Sacred Buddhist Mountains in China

The four sacred Buddhist mountains of China are believed to be the homes of Bodhisattvas (enlightened beings who have delayed their Nirvana to remain on earth and help others find enlightenment). The mountains are Wu Tai Shan to the north, Emei Shan to the west, the eastern mountain Pu Tuo Shan and Jiu Hua Shan to the south.

These places where earth and heaven are believed to touch, over the centuries became places of pilgrimage for Chinese Buddhists from all over the country. Great monasteries built on their mountainsides became centres of art and philosophy. Many of these monasteries were dissolved during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. Yet now, as China's mainstream religions are reviving, the ones that remain are among the most important places for propagating conservation programmes that fit with local people's fundamental beliefs.

All four mountains are in beautiful areas, homes for rare and endangered birds, animals and plant species. Yet because they are sacred, paradoxically they suffer from the ravages of tourism and pilgrimage as well as logging and development.

ARC and the China Buddhist Association, which represents some 200 million Buddhists, are working towards conservation on Wu Tai Shan to the north and Emei Shan to the west.

This project is run closely with another project to protect and restore the five sacred Daoist mountains of China.