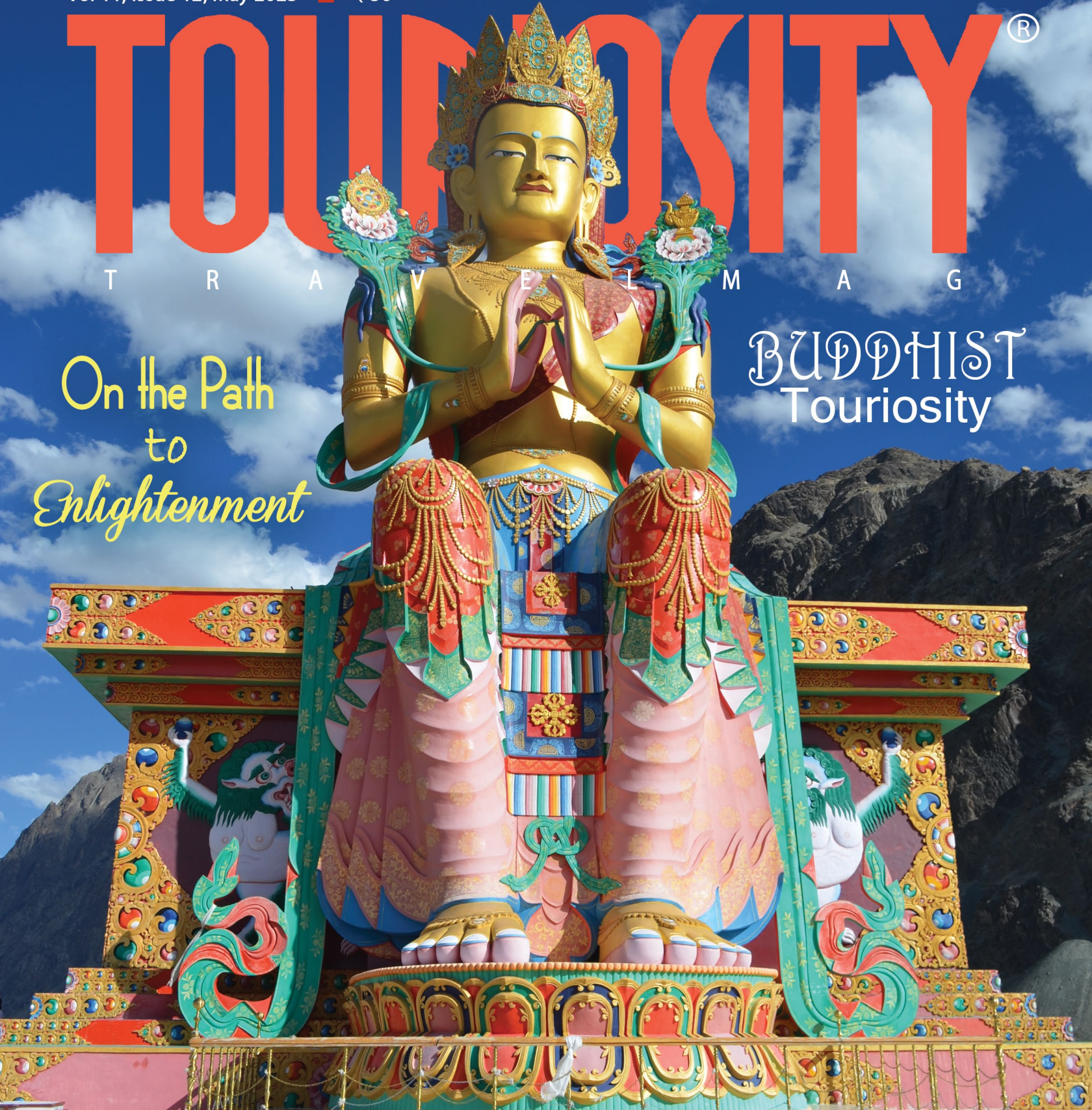


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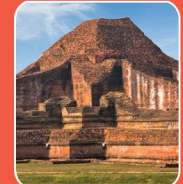
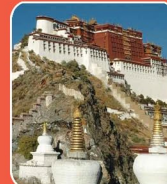
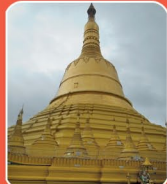
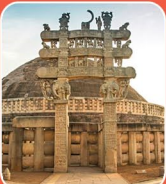
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Buddhist Tourism sites around the world



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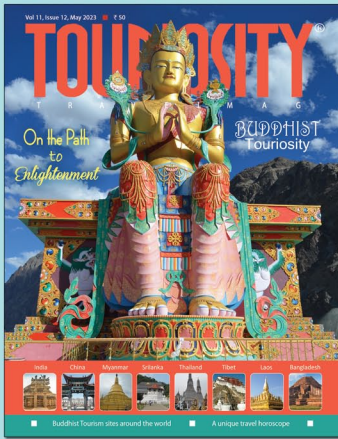
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May 2023 Issue**

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COVER PHOTO:

Maitreya Buddha statue facing near the confluence of Shyok & Siachen rivers at Diskit village in Ladakh

Photo by Rakesh Kapadnis, Mumbai

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This issue is themed on Buddhist tourism. Although essentially a type of religious tourism for many, Buddhist tourism is equally popular amongst people from other faiths as it helps them gain knowledge, participate in meditation, enhance spirituality and know about the heritage of various places. It is a niche but rapidly growing sector in the global travel industry. Destinations that are important from the point of view of such tourism, are spread across numerous countries of Asia, where Buddhism originated, and spread, over two millennia ago. In many such countries the sites lay in ruins, but are important from archaeological point of view.





AN APPEAL TO TOURISTS

When visiting sacred Buddhist sites in India or abroad, it is essential to be respectful of the local customs, traditions, and religious practices. Most of these sites will require visitors to dress modestly when entering sacred places and to observe proper etiquette. Silence is also often expected. It is important to be mindful of all these points. **LET US BE RESPONSIBLE TOURISTS!**

ated with Buddhism. From the intricate carvings of Ajanta and Ellora Caves in India to the serene temples of Kyoto in Japan, from ancient rock carvings to the sprawling monastic sites, these places are not just museums of the past; they are living legacies that deserve our admiration and protection. By visiting these destinations, we also contribute to their maintenance and continuity. Such tourism also has significant economic implications for local communities. It generates income through accommodations, guided tours, and crafts, supporting livelihoods and strengthening local economies. This, in turn, fosters the preservation of cultural traditions and encourages sustainable development.

Buddhism teaches the interconnectedness of all living beings, and Buddhist tourism beautifully exemplifies this concept. Travellers from different corners of the world converge at sacred sites, forming a global community bound by shared spiritual aspirations. This interconnectivity transcends borders, cultures, and religions, reminding us of our common humanity. Many Buddhist destinations are in countries that have faced conflict or political turmoil. Visiting these places can promote peace and understanding. It's a testament to the resilience of communities that, despite adversity, continue to uphold the values of tolerance, compassion, and non-violence. However, it is important to check about safety and security issues before setting foot on any such country.

While Buddhist tourism offers profound opportunities, it also faces challenges. Environmental concerns, cultural appropriation, and overcrowding are issues that need careful consideration. Travellers, tour operators, and local authorities must collaborate to ensure that the spiritual sanctity of these sites remains intact and sustainable for generations to come.

This is our second issue on Buddhist tourism. The first one from November 2016 was dedicated to the places where the Buddha lived, preached and died. So essentially, the issue was centred on various destinations connected with the life and preachings of the Buddha in India. In this issue, we go beyond the country, bringing to our readers, Buddhist tourism sites in a total of 19 countries of the world.

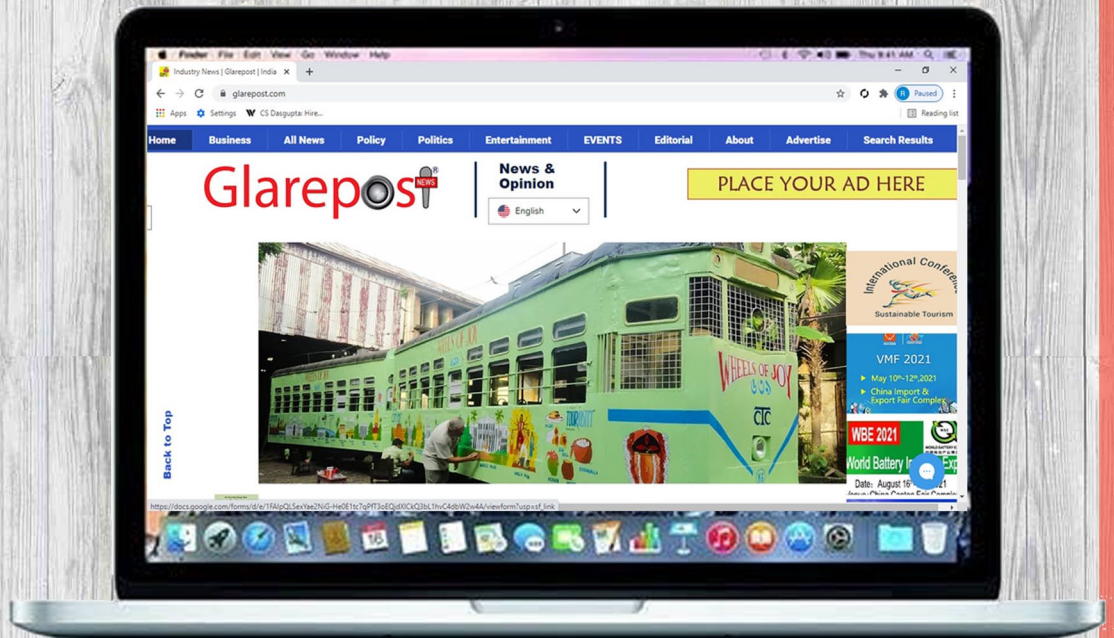
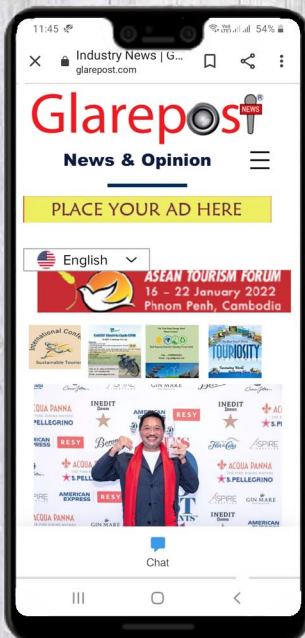
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Rupanjana De
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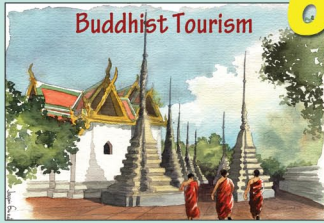
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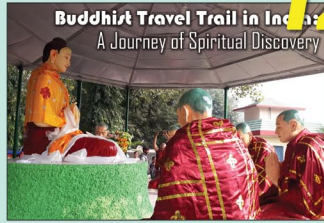


Buddhist Tourism

This article is about this niche travel segment that is gaining popularity worldwide.

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Buddhist Travel Trail in India

This article follows the journey of the Buddha in India, in quest of enlightenment and delivering discourses thereafter.

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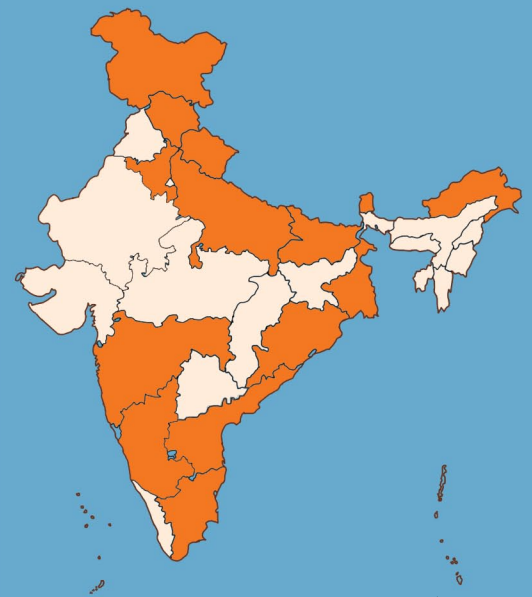
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DESTINATIONS IN THIS ISSUE



Exploring the Spiritual Path: Significance of Buddhist Tourism



Buddhist tourism, also known as Dharma tourism, is a niche but rapidly growing sector in the global travel industry. It revolves around visiting sites of profound religious and historical significance to Buddhists. These sites span numerous countries across Asia, where Buddhism originated over two millennia ago. Buddhist tourism offers a unique opportunity for spiritual and cultural enrichment, as it allows travellers to delve into the teachings and traditions of Buddhism while exploring breathtaking landscapes and historical landmarks.

