



Buddhapath/Eleven Directions

PLACES TO VISIT

Shakyamuni Buddha discovered the truth of overcoming suffering and bringing happiness to the individual, family and society. Before he died, the Buddha suggested that it would be of great benefit to those who are interested in his teachings to make a pilgrimage to the places associated with his life.

The Buddha lived and traveled along the plains of the Ganges. We shall visit travel through the northern states of India, (Uttar Pradesh and Bihar), besides Delhi and Nepal. We shall walk on the same paths the Buddha did. Shantum has been researching some of these paths, as part of a program he has been doing for the Government of India and the World Bank

In **Delhi**, we will visit the place where Mahatma Gandhi, the father of India, lived and died. This is a wonderful place to begin the pilgrimage. Gandhiji reminds us of the Buddha in our time our living memory, and personified a unique way of peaceful living and politics, a practice of applied ethics. He was a man open to all cultures and religions but with a deep faith in his own.

From Delhi, we will fly to **Lucknow**, the modern-day capital of the state of Uttar Pradesh. We will board our coach to journey to **Sravasti**, where the Buddha spent 24 of his rain retreats. We shall visit the famous Jeta Grove where the Buddha offered many teachings, including the Anapanasati Sutra, on the Full Awareness of Breathing, and the old city where he converted the dreaded terrorist, Angulimala to the path of peacefulness. Next, we drive to **Lumbini** across the border in Nepal. Here we visit the Ashokan pillar and sacred garden where the Buddha was born. Enroute, we shall visit **Kapilavastu**, where Siddhartha the Prince spent the first 29 years of his life. We cross back into India to **Kushinagar**, where the Buddha passed away, and visit the stupas and temples to mark the spots of his last teachings, death and cremation. These places are very moving and allow us to experience what the Buddha did and internalize his teachings.

From Kushinagar we drive to **Varanasi**, where the monastics will join our pilgrimage, along with those who are doing the Part Pilgrimage. In Varanasi, the 'City of Light' we will visit the banks of the Ganges River where the Hindu faithful come to wash away their bad karma. We shall visit the Deer Park in **Sarnath** where the Buddha met his first five disciples and offered his teachings on the Four Noble Truths, the Eight-Fold Path and Non-Self, thereby 'turning the wheel of the Dharma', that continues to turn, 2,600 years later. This is where the exquisite statues of the Teaching Buddha and the Lion's Pillar were found and are on display in the museum.

Thereafter we shall move to **Bodh Gaya** where Siddhartha Gautama awakened to become the Buddha. We shall visit the Mahabodhi Temple, sit under the Bodhi Tree and visit the seven sites he visited after his enlightenment. We shall also walk across the countryside to the caves where the Buddha practiced austerities and to the village of Sujata, the young girl who offered him rice and milk when he was starving to death.

We shall journey on to **Rajgir**, the capital of the Magadha kingdom at the time of the Buddha. We will visit Jethian, where the Buddha met with King Bimbisara, walk to the Bamboo Grove, the first land donated to the sangha, climb to his favorite meditation place, Vulture Peak and walk to the



Mahabodhi Temple, Bodh Gaya



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Saptaparni Caves, where the first Buddhist council was held, via the Hot Springs that he bathed. We shall visit **Nalanda** the site of the famous university from the 5th to 12th centuries CE where a lot of Mahayana teachings were developed, including being the source of the Manifestation school lineage of the Order of Inter-being.

Thereafter we shall head back to Bodh Gaya, to close our pilgrimage at the 'navel of the earth'. We then fly back to Delhi.

At each pilgrimage site along the way, Shantum will tell stories of the Buddha's life and give teachings to help us understand the Buddha as a human being, the drama of his life and the significance of what he taught. We will schedule time for daily sitting and walking meditation, regular discussions, and contemplative time for ourselves. The creation of a traveling sangha will be an important aspect of this trip, giving the journey a greater cohesiveness and building a sense of support for those seeking to deepen their practice.

We shall also have the opportunity to travel in the footsteps of Thich Nhat Hanh (Thay). Shantum organised and accompanied Thay on his three pilgrimages in India in 1988, 1997 and 2008. Everywhere we travel, we will also be aware of what Thay taught and how he traveled as a pilgrim.

