



## Buddha-Tour

Let your imagination wander 2.500 years backwards. Siddhartha Gautama was born into a royal family and left them for a life in askese to get a satisfactory answer about life's sufferings. He got enlightened and started talking about something he thought to be the essence of life and suffering, a convincing way of life. This became known as Buddhism and is today a far spread religion having followers all over the world. A fascinating story to which you can come closer by travelling in Buddhas footsteps.

Travel to places which are in nowadays Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Nepal. At that time borders were different, power was different, lifestyle was different. King Bimbisara was the powerful king ruling his kingdom Magadha with the capital in today Rajgir and closely connected to Siddhartha Gautama. While visiting the old ruins and roaming around the area of Buddhas lifetime, you get a feeling towards ancient times. Even if you travel comfortably in a car (or sometimes train), you will better understand the distances and how much time it must have taken to go everything by walk.

And then imagine how this knowledge came to us. Hundreds of years Buddhas teachings were just forwarded orally before being written down. Many important buildings of the ancient times were destroyed and neglected and just rediscovered in the last decades. Even the ashes of Buddhas burned body, which were shared and given to different families, were discovered in Vaishali, when digging in the old ruins.

In many regards the life has changed. Populations have increased, life became modern, forests were turned into agriculture-fields – but there are still glimpses of the past in the villages, where people lead simple lives. Good to take a walk around. Discover what has changed and what might have remained.

Apart from the historical aspect the tour is a good chance to get a little deeper into **Buddhas teachings**. Guides already know a lot, but you can increase the benefit by taking a monk with you, reading buddhist books and keep a meditation practise for the tour.

At Siddharthas lifetime **Hinduism** was the practised religion in that area (with Jainism being also at the start). And so it is now – dotted with small muslim enclaves everywhere. As you are already here, it might be a good idea to look a little bit around and don't focus on the buddhist pilgrimage places.



## Travelling Notes

There are nearly as many different ways to do the Buddha-Tour as there are Individuals! Here you'll find short notes to all the places and aspects. Tell us about your preferences and we'll help you to

## Create your own Buddha-Tour!

### Starters

First you have to decide, from which international airport you want to start and depart. Ideal choices are

- ➔ Delhi
- ➔ Kolkata
- ➔ Kathmandu.

Maybe you'd like to combine your tour with some other travelling – let's talk about it, we know and arrange tours to every destination!

### Buddha-Starters

From the starter-places you can travel to the Buddha-starters by

- ➔ flight
- ➔ car
- ➔ train

There are small airports close to Lumbini, at Varanasi, Lucknow and Patna from where you can start. Or you go by train to Varanasi, Gaya, Patna or Lucknow. And by car you can start from anywhere – although it makes mostly only sense when coming from Kathmandu.





### Lumbini

This is the place where everything started with the birth of Siddhartha Gautama. This place is marked by a marker stone, now with a building constructed over it for protection. Outside is the pond, where Maya Devi should have bathed before delivering and a tree under which you usually find people meditating. The holy site is surrounded by a beautiful peaceful landscape with monasteries from different countries inside you can visit. Besides is a small Nepali village with accommodations for different budgets. It is a good place to stay a minimum of two nights to enjoy the landscape, too. And it is the only place in Nepal, so be aware that you need a visa for there (easy to get with a photograph and 25 USD)

**Accommodation:** many for different budgets



### Kapilvastu

Kapilvastu is the place of the palace where Siddhartha Gautama spent his first 29 years. But there is a dispute going on, where exactly this Kapilvastu is. There is a site close to Lumbini with ruins and a marker from King Ashoka. And there is a site in India with many ruins, which happen to have been a monastery and not a palace. The visit of Nepal's Kapilvastu is just sometimes possible due to political reasons, the one in India is definitely accessible and should be visited on the tour. But there are no accommodations, it is more or less just a stop on the way between Sravasti and Lumbini.

**Accommodations:** none



### Bodhgaya

Before arriving in Bodhgaya, Siddhartha was trying hard to find salvation by askese in different places. But nothing worked out – until he started to follow a middle path (neither askese nor luxury) and vowed to not leave the Bodhi-tree he was meditating under before he'd find enlightenment. As we know, enlightenment came and this Bodhi-tree, or better said some later species is to be found in Bodhgaya and therefore the most important place for Buddhists from everywhere, who gather in their many monasteries, meditate, do prostrations, read and discuss around the big temple.