Historical Roots of Buddhist Tourism

The origins of Buddhist tourism can be traced back to the time of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. After his enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhi Gaya in Bihar, India, he began to preach his teachings and embarked on several journeys across the Indian subcontinent. These journeys are often referred to as the Four

Great Pilgrimages and encompass some important sites including Lumbini (the birthplace of Buddha), Sarnath (where he delivered his first sermon), and Kushinagar (the site of his passing).

Buddhist tourism as we know it today largely emerged during the reign of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (268-232 BC). Emperor Ashoka, inspired by the teachings of the Buddha, constructed many stupas, monasteries and pillars across his vast empire which ranged from Bengal to Afghanistan and from Kashmir to parts of Tamil Nadu. These early Buddhist sites laid the foundation for a tradition of pilgrimage and spiritual exploration that continues to thrive today.

The Appeal of Buddhist Tourism

Spiritual Enlightenment: For devout Buddhists, visiting sacred sites is a means of deepening their spiritual connection. Pilgrimage

provides the opportunity for meditation, reflection, and communion with fellow practitioners.

Cultural Immersion: Buddhist tourism offers travellers the chance to immerse themselves in the cultures, traditions, and practices of different Buddhist communities. This includes observing rituals, participating in meditation sessions, and attending religious festivals.

Historical Exploration: Many Buddhist sites are of immense historical significance. Exploring these locations provides insights into the history and evolution of Buddhism and the societies in which it has thrived.

Natural Beauty: Numerous Buddhist sites are located in picturesque settings, often surrounded by breathtaking natural landscapes. Whether it's the lush forests of Bhutan, the Himalayan scenery of Nepal, the serene lakes of Japan, or the deserted landscape of Mongolia, these sites offer an opportunity for travellers to connect with nature.

Philanthropic Opportunities: In Buddhist tourism, travellers often engage in charitable activities such as helping maintain monastic institutions, supporting local communities, or participating in social and environmental initiatives linked to Buddhism.

Prominent Buddhist Tourism Destinations

Buddhism, with its rich history and teachings, has spread far beyond its birthplace in India. There are numerous significant Buddhist destinations outside India, each with its unique cultural and historical significance. The following are some of the most prominent Buddhist tourism sites around the world. Later in this issue, there are detailed articles about each destination:

Lumbini, Nepal: Lumbini, in Nepal, is the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, who later became the Buddha and founded the religion. The Mayadevi Temple, Lumbini Garden and many monasteries are important pilgrimage sites here. For religious tourists, this place is also significant as the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama.

Bodh Gaya, India: This is where the Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. The Mahabodhi Temple Complex here is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As the site of Buddha's enlightenment, Bodh Gaya holds enormous spiritual significance for every visitor, whether Buddhist or not. The site attracts pilgrims from around the world, round the year.

Sarnath, India: Sarnath, located only about 10 km from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, is where the Buddha delivered his first sermon, thereby setting the wheel of Dharma in motion. Key attractions in Sarnath include the Dhamek Stupa and the Mulagandha Kuti Vihara, where the Buddha delivered his first sermon. Apart from these, there are a number of monasteries, an archaeological museum and a zoo for visitors.

Kushinagar, India: Kushinagar is the place where the Buddha is said to have attained Parinirvana (passed away). The Mahaparinirvana Temple and Ramabhar Stupa located here are significant sites of interest.

Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka: Anuradhapura was once the intellectual centre of



Theravada Buddhism. The city boasts ancient stupas and monasteries. There is also the Bodhi tree which grew from the cutting from the original Bodhi tree of Bodh Gaya that Sanghamitta, a Buddhist nun, had brought here.

Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka: Another Sri Lankan city with significant Buddhist heritage, Polonnaruwa features ancient Buddhist ruins, including the Gal Vihara with its colossal Buddha statues.

Borobudur, Indonesia: Borobudur is one of the most impressive Buddhist temples in the world. It is adorned with thousands of



bas-reliefs that narrate stories from Buddhist texts.

Sanchi, India: Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh is home to the famous Great Stupa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is one of the oldest stone structures in India, and among the oldest and best prepared stupas in the world.

Ajanta and Ellora Caves, India: These UNESCO designated sites, located in Maharashtra, are a collection of rock-cut cave temples featuring exquisite sculptures and paintings, including depictions of Buddha.

Mount Koya, Japan: Mount Koya, or Koyasan, is a sacred mountain in Japan and the headquarters of Shingon Buddhism (the Japanese version of Buddhism). It has numerous temples and the famous Okunoin cemetery.

Tibet Autonomous Region, China: Tibet, the cradle of Tibetan Buddhism, is known for monasteries like the Potala Palace and Jokhang Temple in Lhasa.

Luang Prabang, Laos: The ancient town of Luang Prabang is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its well-preserved Buddhist temples and traditions.

Bhutan: Bhutan is steeped in Buddhist culture, with monasteries

like Paro Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) offering unique spiritual experiences amidst unparalleled natural settings. Perched on a cliff, this iconic monastery is a symbol of Bhutanese Buddhism and offers breathtaking views of the Himalayas.

Wat Pho, Thailand: The Wat Pho temple in Bangkok is famous for its reclining Buddha statue and traditional Thai massage.

Mogao Caves, China: The Mogao Caves in Dunhuang dating from the 4th century AD, are renowned for their Buddhist art, manuscripts, and murals.

These destinations are not only culturally significant but also offer a peaceful and reflective environment for travellers to explore Buddhist teachings and heritage. They provide unique insights into the global spread and influence of Buddhism.

Ancient Buddhist carvings around the world

Ancient Buddhist carvings, often found in the form of reliefs, sculptures, and rock-cut monuments, hold immense cultural, religious, and historical significance. These carvings can be found in various Buddhist sites across Asia and are an essential part of Buddhist art and heritage. Here are some significant examples of ancient Buddhist carvings:



Ajanta and Ellora Caves, India: The Ajanta and Ellora Caves in Maharashtra, India, are renowned for their exquisite rock-cut architecture and ancient Buddhist carvings. The Ajanta Caves, dating from the 2nd century BCE to the 6th century AD, contain elaborate frescoes and sculptures that depict the life and teachings of Buddha. The Ellora Caves, which date from the 6th to the 10th century AD, feature a combination of Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain carvings within a monolithic rock structure.

Gandhara Art, Pakistan and Afghanistan: The ancient Gandhara region, encompassing parts of present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, is known for its distinctive style of Buddhist art. Gandharan sculptures and carvings, often combining Greek and Indian influ-



While Buddhist tourism brings numerous benefits, it also poses challenges, including over-tourism, environmental impact, and commercialization. Responsible tourism practices are essential to ensure the preservation of sacred sites and their natural surroundings. This involves respecting local customs, preserving the environment, and supporting local communities.

ences, depict Buddha and Bodhisattvas with intricate details.

Borobudur, Indonesia: Borobudur, a massive Buddhist temple in Indonesia, is adorned with thousands of bas-reliefs that narrate stories from Buddhist texts. These carvings offer a visual guide to Buddhist teachings and the life of the Buddha.

Longmen Grottoes, China: Located near Luoyang in China, the Longmen Grottoes are a UNESCO World Heritage Site containing over 100,000 Buddhist statues and carvings. These carvings, created during the Northern Wei and Tang dynasties, are considered masterpieces of Chinese Buddhist art.

Yungang Grottoes, China: The Yungang Grottoes, also in China, consist of 53 rock-cut caves adorned with thousands of Buddhist sculptures and carvings. These carvings span from the 5th century to the 6th century CE and reflect various Buddhist traditions.

Ajanta of Sri Lanka, Polonnaruwa: The ancient city of Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka features carvings and sculptures that include depictions of Buddha, stupas, and ancient inscriptions. The Gal Vihara, in particular, has four massive rock-cut Buddha statues.

Mahabalipuram, India: Also known as Mamallapuram, this UNESCO World Heritage Site in Tamil Nadu, India, contains several monolithic rock-cut temples and sculptures, including the famous 'Descent of the Ganges' relief and 'Arjuna's Penance', which features various scenes from Indian mythology.

Dazu Rock Carvings, China: The Dazu Rock Carvings in Chongqing, China, comprise over 50,000 statues and rock inscriptions, primarily from the 9th to the 13th centuries.

These carvings depict Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian themes, reflecting a blend of beliefs and traditions.

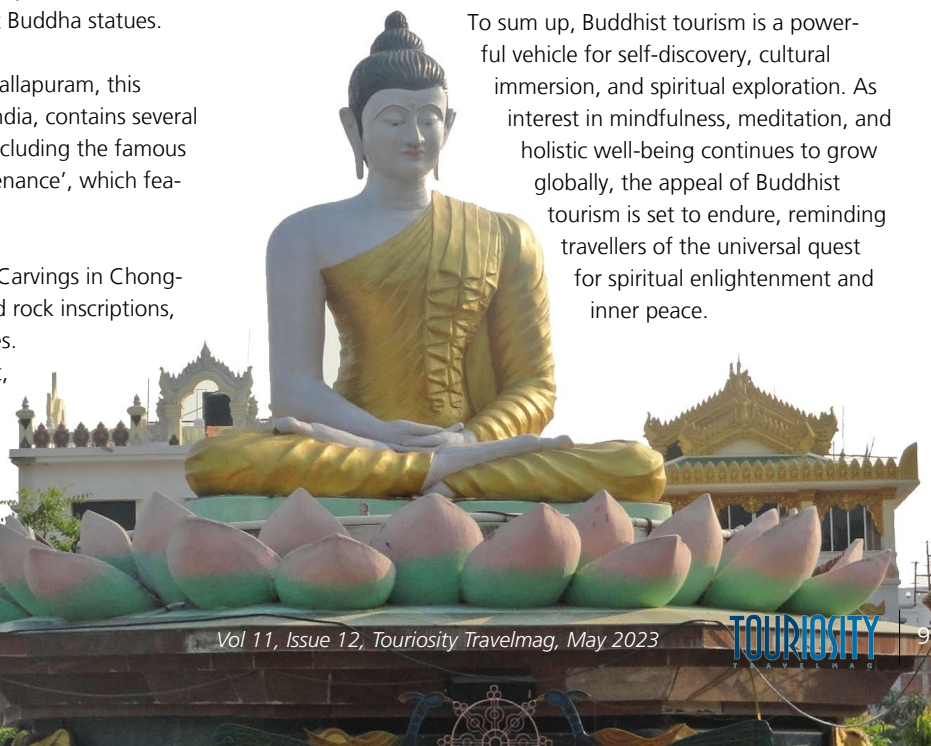
Sanchi Stupa, India: The Sanchi Stupa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Madhya Pradesh, India, is adorned with intricate carvings that illustrate Buddhist stories and events from the life of Buddha. The gateway of Sanchi Stupa is particularly known for its ornate carvings.

Ancient Buddhist carvings not only showcase the artistic achievements of their time but also serve as a means of preserving and conveying Buddhist teachings, history, and culture. These carvings are a testament to the enduring influence of Buddhism on the art and culture of Asia.

Challenges and Responsible Tourism

While Buddhist tourism brings numerous benefits, it also poses challenges, including over-tourism, environmental impact, and commercialization. Responsible tourism practices are essential to ensure the preservation of sacred sites and their natural surroundings. This involves respecting local customs, preserving the environment, and supporting local communities.