DAILY SCHEDULE & SPECIAL EXCURSIONS

Our retreat schedule will include daily sitting and walking meditation, often starting with a morning meditation at one of the Buddhist sites. This will be followed by breakfast at the hotel, after which we'll visit one of the Buddhist sites listed below in the itinerary. Shantum will offer a detailed talk on that site in the context of the Buddha's life and teachings, and what was happening in the area many centuries ago. Pilgrims will have some time at the site itself, after which we will have lunch. We'll rest after lunch, after which we may visit another site associated with the Buddha or go to a village, school, home and meet with interesting people etc. We return to the hotel by evening in time for dinner. The monastics will lead us in many of the practices, once they join us in Varanasi. On the days we travel, the itinerary will vary slightly, and there will be some flexibility depending on the size, needs, and interest of the group.

Apart from visiting the places where the Buddha lived, we shall visit monasteries, temples and shrines of different faiths, take a boat ride at sunrise along the Ganges at Varanasi and walk in the alleyways, have discussions with locals, visit the homes of the poor and the privileged and get a deep understanding of historical and contemporary India. We would discuss this within the context of the Buddha's teachings, so we can examine what we are witnessing and experiencing both from an external and internal perspective.



After a Teaching at Nalanda



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India's cities stand in contrast to her villages and have their own interesting, if seemingly chaotic lifestyle. Varanasi/Sarnath and Bodh Gaya are significant pilgrimage sites, having their own distinct character and personality. In these places we get a closer view of how modern and traditional India/Nepal co-exist. Lumbini, Kushinagar, Sravasti, Rajgir and Nalanda are smaller towns and relatively quiet, giving the pilgrims the opportunity to absorb the nuances of the local culture and society. We shall take many opportunities to take extended walks so as to be more grounded and touch the earth and life unfolding around us more deeply.

Join us on this journey through a fascinating and mysterious India – as we walk 'In the Footsteps of the Buddha'. The pilgrimage is an unforgettable opportunity to explore areas that few tourists visit and to see and experience aspects of Indian life that, in many ways, that have not changed since the time of the Buddha. We invite you to journey with other practitioners on a transformative journey that will allow you to touch an ancient culture and civilization, and experience the life of the Buddha through the places he lived and taught.

Building Love - Agra, the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort (February 18-19, 2023) USD 475

Agra was the capital of the great Mughals. Emperor Akbar, was the sponsor of the phenomenal Agra Fort. His grandson Shah Jahan built the beautiful monument to love, the Taj Mahal, as a mausoleum for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. Both these monuments are UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The Exquisite Caves- Ajanta & Ellora (beginning and ending in Delhi) -March 4-7, 2023 USD 1,495

Ajanta

Ajanta is situated near Aurangabad. Beginning in the 2nd century BCE and continuing for 900 years, thirty monumental caves were chipped out of a horseshoe shaped cliff by hammer and chisel. The early followers of the Buddha created an isolated haven, shrouded in the darkness of the caves where they could meditate in peace. The exquisite Buddhist paintings and sculptures created by using simple tools in the glow of lamps rank among the world's most important cultural treasures and the area has been declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Although the Jataka Tales form the main theme of the paintings, also depicted are scenes from contemporary courtly life all demonstrating a startling degree of sophistication. In the Ajanta paintings we see the brilliant union between sacred and secular art.

Ellora

Ellora Caves: Nearby is Maharashtra state's most phenomenal ancient monument, the Ellora caves which carried on the legacy of Ajanta from the 7th century CE and was subjected to Buddhist, Jain and Hindu influences. The sculptures at Ellora are massive in form and the entire spectrum of carvings pulsates with life and energy. The incredible Hindu temple of Kailash which is carved out of a hillside is the world's largest rock cut monolith. Ellora too, is a World Heritage site declared by UNESCO.



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The remains of the University of Nalanda.



The Dhamekh Stupa in Sarnath.



The Ashokan Pillar with a Lion capital in Vaishali.