**Accommodations:** many for different budgets



### Sarnath

After attaining enlightenment, Buddha had to share his new knowledge. He went to Sarnath and gave his first Dharma-talk about the Four Noble Truths. Also he started the first Sangha here, means that he thinks that monks should stay in a community/monastic order for better learning the Dharma. In Sarnath you can see that place marked by some statues and inscriptions as well as. Apart from old Stupas there is also an interesting museum and a Central Institute for Buddhist Studies.

**Accommodation:** usually one doesn't stay here but in close by Varanasi with a big choice of hotels





### **Rajgir + Nalanda**

Rajgir was an important place for the Buddha not only because the then-ruling king Bimbisara made it his capital and as they were close connected he used to visit him, but he also meditated there and found his most important disciples Shariputra and Moggallana with whom he could build more monastic communities. Today one can go by chairlift or walk on the „Hill of vultures“. Just 15 km away is Nalanda, where the biggest buddhist university was built in the 5<sup>th</sup> century with more than 10.000 students and 1.000 teachers. Today there are only ruins, but it is nice to imagine, how the vivid buddhist life must have been.

**Accommodation:** few hotels in Rajgir



### **Vaishali**

Vaishali is another place the Buddha visited quite often. He did some important Dharma-talks here and founded the first nunnery. When the ruins were researched, ashes were found which are very likely to belong to the Buddha. Now they are shown in a small park. The surrounding villages are so beautiful that we recommend a longer stay with village-walks.

**Accommodation:** only one hotel



### **Sravasti**

Buddha was supposed to have stayed here 24 years, that means most of his enlightened life in one place (although in two different monasteries) giving lots of talks and advises to people. There is a big peaceful park with the ruins of the monasteries with people reading, meditation and praying. Labourers are still busy working on the site. The surrounding fields and the village life are nice to stay a little while.

**Accommodation:** two big hotels



### **Kushinagar**

In Kushinagar the Buddha entered Nirwana and died. Same as other places, Kushinagar lost its importance and was neglected. Just in 1867 the remains of the old Nirwana-Stupa was discovered and restored in 1927. Today one can see the remains of the place where the dead body of Buddha was stored before burned, a huge statue of the laying Buddha and ruins of old monasteries.

**Accommodation:** there are few hotels of different categories

These are the main places, which should be included in a proper Buddha-tour.

You can extend your tour having a closer look at these close-by places:

### **Varanasi**

Just some km away from Sarnath this most important place for Hindus is felt as „the essence of India“. You can explore it just for what Varanasi is – but also to get a better understanding of a) the dominant religion at Buddhas times and b) the India of today. It is a very exciting place, one can walk endless along the 84 Ghats, discover some of the 5.000 temples, take a yoga-lesson,



stroll along the lanes of the old town, ride on a boat for sunrise or sunset on the Ganges and listen to the Aarti in the early evening.

### **Lucknow**

Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, has a beautiful memory of the past with the Residency Park and some great old buildings, but also boasts to be one of the most modern cities in Uttar Pradesh. There are museums, Art Galleries, Shopping Malls, huge parks etc.

### **Patna**

Patna is the capital of the state Bihar, former one of the poorest places in India and since some years on the rise. It is a holy city for the Sikhs and has a famous museum with historic sculptures.

### **Kathmandu**

Kathmandu as the capital of Nepal is always worth a visit, but also a good place to start discovering other places in Nepal. Whereas in India you can find buddhist people only at more faraway places, in Nepal they are much more spread in different places.

Before we start going into details a special remark to the accommodations.

### **Accommodations**

There are hotels and monasteries to accommodate the travellers. Western tourists are not allowed to stay in the monasteries and have to use the hotels. Mostly this tour is done by pilgrims from asian countries travelling in big groups. Therefore the hotels are mostly big and offer many rooms. But they don't care much about beauty and cozyness. They are clean and comfortable, so one cannot complain. But to prepare for too high expectations, we think it is better to tell in advance that you don't find hotels as beautiful as in other parts of India except Lumbini and Varanasi.

So to **create your own Buddha-Tour**, we need to know from you:

- How much time do you have?
- When do you want to travel?
- How many are you to travel together?
- Which other places are you interested?
- Where do you want to start and where to finish?
- Should we include train-rides?
- Do you prefer having a flight to the buddhist starting-point?
- Are there special places you want to stay longer/shorter?
- Are you more interessted in the history or the teaching?
- Would you like to have an accompagnying monk?
- Do you like to have an organised daily routine of meditation and/or Dharma-talk?
- Do you prefer medium or better accommodations?
- What else is important for you?

**Please drop a mail at [info@yangla-tours.de](mailto:info@yangla-tours.de) and we'll talk about your tour!**