To sum up, Buddhist tourism is a powerful vehicle for self-discovery, cultural immersion, and spiritual exploration. As interest in mindfulness, meditation, and holistic well-being continues to grow globally, the appeal of Buddhist tourism is set to endure, reminding travellers of the universal quest for spiritual enlightenment and inner peace.





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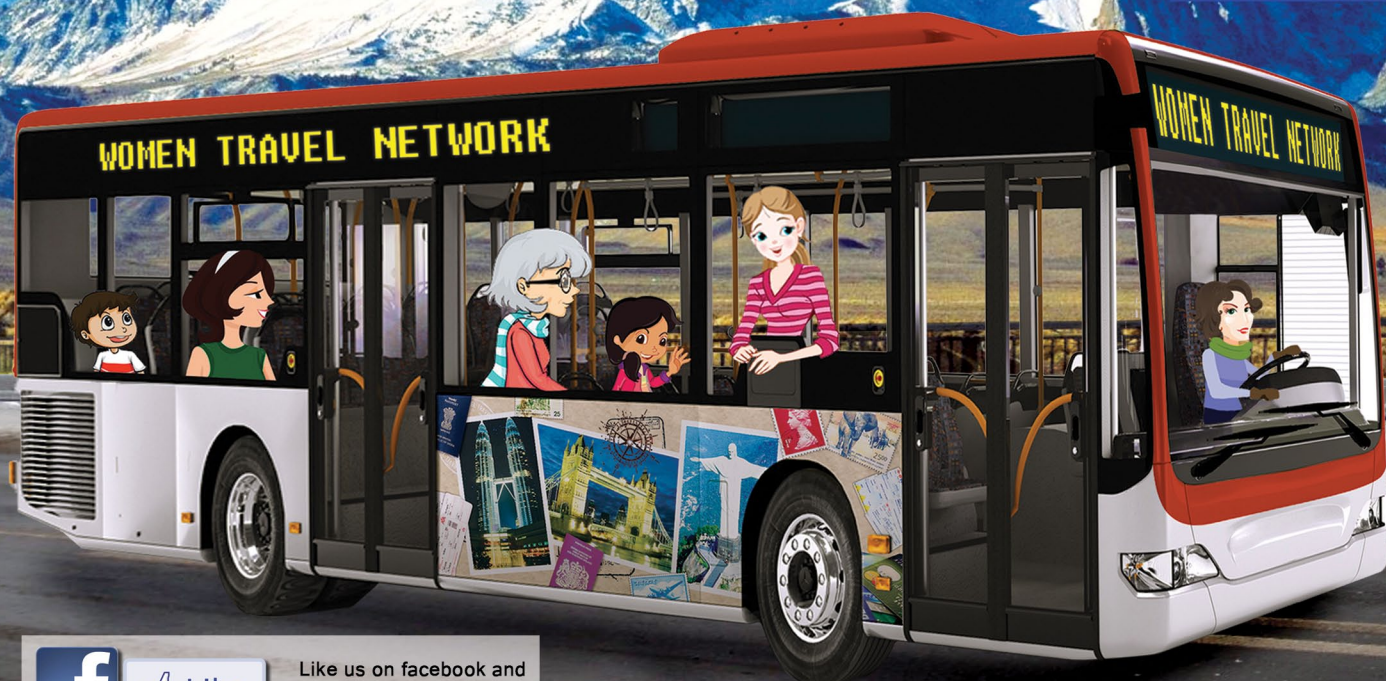
Many a times, when your skin thirsts for a touch of mist or dew drops and your heart yearns for an escape far from the daily life routine or the load of work in your respective jobs, you start seeking for people eager to accompany you. You try convincing your husband or children to take some time out of their busy schedules, but many times in vain. At those difficult times, the Women Travel Network (WTN) gives you the grand idea to set out alone to evaluate the passion of you. Personal safety is of great concern to you, so you may be fearing to set sail for your

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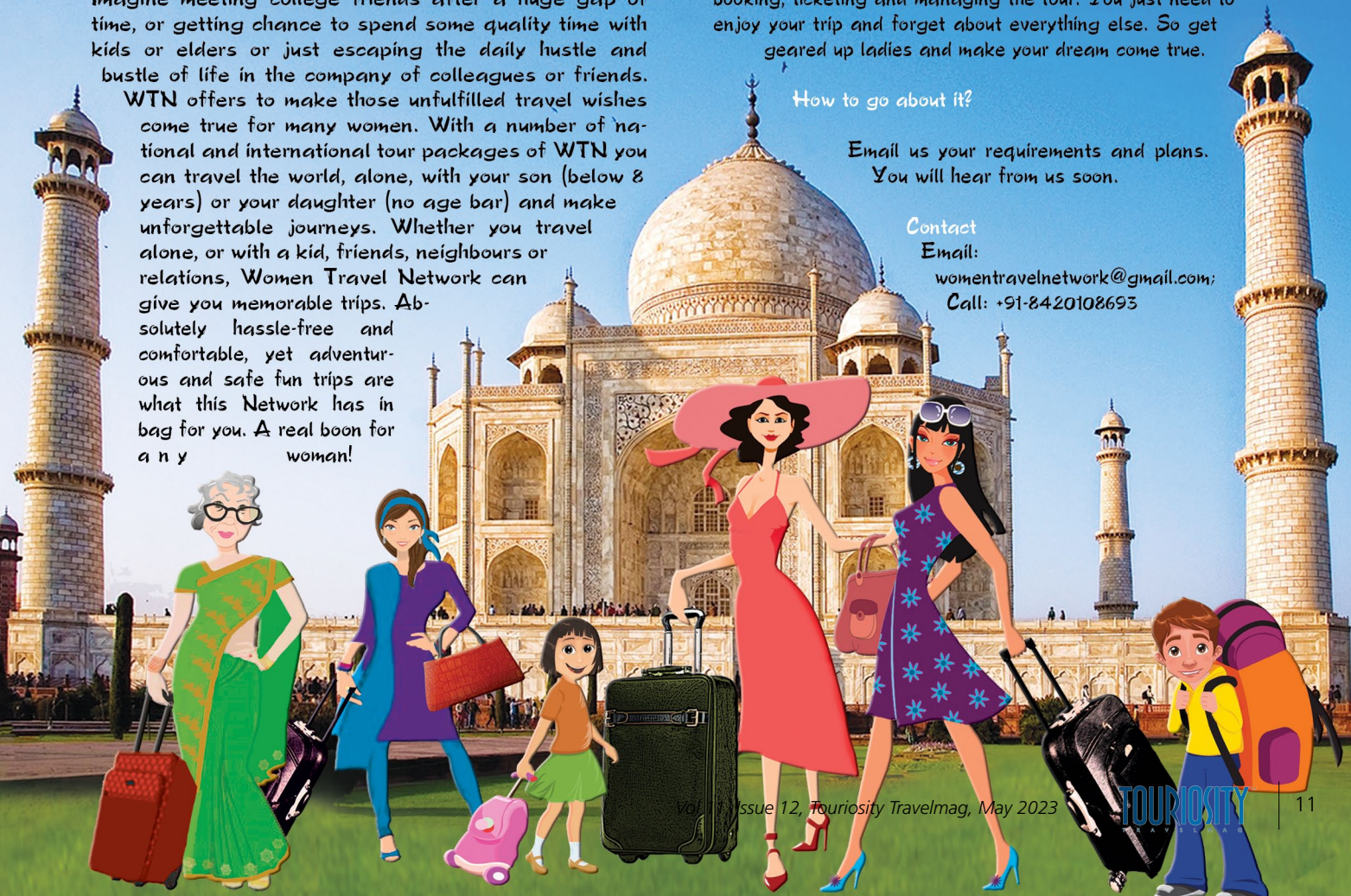
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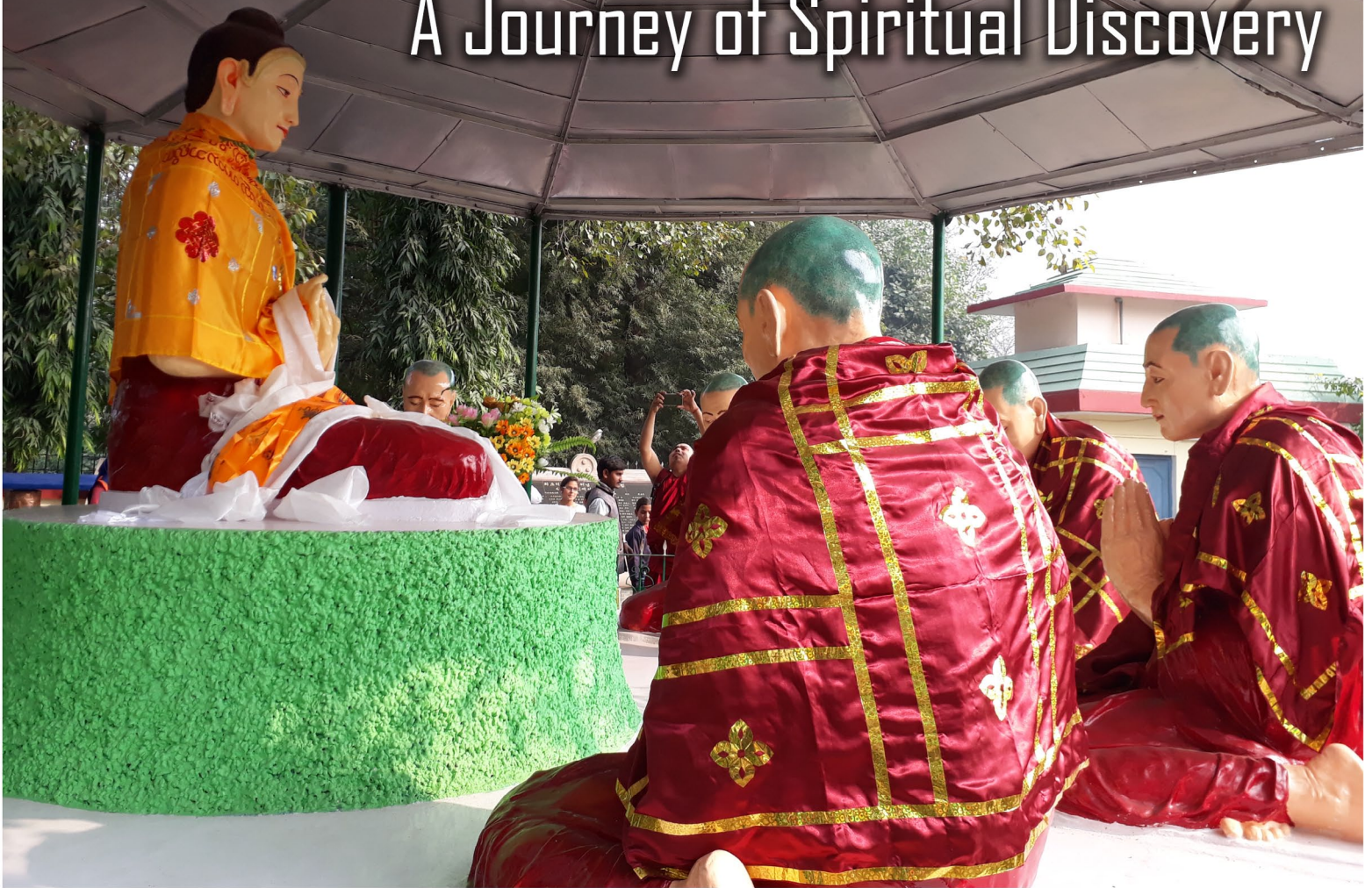
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Buddhist Travel Trail in India: A Journey of Spiritual Discovery



Buddhism, one of the world's major religions, has deep roots in the Indian subcontinent. Emerging in the 6th century BC, it was founded by Siddhartha Gautama, who, after attaining enlightenment, became known as the Buddha. Buddhism has had a profound and enduring influence on the spiritual, cultural, and philosophical landscape of India. Every year, Buddhist pilgrims from all over the world come to visit various sites in India connected with the life of the Buddha. This accounts for a major tourism revenue of the country. This article explores the history, development, and contemporary relevance of Buddhism in India.

