

Pretty Spiritual

The Christmas exhibition at the Museum der Kulturen Basel presents a range of devices people use at home in search of spirituality or when meditating.

The Virgin Mary, immersed in prayer, welcomes visitors to the exhibition “Beautiful and spiritual – Things for faith and meditation”. When you look at her, you also see yourself reflected in the reverse glass painting.

This first exhibit opens up a whole new level of perception, taking viewers on a journey to the realm of the spiritual and sensuous with the aid of select items from the museum’s collection, some of them simple and practical, others more elaborate and beautifully designed.

The exhibition’s various stations reveal how people in our hectic and challenging world turn to meditation and the search for spirituality in the walls of their own home, with the help of things they can either gaze at, touch, apply or embrace otherwise with all their senses.

Devotional images, crucifixes, and patience bottles containing religious depictions on paper are a treat for the eyes. Meditation images with their strict geometric designs demand full concentration. In the case of deity figures, eye contact is essential. Buddha figures emit spiritual energy when gazed at or touched.

The corporeal is important even though often the aim of spiritual practice is to detach oneself from the body. In addition to touch, posture and movement are significant aspects. Prayer rugs, tefillin (prayer boxes and straps), and pilgrim’s staffs bear evidence of this. A special experience comes from ingesting certain substances, as shown in a picture painted by a shaman.

Home altars and prayer corners

Prayer wheels, prayer chains, and electronic mantra metres indicate that rhythmic repetitions help worshippers to concentrate. Light, smoke, and scent play a central role in many rituals, as they do in the exhibition. Incense burners, oil lamps, and candles help to create the right atmosphere.

Home altars and offerings – ranging from amulets to soap wrappers, and sugar pastry – are often displayed in special corners and niches. When on the road, the right app on your smartphone will provide a dose of spirituality.

An interactive tour of the exhibition allows visitors to try things out for themselves. For instance, they can learn about appropriate gestures of the hand and relax to spiritual music and special scents. In addition, a “Christmas trail” invites you to reflect on some of your own traditions – candlelight, decorations, nativity scenes, Christmas trees, family gatherings – and spirituality.

The exhibition is on from 21 November 2025 to 11 January 2026. For images, go to our [website](#).