earth Charter, a universal declaration of principles for a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. Damanhurians consider the earth as a sentient being to respect and protect, notable amount of resources are invested in research and the use of renewable energy sources with a low environmental impact. The Federation has a 70% sustainability in hot water with solar panels, 35% sustainability in electricity with photovoltaic panels and small turbines and 90% sustainability in bio-mass heating, fuelled with wood from the care of Damanhur's own forest.

WaterHall

The Temples of Humankind are at the heart of the community, and have been built completely by hand: the demonstration that shared ideals and dreams can lead to the realization of incredible works, so extraordinary that most would think are "impossible".

The Temples extend for thousands of square metres on different levels, connected by miles of corridors and are located exactly at the point in which a rare mineral comes to the surface, carrying with it the physical energies of the Earth. It is mylonite, an ancient rock, over 300 million years old. This is one of the most important energy centres of our planet as four Synchronic Lines meet, the energy rivers that link the Earth to the cosmos, transporting thought, dreams and ideas. The founders of Damanhur took off from Turin and travelled for several years all around the world to find the place that would be energetically the most suitable for the development of the community and their vision, and, thanks to a pinch of divine humor, they found it very close to their starting point!

The Temples of Humankind are dedicated to universal spirituality, to the union between human beings and Divine Forces. The Hall of Water, of the Earth, of the Spheres, of Mirrors, of Metals, the Blue Temple, the Labyrinth, symbolically represent the inner rooms of every human being, a profound journey of discovery to the inner self. They are decorated with mosaic, paintings, sculptures, glass domes and they are all full of light, even though they are all completely underground. They remind us of something very ancient, and at the same time some of the symbols and the architecture itself seem to come from our future. They help us connect with the stellar origins of humankind, while exalting the uniqueness of our experience of this beautiful planet. The Temples have been built to represent a three dimensional book that tells the story of humankind through all forms of art and are a great laboratory where science, art and spirituality are united in the search for new paths for humanity.

The story of the Temples

The Temples are truly a unique kind of building, even more so for the adventurous story of their construction: Damanhurians dug, painted, decorated day and night for 16 years – from 1987 to 1992 – but nobody, including the Italian government, was aware of the existence of the underground complex! When the Damanhurians started building the Temples, there were no laws regulating underground building of that kind, and no authorities to ask permission to. So the citizens of Damanhur started digging in secret, thinking that they'd find a solution to make the Temples legal once they were finished and ready to be shown to the world as their gift to humanity. After all, they were excavating in their own land!

But their secret was discovered sooner than they predicted. In 1992, a former member started to blackmail the community for money in exchange for his silence on the underground building. Damanhurians decided not to give in to his threat. Disgruntled, he went to the local Judge with a map of the secret temples. The Judge and dozens of police and Carabinieri arrived at the hillside house early one morning in July 1992, but the map was 10 years old, and they could not find anything. The Judge then threatened to use explosives and the Damanhurians decided to open the secret door leading inside the mountain. Damanhurians feared for the worse, knowing that this raid would change their life forever,



Sala dei metalli

but they hoped that the beauty and the spirituality of the Temples would touch the Judge's heart. Indeed, the miracle happened: the Judge was so moved that decided to help them find a solution to legalize their work of art. Four years of legal battles followed, as in order not to displease the Catholic Church, who wanted the temples to be destroyed, no authorities dared to make a decision in favor of the Damanhurians. Finally, in 1996, the Italian government itself passed a special amendment that gave the complex legal status and the Damanhurians full control of it.

Today the Temples are visited by thousands of people from all over the world who meditate in their Halls as a way to connect to the divine, both inside and outside of themselves. The Temples, indeed, have been built to be a living laboratory for the awakening of humankind, and to reconnect every human being to the divine principle we all contain.

The future of the Temples

The Temples of Humankind represent the concrete collective realization of the highest ideals of the citizens of Damanhur and for this reason work is always in progress. They aren't a monument of the past, but a constantly evolving dream. The present complex is only 10% of the development envisaged inside the mountain. A new project sees the reclamation of a vast natural area, ruined in the past by stone quarries, in the woodland adjacent to the already built Temples of Humankind. Inside the rock the "Temple of Peoples" will be built, to represent and celebrate the preciousness of human diversity. It will be a modern cathedral to honor the importance of safeguarding all peoples, with their culture, their language, their traditions and their expressions of contacting the Divine.

It will host a theatre seating over a thousand, and dedicated to all aspects of human creative expression. Part of the rock walls will be left untouched to create a very special acoustic and energetic effect. There will be a library of sacred and spiritual texts, innovative spaces for art and research, underwater hot pools and spaces for health and well-being.

A small underground electric train will link the present Temples to the new area and a cable car will carry visitors to the complex from the village below. All the new spaces will be enclosed within a very large dome, constructed thanks to new and innovative technology and will be rich in works of art, so that artists from all over the world can

participate in the realization of this amazing dream.

It will be a magic place which will have a positive influence on those who visit because like the Temples of Humankind, the extension will be sited at a special point on the planet: the meeting place of the Synchronic Lines, the roads that carry spiritual energy throughout the universe. The ultimate aim is that the Temple of Peoples will become a meeting point for all the arts, for science and politics, a place in which the powerful of the planet can meet together as human beings in a spirit of understanding rather than opposition. It will be a place to inspire new hope; a place to reinforce faith in the profound ethical nature of human beings and from which to construct the path towards a planet of peace and harmony.

Visiting Damanhur

Visiting the Federation not only gives the opportunity to experience the magic of its Temples, but also to witness the model for a new, sustainable society, a social laboratory for the future. The artists who have created the Temples have studios at Damanhur Crea, a centre for the arts, research and well being that is open to visitors every day of the year.

Damanhur offers events and seminars all year round and can be visited for short or long periods of study, vacation or regeneration. At the Solstices and Equinoxes, just as many peoples of the planet have done for thousands of years, Damanhurians celebrate moments of communion with Nature and Divine Forces. They also commemorate the Dead in November and celebrate the Rite of the Oracle every month at the time of the full moon. All these celebrations are open to guests.

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