The Birth of Buddhism

The story of Buddhism in India begins with Siddhartha Gautama, a prince born in Lumbini, in present-day Nepal, around 563 BC. Raised in opulence, he grew disillusioned with the suffering he saw in the world. His quest for spiritual enlightenment led him to renounce his princely life and embark on a journey of self-discovery. It was during this quest that he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhi Gaya, Bihar. This enlightenment gave birth to Buddhism, a path to liberation from suffering.

The Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism quickly gained popularity in ancient India. The teachings of the Buddha, encapsulated in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, resonated with people from all walks of life. As Buddhism gradually spread far and wide, it got transformed into various schools, sects and sub-sects, each interpreting the Dharma differently.

One of the significant events in the history of Buddhism was the reign of Emperor Ashoka (3rd century BC). He is said to be one of the greatest rulers of the sub-continent of all time with kingdom spanning from Bengal in the east to Afghanistan in the west, and from Kashmir in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south. Once a ruthless ruler, after witnessing the devastating consequences of a war, Emperor Ashoka famously embraced Buddhism and became the greatest patron of the faith. He erected edicts and pillars throughout his empire, propagating Buddhist principles of non-violence and compassion.

Buddhism thrived in India, and the country became a hub for mon-

asteries, stupas, and centres of learning. Nalanda University, an ancient centre of Buddhist education, drew scholars from all over Asia and became renowned for its scholarship.

The Decline and Transformation

Despite its flourishing beginnings, Buddhism in India began to wane for various reasons. The re-awakening of Hinduism and its assimilation of Buddhist practices, the revival of Vedic traditions, and changing political dynamics - all played a role in Buddhism's decline. The Muslim invasions in the medieval period further contributed to the decline of Buddhism.

Buddhism's revival in India is credited to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, who converted to Buddhism along with thousands of his followers in a movement called the Dalit Buddhist movement. This marked a significant resurgence of Buddhism in modern India.

Contemporary Buddhism in India

Today, Buddhism continues to have a presence in India, with an estimated 8-9 million Buddhists in the country. The holy sites associated with the life of the Buddha, such as Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Rajgir and Kushinagar, are major pilgrimage destinations for Buddhists from around the world.

In regions like Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, Buddhism is the dominant faith, and monasteries and stupas dot the landscapes. The Tibetan diaspora in India, led by the Dalai Lama, has also contributed to the preservation and propagation of Tibetan Buddhism in the country.

Buddhism in India represents not only a historical tradition but also a living philosophy. It is a guiding light for those who embark on the path of self-discovery and enlightenment. India remains a place of immense spiritual significance for Buddhists, attracting seekers and scholars from all over the world to explore the profound wisdom of the Buddha and the rich tapestry of Buddhist culture and heritage.

The Buddhist Travel Trail

India, the land where Buddhism was born, is home to a sacred network of sites known as the Buddhist Travel Trail. This trail weaves through the historical and spiritual tapestry of the country, connecting the significant places associated with the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who later became the Buddha. It is a journey of profound spiritual significance and historical exploration, offering pilgrims and travellers a unique opportunity to walk in the footsteps of one of the world's greatest spiritual leaders of all times.

The Buddhist Travel Trail is a treasure trove of historical and spiritual sites, each one a testament to the life and teachings of the Buddha. The trail can be loosely divided into two parts: the places associated with his early life and the places associated with his later life, including his enlightenment and the dissemination of his teachings.

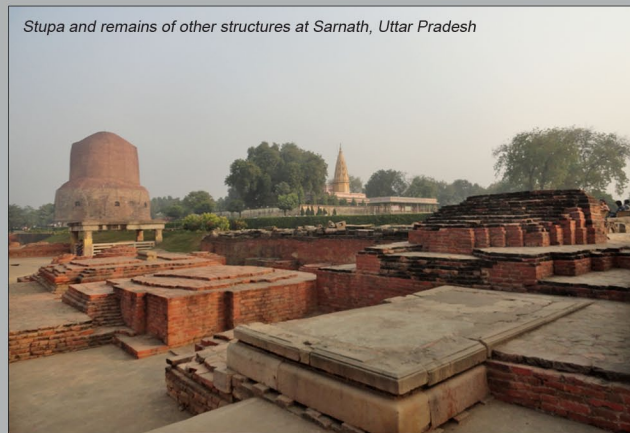
The early life of Siddhartha Gautama unfolded in the fertile plains of northern India, which are now part of Nepal. Lumbini, situated in present-day Nepal, is the birthplace of the Buddha. Here, the famous Maya Devi Temple stands as a poignant reminder of the miraculous birth. Lumbini's



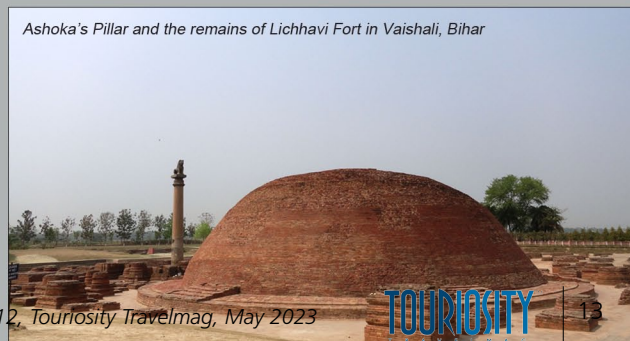
Stupa at Kesariya, Bihar



Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, Bihar



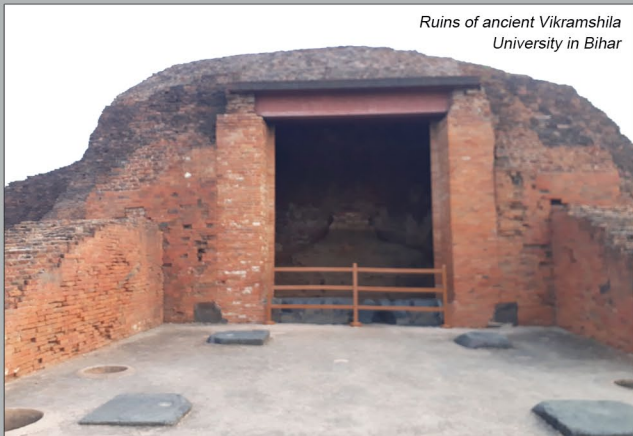
Stupa and remains of other structures at Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh



Ashoka's Pillar and the remains of Lichhavi Fort in Vaishali, Bihar



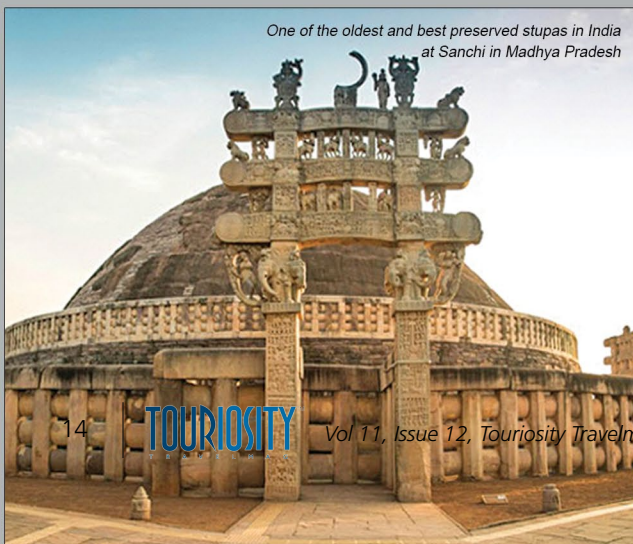
Ruins of ancient Nalanda University at Nalanda, Bihar



Ruins of ancient Vikramshila University in Bihar



Group of monuments with Buddhist influence at Pattadakal in Karnataka



One of the oldest and best preserved stupas in India at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh

tranquil gardens, monastic zones, and the sacred pond create a serene atmosphere for pilgrims to contemplate the beginnings of the Buddha's journey.

Kapilavastu, near Lumbini, is another important site associated with the Buddha's early life. This was his princely home, and today, the site hosts the ruins of the palace, stupas, and monastic cells.

The trail then leads to Bodh Gaya in Bihar, where the young prince Siddhartha sat under the Bodhi Tree, vowing not to rise until he attained enlightenment. This marked a significant turning point in his life. The Mahabodhi Temple complex in Bodh Gaya is the most important site along the trail, and the Bodhi Tree is said to be a direct descendant of the original tree under which Buddha meditated. The Mahabodhi Temple, with its intricate carvings and sacred ambiance, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a place of deep reflection and meditation.

The next stop along the trail is Sarnath, in Uttar Pradesh, where the Buddha delivered his first sermon, known as the Dharmachakra Parivartan. The ancient Dhamek Stupa and the Mulagandha Kuti Vihara are the key attractions here. Sarnath is also home to several other stupas and monasteries that date back to the early Buddhist period.

From Sarnath, the Buddhist Travel Trail extends to Kushinagar, another important site associated with the Buddha's life. It is where Buddha attained Mahaparinirvana, or final liberation from the cycle of birth and death. The Mahaparinirvana Temple and the Ramabhar Stupa here mark this poignant event.

Bodh Gaya is the spiritual heart of the Buddhist Travel Trail, but the trail extends further to cover more places where Buddha continued his teaching and spiritual journey. Some other significant sites on the trail include Sravasti, associated with various miracles performed by the Buddha, and Rajgir, where the Buddha spent several years and where the Vulture's Peak (Griddhakuta) stands, known as the site of numerous important discourses. Shravasti, also known as Savatthi, is famous for the Jetavana Monastery, a key location for Buddha's teachings. Another noteworthy location is the ancient Nalanda University, one of the earliest residential universities in the world, which became a renowned centre for Buddhist scholarship and meditation.

The trail also leads to Vaishali, associated with several significant events in the Buddha's life and teachings, including the conversion of Ambapali, the courtesan, to Buddhism.

The Buddhist Travel Trail is a remarkable journey of historical and spiritual exploration. It provides a unique opportunity to experience the life and teachings of the Buddha in the very places where they unfolded. Travellers and pilgrims alike have the chance to gain a deeper understanding of Buddhism, its rich history, and the profound impact it has had on the world. Unless one personally visits these places, it is difficult to understand how important they are from a tourism point of view. Along with hundreds of thousands of Buddhist pilgrims from all over the world, each of these sites get the footfall of similar number of tourists every year.

This trail is not merely a physical journey but also a spiritual pilgrimage, allowing visitors to connect with the teachings of compassion, mindfulness, and enlightenment that the Buddha imparted. It is a place for contemplation, meditation, and self-discovery, and it continues to inspire people from all corners of the globe to embark on a journey of spiritual growth and inner

transformation.

The Buddhist Travel Trail is not just a connection to the past; it is an enduring source of spiritual guidance and insight, and it remains an integral part of India's cultural and religious heritage. As travellers walk this trail, they not only learn about the life of the Buddha but also absorb the profound wisdom that has shaped the lives of countless individuals for over two millennia. It is a pilgrimage that transcends time, inviting all those who follow it to embark on a personal journey of enlightenment and self-discovery.

Tourism sites

India is home to a plethora of significant Buddhist destinations that hold deep religious and historical importance. As already stated, these sites are not only places of pilgrimage for Buddhists but also attract travellers from around the world interested in Buddhism, its teachings, and the rich cultural heritage associated with it. Many of these places are also of great archaeological value. In the following paragraphs, we will delve into some of the most prominent Buddhist tourism sites in India.

Bodh Gaya - The Enlightenment Site

Bodh Gaya, in the state of Bihar, is where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. It is the most sacred site for Buddhists. The Mahabodhi Temple Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the focal point of Buddhist pilgrimage here. The awe-inspiring temple stands near the Bodhi Tree, which is believed to be a direct descendant of the original Bodhi tree.

Within the complex, one can also explore the Vajrasana (Diamond Throne), which marks the spot where the Buddha is believed to have sat in meditation, as well as the Animesh Lochana Chaitya, where the Buddha is said to have gazed without blinking at the Bodhi Tree for seven days.

