

《纽约街头现假和尚乞讨》



New York City Buddhist leaders are sounding the alarm to tourists: Beware the "fake monks."

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Men in orange robes claiming to be Buddhist monks are approaching visitors to some of the city's most popular attractions, handing them shiny medallions and offering greetings of peace. They then hit them up for donations to help them build a temple in Thailand, and are persistent if their demands are refused.

[illegible]

"The problem seems to be increasing," said the Rev. TK Nakagaki, president of the Buddhist Council of New York, a group that represents nearly two dozen Buddhist temples. "They are very aggressive and hostile if you don't give them money."

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His group has taken to the streets and social media to warn people that the men appear to have no affiliation to any Buddhist temple. "Please be aware," read one Facebook post, "this is a scam."

But parks department spokeswoman Crystal Howard said parks enforcement officers hadn't issued any summonses and the men's actions were "aggressive panhandling," a violation of state law that would be enforced by police. New York City police say that in the rare cases when someone has called 911 against the men, they were usually gone by the time officers arrived.

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A few days after the AP inquired about the men on the High Line, several signs were posted there with photos of them, warning visitors not to give money to panhandlers.

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Similarly robed men have been spotted in San Francisco, asking tourists to sign their "peace petition" before demanding cash. In China, authorities said the problem of "fake" monks begging in the streets prompted them to create an online registry of all actual Buddhist and Taoist sites.

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In Times Square, the warnings came too late for tourist Rob Cardillo, of Pennsylvania. He gave a robed man \$10 to help out with his temple, without ever asking anything about the temple or what the money would be used for.

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"He might be fake, but it's the thought and I feel it," Cardillo said as he gripped the gold medallion.

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