Sarnath - Where the Buddha Preached His First Sermon

Sarnath, barely 10 km from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, is where Buddha delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment in Bodh Gaya. This discourse, known as the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta or 'Turning of the Wheel

of Dharma', famously laid the foundation of Buddhist teachings.

Sarnath's archaeological site includes the Dhamek Stupa, an important monument marking the event, and the Mulagandha Kuti Vihara, a temple with frescoes depicting the Buddha's life. The Ashoka Pillar at Sarnath also signifies Emperor Ashoka's reverence for Buddhism.

Nalanda - Ancient Centre of Learning

Nalanda, in Bihar, is renowned not only for its ancient Nalanda University but also for its association with Buddhist learning. The ruins of Nalanda University, where scholars from various parts of the world once studied, remain a testament to India's ancient intellectual and Buddhist heritage, as well as architectural finesse and expertise.

Dhankar Gompa - Most endangered monastery

Lahaul and Spiti Valley of Himachal Pradesh has many monasteries and stupas. A key site here is the Dhankar Gompa, a 12th-century Buddhist monastery perched atop a rocky hill offering stunning views of the Himalayas. It has an elevation of 3,894 metres above the sea level and is set amidst an extremely difficult terrain. It is listed amongst the 100 most endangered monuments in the world.

Dharamshala - Residence of the Dalai Lama

Dharamshala, in Himachal Pradesh, serves as the headquarters of the Tibetan Government in Exile. It is the residence of the Dalai Lama, the highest spiritual leader of Tibet. The town's Tsuglagkhang Complex features the Namgyal Monastery and the Tibet Museum, providing insights into Tibetan culture and Buddhism. Dharamshala is indeed a 'Mini Tibet' and is a must visit for all.

Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh

Kushinagar is where the Buddha is said to have breathed his last and attained Mahaparinirvana (relieved from the cycle of life and death). The Mahaparinirvana Temple and Ramabhar Stupa are significant sites in Kushinagar.

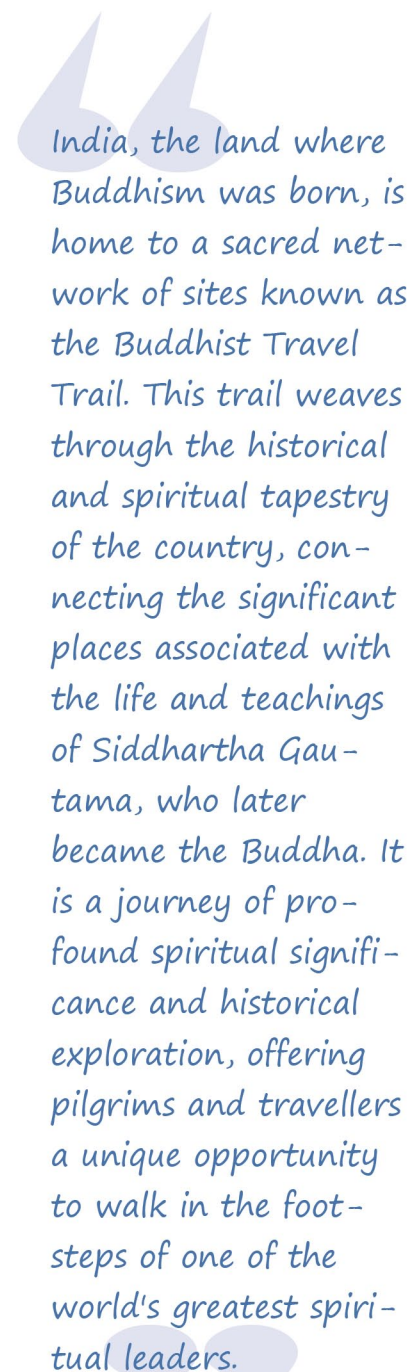
Nalanda, Bihar

Nalanda was home to the ancient Nalanda

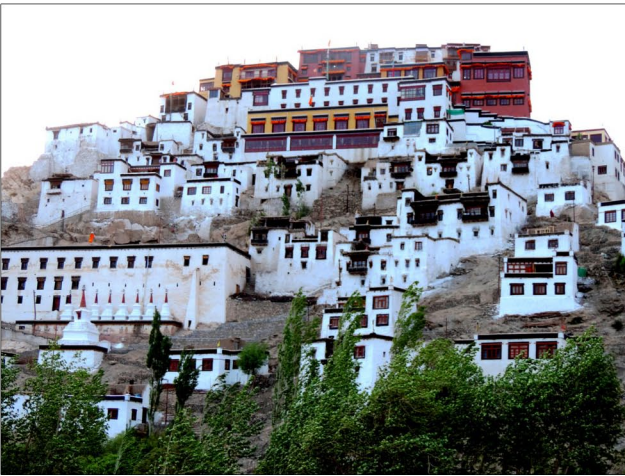
University, one of the earliest residential universities of the world. It was famous as a centre of Buddhist learning and scholars from all over the world came here to study. Today one finds here the ruins of the ancient university. The Nalanda Archaeological Site and the ruins of the Nalanda University are key attractions here.

Vaishali, Bihar

Vaishali is associated with several events in the Buddha's life, including his famous



India, the land where Buddhism was born, is home to a sacred network of sites known as the Buddhist Travel Trail. This trail weaves through the historical and spiritual tapestry of the country, connecting the significant places associated with the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who later became the Buddha. It is a journey of profound spiritual significance and historical exploration, offering pilgrims and travellers a unique opportunity to walk in the footsteps of one of the world's greatest spiritual leaders.



Top left: Statue of Guru Rinpoche in Guru Lhakhang of Hemis monastery (Photo by Vikas Singh)

Top right: The 32-meters-tall Maitreya Buddha statue facing down the confluence of the Shyok and Siachen rivers at Diskit village in Ladakh (Photo by Rakesh Kapadnis)

Above: The Thiksey Monastery in Ladakh (Photo by Vikas Singh)

last sermon. The Relic Stupa and the Asokan Pillar are important sites in Vaishali.

Rajgir, Bihar

Rajgir was a prominent city where the Buddha spent several years and delivered numerous discourses, making it an important centre of early Buddhism. It was a significant place for Buddha's teachings and is associated with the First Buddhist Council. The Griddhakuta (Vulture Peak), where the Buddha delivered key teachings, and the Saptaparni Caves are notable sites here.

Aurangabad, Maharashtra

Aurangabad is known for the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the Ajanta and Ellora Caves, which include two groups of rock-cut cave temples containing Buddhist, Hindu and Jain monasteries and temples with exquisite sculptures and paintings. Cave 10 (Vishwakarma Cave)

and Cave 12 (Tin Thal) are particularly significant.

Sanchi Stupa, Madhya Pradesh

The Sanchi Stupa is one of the oldest and most well-preserved stupas in India, featuring intricate carvings depicting Buddhist stories. The stupa is located on a hilltop in the town of Sanchi, 46 km from Bhopal. The temples and monasteries in the complex are great examples of aniconic art and free-standing architecture documenting Buddhist history in the country.

Sankisa, Uttar Pradesh

The place where Buddha is believed to have descended from the Tushita Heaven after teaching his mother. A temple is built in honour of the Buddha at this location. The Ashokan Pillar with an elephant head was installed here but the same is in ruins.

Hemis Monastery, Ladakh

Located 45 km from the Leh city, it is one of the wealthiest and most famous monasteries in Ladakh. This 17th century Buddhist shrine is known for the famous 2-day Hemis Festival.

Tawang Monastery, Arunachal Pradesh

Located close to the Chinese and Bhutanese border, in the Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh in northeast India, this is the largest Buddhist monastery in India and the second largest in the world. This 17th century monastery is known for its stunning Himalayan landscapes and vibrant festivals. This 3-storied monastery has 65 residential buildings in the complex.

Buddhist travel circuit, Haryana

There are numerous sites in the state of Haryana that was personally visited by the Buddha during his lifetime for discourses. The Chaneti Buddhist Stupa, a 3rd century BC monument, is located in the Yamunanagar district, 3 km from another important archaeological site called Sugh. The Chaneti stupa even found mention by Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang. Another important place in the circuit is Kumashpura village in Sonapat district. During the Vedic era, when it was still under the Kuru Kingdom of the Mahabharata fame, the Buddha is



Kagyu Thekchen Ling Monastery in Lava, West Bengal



Rumtek Monastery near Gangtok, Sikkim

said to have visited this place for a discourse. To be precise, it was in the year 545 BC, as recorded in the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism. Back then Kumashpur was a trading hub. He delivered his famed discourse called Mahasatipatthana sutta which means 'The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness'.

Rumtek Monastery, Sikkim

The largest and most significant monastery in Sikkim, it is home to the Karmapa Lama. Also known as the Dharmachakra Centre, it is located close to the state capital of Gangtok.

Tabo Monastery, Himachal Pradesh

Often called the 'Ajanta of the Himalayas', this monastery is located in the village of Tabo. It is the oldest Buddhist monastery in the Spiti Valley and is known for ancient murals and scriptures. It is home to ancient paintings, beautiful stuccos, artistic murals and frescoes.

Leh and Thiksey Monastery, Ladakh

Leh is the region's main city, and Thiksey Monastery is one of the largest and most iconic in Ladakh. The monastery is affiliated with the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. Located atop a hill, 19 km from Ladakh, it is famous for its 49-foot-tall statue of the Maitreya Buddha in the lotus position.

Zaskar Valley, Ladakh

Located 105 km from the city of Leh, this remote valley is a hidden gem. It is home to numerous Buddhist monasteries and dramatic landscapes, and offers trekking, rafting and paragliding opportunities. This place is also known for its otherworldly landscapes.



Tawang Monastery in Arunachal Pradesh

Ajapala Nigrodha Tree, Sravasti, Uttar Pradesh

This is an ancient tree which is believed to be the only one still standing from the Buddha's time. It is revered by the Buddhists. Sravasti is the city where the Buddha spent a considerable part of his time after attaining enlightenment. He used to deliver sermons here regularly, making it an important place of visit by pilgrims even at that time. Gandhakuta (Buddha's abode), Jetavana Monastery

and the stupa of the twin miracle are some other important attractions in Sravasti.

Kee Monastery, Himachal Pradesh

Perched on a hilltop at an altitude of 4,166 metres above the sea level, Kee Monastery offers breathtaking views of the Spiti Valley and is a significant learning centre for Buddhist monks. The monastery is also known for its ancient murals, collection of ancient weapons and unusual thankas.

Pelling, Sikkim

Known for its beautiful landscapes and the Pemayangtse Monastery, this monastery is one of the oldest and most significant in Sikkim. This monastery, dating back from the 17th century, is regarded as one of the oldest in the northeastern part of India.

Vikramshila University, Bihar

Although now mostly in ruins, Vikramshila University was once an important centre for Buddhist learning during the Pala Empire. Built by the Pala king Dharmapala in the 8th century AD, at its peak, it is said to have had more than 100 teachers and more than a thousand students. Today, the ruins of this ancient university can be seen near Antichak village (38 km from the town of Bhagalpur) in the Bhagalpur district of Bihar.



Sittanavasal Caves, Tamil Nadu

These caves dating from the 2nd century AD are famous for its rock-cut Jain beds and cave temples with ancient Jain and Buddhist inscriptions.

Ratnagiri-Udayagiri-Lalitgiri complex, Odisha

Udayagiri is the largest Buddhist complex in Odisha containing many important stupas and monasteries. Located near the other two Buddhist monastic complexes of Lalitgiri and Ratnagiri, it forms part of the 'Diamond Triangle of the Ratnagiri-Udayagiri-Lalitgiri'.

Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh

Once a hill, it is now an island site with Buddhist monastic remains, stupas and inscriptions dating from the 1st to 3rd century AD. It is named after Nagarjuna, the founder of the Mahayana School of Buddhism, who is said to have taught here in a university in the 3rd - 4th century AD.

Bharhut Stupa, Madhya Pradesh

It is a significant Buddhist site with a large stupa and ancient ruins. It is famous for being one of the earliest examples of narrative Buddhist art depicting the life of the Buddha and scenes from Jataka tales.

Pattadakal, Karnataka

This UNESCO World Heritage Site is known for its group of monuments, including the Jain Narayana Temple, which has Buddhist influences.

Tinmalai Cave Temples, Tamil Nadu

These are a cluster of rock-cut caves with Buddhist inscriptions and artwork.

Bajaura Monastery, Himachal Pradesh

Dechen Choekhor Buddhist monastery is a 16th century monastery built in Bajaura in Kullu. It features intricate carvings and statues.

These 30 Buddhist tourism sites in India and nearby regions provide a diverse range of experiences for pilgrims, spiritual



Buddha rock carving at Kargha Nala near Skardu in the controversial Gilgit-Baltistan area

seekers, and travellers alike. Apart from these, there are many other pilgrimage sites in India, including many important monasteries in Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts in the state of West Bengal and many monasteries in the Ladakh region that are not listed above. Each site has its unique historical and cultural significance, making India a treasure trove of Buddhist heritage. While visiting these sites, it's important to be respectful of local customs and practices, and to be mindful of the environmental and cultural impact of your visit.

Gilgit-Baltistan region, forming the northernmost part of Indian union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, has been the subject matter of dispute between India and Pakistan since partition

and independence of the two nations in 1947. The area is currently administered by Pakistan. From the point of view of Buddhist tourism, the region is of significant interest as it has many ancient Buddhist sites and rock carvings. This data is being provided to readers just for the sake of information as it may not be possible, nor advisable, to travel to this region due to political tensions and terrorism. The following are the important Buddhist sites in this region:

Skardu

The region around Skardu contains several ancient Buddhist sites and rock carvings, often in spectacular natural settings.

Shatial Stupa

Located in the Indus Valley, this stupa is known for its unique design and intricate carvings.

Shey Monastery, Skardu

This monastery in Skardu is known for its stunning rock carvings and beautiful surroundings.

Conclusion

Buddhist tourism in India offers a profound journey through the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. The sacred sites evoke a sense of peace and enlightenment, connecting travellers to the rich spiritual and historical heritage of Buddhism. Visitors can immerse themselves in the culture, traditions, and teachings of this ancient religion while exploring the natural beauty and cultural diversity that India has to offer. These sites also serve as a source of inspiration, attracting pilgrims and curious travellers alike, making India a cradle of serenity and wisdom.

Buddhism in Nepal: The Cradle of the Dharma

Nepal is not only known for its stunning Himalayan landscapes but also for its rich Buddhist heritage. It is home to several important Buddhist destinations that attract pilgrims, tourists, and scholars from around the world. It is here that Siddhartha Gautama, who later became the Buddha, was born in the town of Lumbini, in the southwestern part of the country. This article explores the history and contemporary presence of Buddhism in Nepal, highlighting its spiritual and cultural significance.

The Birthplace of the Buddha: Nepal holds a unique place in the world as the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha. Lumbini, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the most sacred pilgrimage site for Buddhists. The Maya Devi Temple in Lumbini marks the exact spot where Siddhartha was born. The Ashoka Pillar, built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, commemorates his visit to Lumbini and his role in spreading Buddhism.

The Early Spread of Buddhism: Nepal's connection to Buddhism goes beyond being the birthplace of the Buddha. Buddhism began to spread and thrive in the Kathmandu Valley and other regions of Nepal as well. Ancient stupas, monasteries, and sculptures from the Mauryan and Gupta periods attest to the faith's deep-rooted history in the country.

Influence on Art and Culture: Buddhism has left an indelible mark on Nepali art and culture. The Newari people of the Kathmandu Valley have a long history of devotion to Buddhism and are known for their artistic excellence. Intricate woodwork, metalwork, sculptures, and thankas (religious paintings) often depict Buddhist deities and themes. The traditional architecture of pagodas and stupas is also inspired by Buddhist design.

Monastic and Pilgrimage Sites: Nepal is home to several monastic and pilgrimage sites, each with its unique history and significance:

Lumbini: Lumbini, situated in the Rupandehi district of Nepal, is the revered birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama. Lumbini is located just a few kilometers from the Indian border and is one of the most significant pilgrimage sites for Buddhists worldwide. The site is centred around the Sacred Garden, where one finds the Mayadevi Temple, marking the exact spot where Queen Mayadevi is believed to have

given birth to Siddhartha. Visitors can also explore monastic zones with beautifully designed monasteries representing different Buddhist nations. The Ashoka Pillar, erected by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BC stands here.

Boudhanath Stupa: This iconic stupa in Kathmandu is one of the largest in Nepal and an important pilgrimage site for Tibetan Buddhists. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is adorned with prayer flags, prayer wheels, and countless smaller stupas.

Swayambhunath (Monkey Temple): Perched atop a hill in Kathmandu, this stupa is known for its stunning views and is an important pilgrimage site for both Buddhists and Hindus. This iconic symbol of Nepal is also surrounded by hundreds of prayer flags, smaller stupas, and curious monkeys.

NEPAL



Kopan Monastery: Located on the outskirts of Kathmandu, it is a prominent Tibetan Buddhist monastery known for its teachings and meditation courses.

Namo Buddha: Situated in the Kavrepalanchok District, a few hours from Kathmandu, this is an important pilgrimage site where the Buddha is believed to have made a great sacrifice in a past life when he offered his body to a starving tigress.

Pharping: This small town in the Kathmandu Valley is home to several monasteries and sacred caves. The Asura Cave is believed to be the place where Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) meditated, and a stupa commemorates this site.

Maratika Cave: Also known as Haleshi, this cave is associated with the legend of Maratika, which states that Guru Rinpoche and Mandarava achieved the state of immortality here. It is an important pilgrimage site for the Vajrayana Buddhists.

Mani Rimdu Festival (Tengboche Monastery): This monastery in the Everest region hosts the annual Mani Rimdu Festival, a colourful Buddhist celebration that includes masked dances, prayers, and blessings.

Salyan: It is home to several ancient Buddhist monasteries, chortens, and sacred sites. It's a lesser-known but culturally significant destination for Buddhist tourists.

Tilaurakot: It is located in the Kapilvastu district and is believed to be the ancient capital of the Shakya kingdom where Siddhartha Gautama spent his early life. It contains archaeological remains and is a site of historical importance for Buddhists.

These Buddhist destinations in Nepal provide not only spiritual and cultural enrichment but also the opportunity to explore the serene and picturesque landscapes of the country. Whether you are a devout Buddhist or a traveller interested in ancient traditions, these sites offer a profound and enlightening experience.

Nepal has been a significant refuge for Tibetan Buddhists, particularly following the Chinese occupation of Tibet. The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, resided in Dharamsala, India, but Nepal provided a transit and refuge for Tibetan refugees.

Buddhism continues to thrive in Nepal, with a significant population of Buddhists, especially in the Kathmandu Valley and the northern regions of the country. Monasteries and retreat centres offer opportunities for meditation and spiritual practice. The annual festival of Buddha Jayanti, celebrating the birth and enlightenment of the Buddha, is widely observed.

Nepal, as the birthplace of the Buddha and a reservoir of Buddhist history and culture, holds a unique place in the Buddhist world. The country's heritage is a testament to the enduring influence of Buddhism on its art, culture, and people. Nepal remains an essential destination for pilgrims, scholars, and seekers who wish to explore the profound teachings of the Buddha amidst the breathtaking landscapes of the Himalayas.



Buddhism has deep historical roots in Mongolia, dating back to the time of the rule of Genghis Khan here in the 13th century. It is important to note here that Genghis Khan himself followed Tengrism, a religion based on animism and shamanism. But he had high regard for Buddhism.

Buddhism had its beginning in the country with the conversion of the emperors of the Yuan Dynasty (that ruled from 1271 - 1368 AD) to Buddhism. The religion played a pivotal role in shaping the culture and politics of the Mongol Empire. Today, 52% of the Mongolians are Buddhists by faith, while 41% of the population do not follow any religion and the remaining minority follows Islam (especially those of Kazakh origin) and Christianity.

The predominant form of Buddhism in Mongolia is Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism), which is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism. It incorporates esoteric rituals and practices. Mongolian Buddhism developed its unique traditions and schools, with a strong emphasis on Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama, as the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, holds considerable influence in Mongolia.

During the Soviet era (1920s to 1990s), the Communist government implemented a policy of state atheism, leading to the suppression and destruction of many monasteries and religious institutions in all of Mongolia. Consequently, this period resulted in the loss of a significant portion of Mongolia's Buddhist heritage. Ever since Mongolia's transition to democracy in the 1990s, Buddhism has experienced a revival. Many monasteries and temples have been restored, and there has been a resurgence of interest in Buddhist practices and teachings.

Buddhism has had a profound influence on Mongolian culture, including art, music, and literature. Traditional Buddhist ceremonies, such as Tsam dances and rituals, remain an integral part of Mongolian cultural celebrations. Mongolian Buddhists celebrate various Buddhist festivals and rituals, with Tsagaan Sar (Mongolian Lunar New Year) being one of the most significant festivals.

The following are some notable Buddhist sites in Mongolia that may be of interest to visitors:

Erdene Zuu Monastery

Located about 2 km from the centre of Kharkhorin,



MONGOLIA

the ancient capital of the Mongol Empire, and adjacent to the ancient city of Karakorum, Erdene Zuu is one of the oldest and most important monasteries in Mongolia. It was founded in 1586 AD by Abtaai Khan. Stones from the ancient city of Karakorum were used in constructing this monastery. It is surrounded by a wall and the entire complex houses 108 stupas. The monastery complex includes several temples and a museum with a collection of Buddhist artifacts.

Amarbayasgalant Monastery

This monastery is often referred to as the 'Monastery of Tranquil Felicity'. Situated in the Baruunburen province, it is one of the three largest monastic centres in Mongolia. Built in the 18th century, it is known for its stunning architecture, artistic treasures, and serene surroundings. The monastery complex originally consisted of as many as 40 temples, of which only 28 remain now. This monastery is located 360 km from the capital city of Ulaan Baatar. The monastery is located amidst stunning surroundings.

Gandantegchinlen Monastery

Also known as the Gandan monastery, this is an important monastery located in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. Its name literally means 'the big place of complete joy'. Gandantegchinlen Monastery is one of the few monasteries that survived the communist era in Mongolia. It is an active centre for Tibetan Buddhism and an important religious site in the city. Many Buddhist monks live here.

Ongi Monastery Ruins

These are the ruins of Ongiin Khiid, a large monastery complex, dating from the mid 17th century, that was destroyed during the communist purges in the 1930s. The complex is said to have housed 4 Buddhist Universities and more than a thousand monks at the peak of its time. Despite being in ruins, the site offers a glimpse into Mongolia's Buddhist history and provides a picturesque view of the surrounding area.

Shankh Monastery

Also known as Shankh Khiid, this monastery is located in the Gobi Desert. It was founded in the 17th century and served as an important religious and cultural centre for the region. At a point of time it is said to have been home to 1500 monks. Situated about 25 kms from Kharkhorin, the old capital of Mongolia, this monastery has a significant historic value.

Tuvkhun Monastery

Situated in the scenic Khangai Mountains, 47 km from Kharkhorin, the old capital of Mongolia, Tuvkhun Monastery is associated with the famous Mongolian Buddhist leader Zanabazar. The complex houses many temples and caves. The monastery is located in a tranquil forested area, making it a beautiful and peaceful destination for tourists.

Khamar Monastery

This monastery is located in the Khentii Province and is associated with Genghis Khan as it was his birthplace. The monastery features a large statue of Chinggis Khaan and offers a unique blend of historical and religious significance.

Buddhism in Mongolia has a rich and enduring history, with its resurgence in recent decades after a period of suppression. It continues to be an integral part of Mongolian culture and identity, shaping the nation's traditions and spiritual practices.

Malaysia is a multicultural and multi-religious country, and Buddhism coexists here with other major religions such as Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. The country's religious diversity is protected by the constitution.

Although Buddhism in Malaysia is a minority religion, it has a significant presence in the country, particularly among the Malaysian Chinese population. The country is home to both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist traditions. While Theravada Buddhism is followed by the ethnic Malays, particularly in northern states like Kelantan and Terengganu, Mahayana Buddhism is predominantly practiced by the Malaysian Chinese community.

Buddhism has influenced Malaysian culture, particularly in the areas of art, architecture, and festivals. Buddhist temples and pagodas are scattered across the country and are often significant landmarks in their respective regions.

Buddhist organizations in Malaysia actively engage in social welfare activities, charity work, and education. These activities reflect the Buddhist principles of compassion and helping those in need.

Malaysia boasts numerous Buddhist temples and monasteries. Buddhists in Malaysia celebrate festivals like Wesak Day with religious ceremonies and processions. Here are some prominent Buddhist tourism sites in Malaysia:

Kek Lok Si Temple, Penang

Located in Penang, Kek Lok Si is one of the largest and most magnificent Buddhist temples in Southeast Asia. It is the largest Buddhist temple in Malaysia and an important pilgrimage centre for Buddhists from across south Asia. It is known for its seven-tier pagoda and the giant bronze statue of Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy.

Dhammikarama Burmese Temple, Penang

This Burmese temple in George Town, Penang is the oldest and one of the most famous Burmese Buddhist temples outside of Myanmar. It is known for its impressive

architecture and serene atmosphere. The temple complex houses a Bodhi tree, a wishing well, numerous statues of the Buddha and living quarters for the monks.

Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary, Taiping

This sanctuary was established in Taiping in Perak, Malaysia in the year 2000. It is a meditation centre and educational facility for practicing Buddhists and those interested in meditation. Located in the mountainous landscape, this sanctuary provides an ideal setting for meditation amongst peace and serenity.

Kwan Yin Tong Temple, Ipoh

This is a cave temple in Ipoh that is dedicated to Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy. It is adorned with numerous statues and carvings. Located at the foot of the Gunung Rapat mountain, the cave goes down a depth of 20 metres below the cliff.

Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple, Sentul

Located in the Sentul Park in Jalan Ipoh in Kuala Lumpur, this temple is an important centre for the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Malaysia.

Sam Poh Tong Temple, Ipoh

Sam Poh Tong is a Chinese cave temple with a beautiful garden and ponds, making it a peaceful place for reflection. It is the largest cave temple in Malaysia and follows the Mahayana Buddhist faith. 246 steps take visitors to the opening of the cave from where the whole city of Ipoh is visible. There is the statue of reclining Buddha inside. It is possible to feed fish or release turtle into a turtle pond inside to better one's karma.

Wat Chayamangkalaram, Penang

This beautiful Thai temple in George Town, Penang, located close to the Burmese temple, is known for its enormous reclining Buddha statue, one of the largest in the world.

Wat Phothivihan Phutthaktham, Kelantan

Also known as Wat Balai, Wat Dua Naga or Dragon Temple (because of the two dragon statues flanking the entrance), this beautifully adorned temple is home to a 108-foot-tall statue of the Buddha, also one of the largest in the

world.

Kek Lok Si Temple, Kelantan

This Kelantan version of Kek Lok Si Temple is another branch of the famous temple in Penang and is known for its striking architecture.

Nan Tien Temple, Selangor

Located in Shah Alam, this is the largest Buddhist temple in Malaysia. It is a branch of the famous Nan Tien Temple in Australia. 'Nan Tien' in Chinese language means 'Paradise of the south'.

Sam Poh Tong Temple, Perak

Another cave temple in Perak, Sam Poh Tong features impressive statues and an underground passage. It is a Chinese Buddhist temple built within a limestone cave. It is the oldest cave temple in Ipoh. It is quite popular amongst tourists.

Thean Hou Temple, Kuala Lumpur

Although it's a predominantly Chinese temple, Thean Hou Temple also features a large statue of Guan Yin, the goddess of mercy and offers stunning views of Kuala Lumpur. It is a six-tiered Chinese temple dedicated to the Chinese sea goddess Mazu.

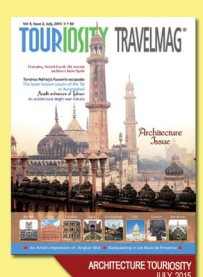
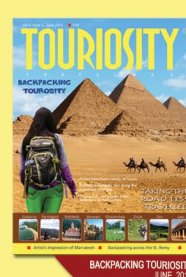
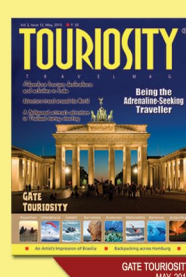
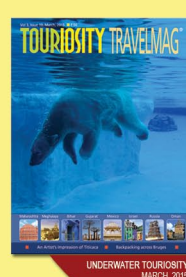
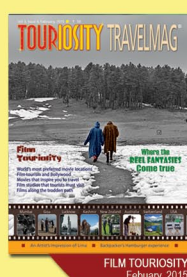
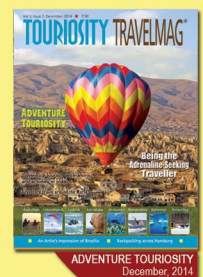
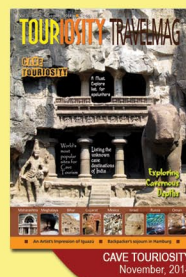
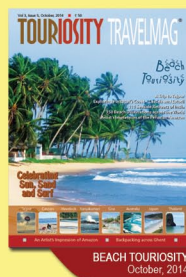
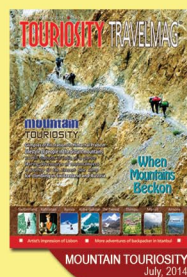
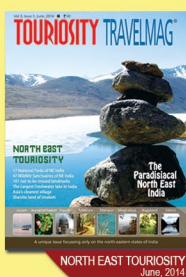
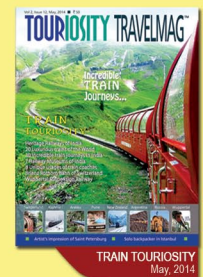
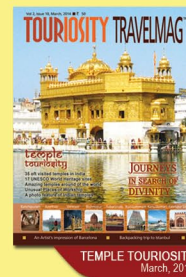
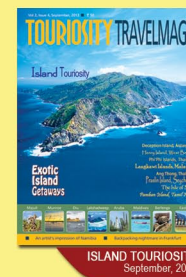
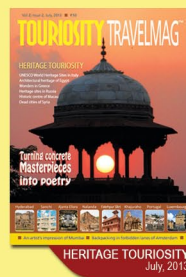
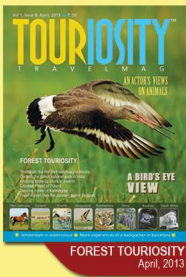
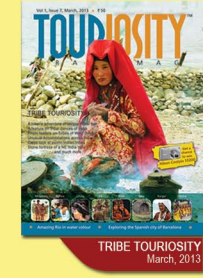
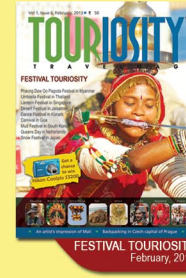
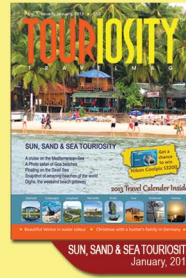
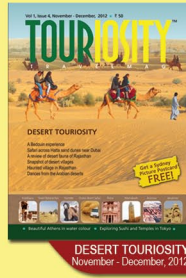
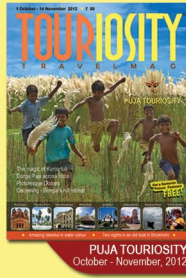
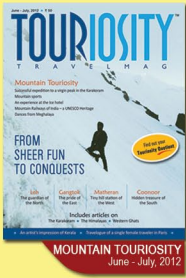
Buddhism in Malaysia is a significant part of the nation's religious and cultural landscape, contributing to the rich tapestry of Malaysia's diverse society. These Buddhist tourism sites in Malaysia offer a diverse range of experiences, from exploring ancient temples to witnessing the country's multi-ethnic Buddhist traditions.

MALAYSIA



Touriosity Travelmag brings to you

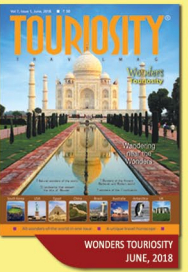
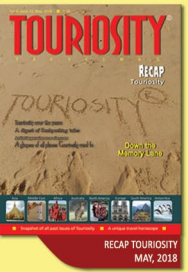
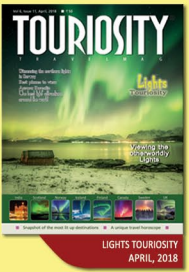
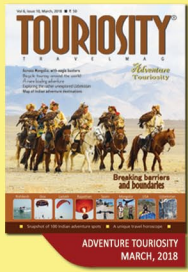
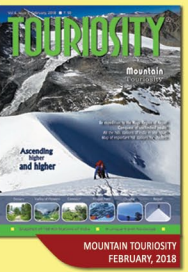
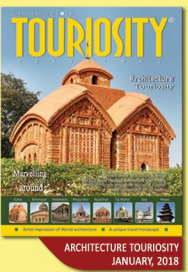
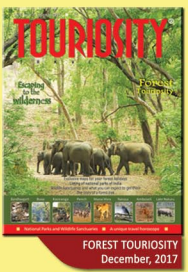
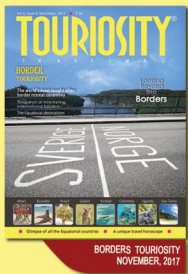
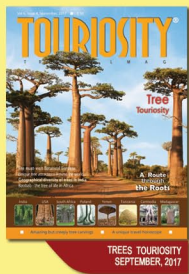
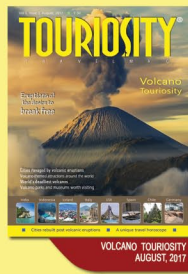
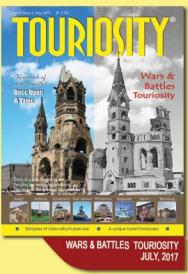
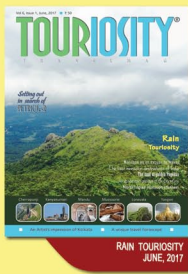
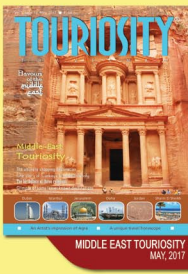
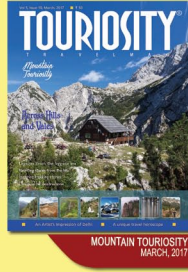
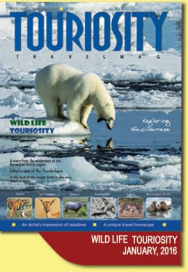
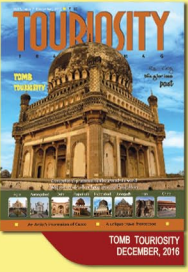
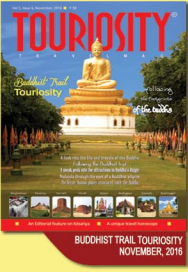
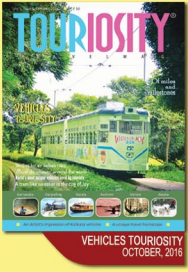
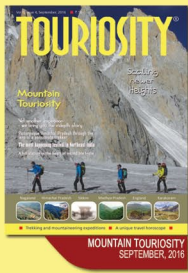
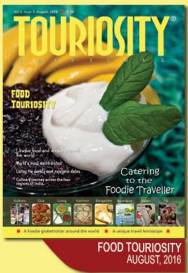
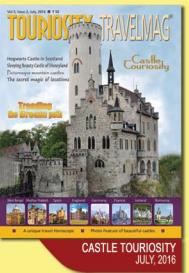
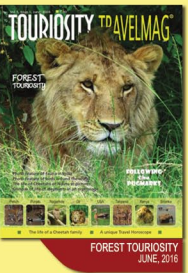
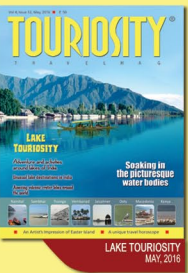
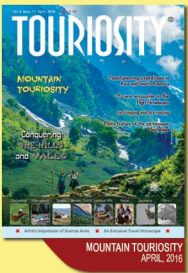
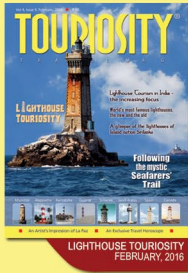
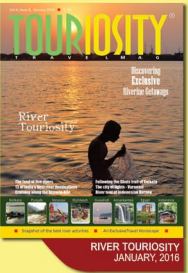
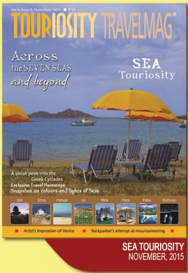
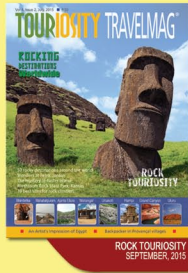
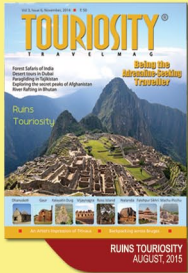
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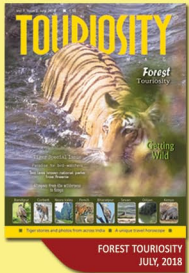
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of **TOURIOSITY**

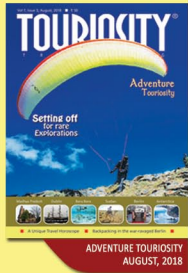
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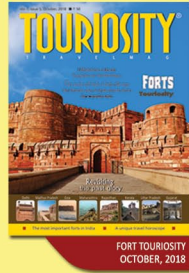
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ADVENTURE TOURIOSITY
AUGUST, 2018



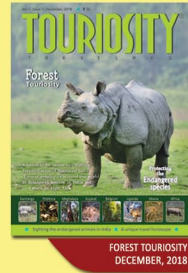
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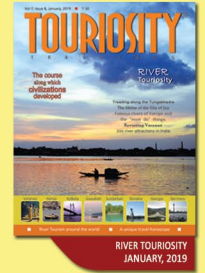
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DESERT TOURIOSITY
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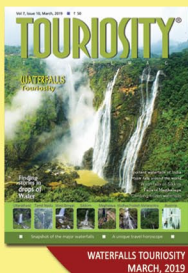
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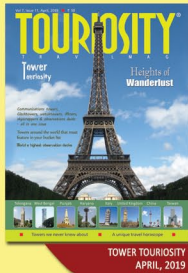
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JANUARY, 2019



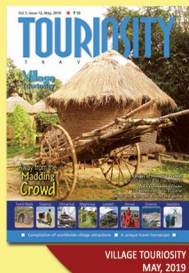
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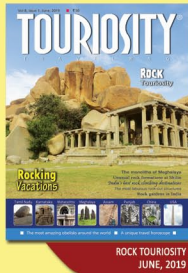
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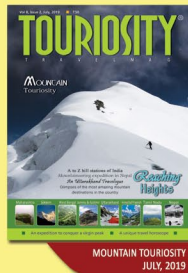
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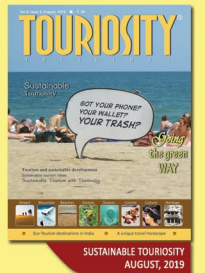
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ROCK TOURIOSITY
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MOUNTAIN TOURIOSITY
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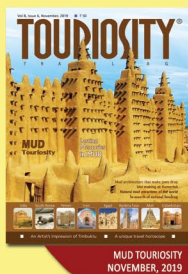
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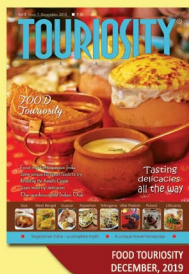
JOURNEYS TOURIOSITY
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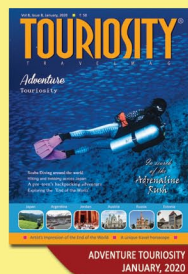
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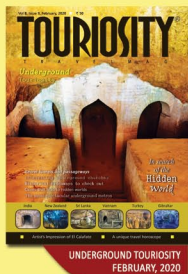
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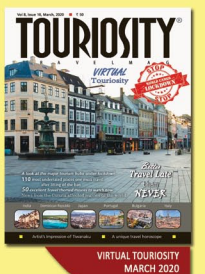
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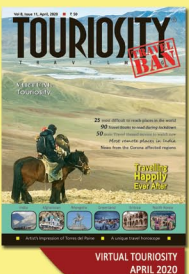
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UNDERGROUND TOURIOSITY
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VIRTUAL TOURIOSITY
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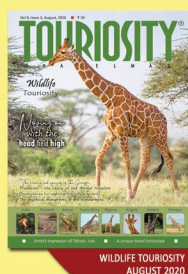
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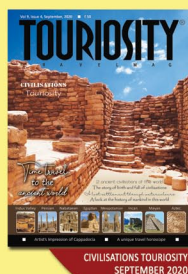
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MICRONATIONS TOURIOSITY
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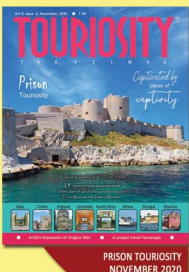
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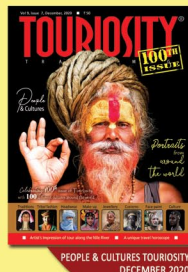
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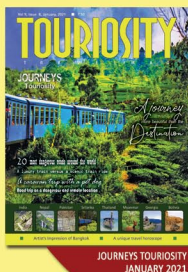
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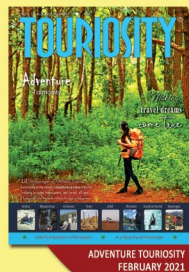
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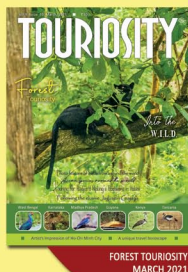
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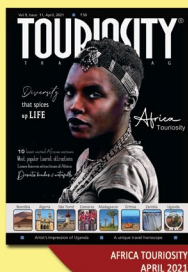
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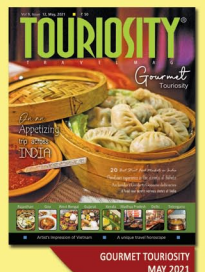
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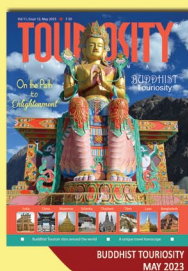
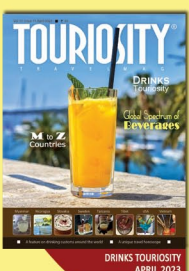
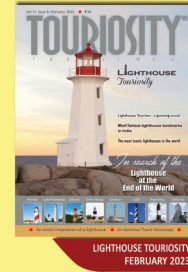
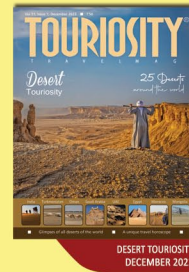
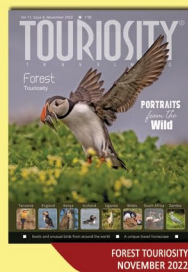
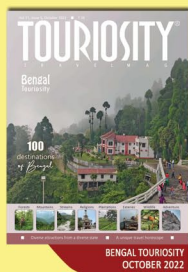
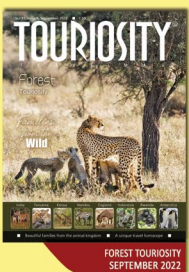
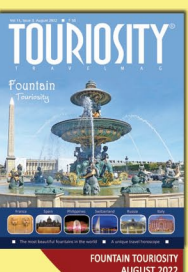
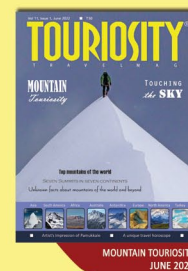
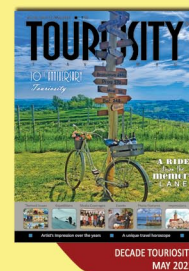
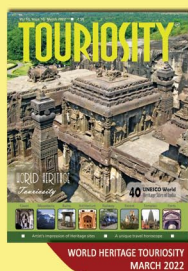
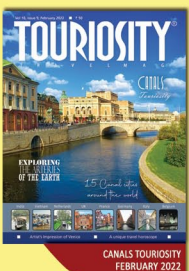
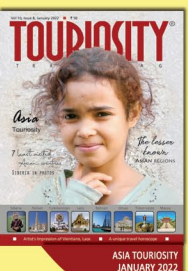
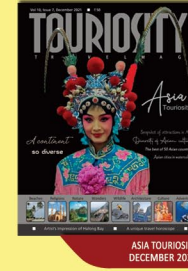
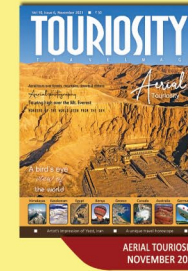
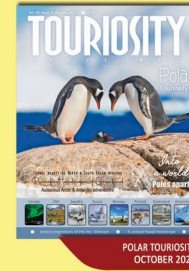
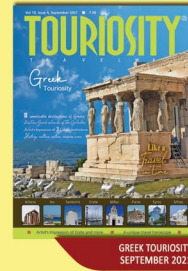
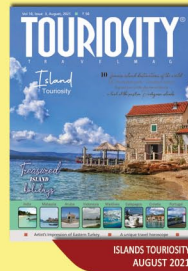
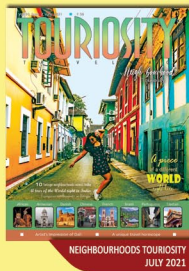
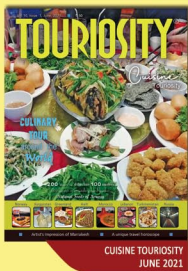



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A Southeast Asian country traversed by the Mekong River, Laos follows Theravada Buddhism, which emphasizes the original teachings of the Buddha. Buddhism is deeply ingrained in the Laotian way of life and plays a pivotal role in shaping the country's culture and customs. Buddhism is also deeply integrated into the Laotian culture, influencing art, architecture, and traditional dance.

The country also has a strong tradition of monasticism, with monks playing a significant role in daily life. Monks are highly respected, and many Laotian men spend time as monks to gain merit and religious insights. The Sangha, or the community of monks, plays a critical role in preserving and propagating Buddhist teachings and values.

Laos is dotted with Buddhist temples, and religious rituals and ceremonies are integral to daily life. These rituals often involve almsgiving to monks and offerings to Buddhist shrines. Laotians celebrate various Buddhist festivals, such as Boun Pi Mai (Lao New Year) and Boun Ok Phansa (the end of Buddhist Lent), with traditional customs and religious observances. The following are some prominent Buddhist tourism sites in Laos:



LAOS

Pha That Luang, Vientiane

The golden stupa of Pha That Luang (pictured above) is the most important religious monument in Laos and a national symbol. It is believed to house a relic of the Buddha. The stupa is located in the capital city of Vientiane. Originally

constructed in the 3rd century AD, the stupa has undergone changes many times.

Wat Si Saket, Vientiane

Wat Si Saket is famous for its ten thousand sculptures and statues of the Buddha in various shapes, sizes and styles. The temple also has a beautiful architecture with a 5-tiered roof. The temple houses a drum tower, a library and ornate floral ceiling. Built in 1818, this is the oldest Buddhist temple in Vientiane.

Wat Xieng Thong, Luang Prabang

Built between 1559-60 by King Setthathirath, the Wat Xieng Thong is a stunning temple complex in Luang Prabang. It is known for its intricate wall carvings and mosaics. It also abodes a 12-metres-tall funeral carriage. Many annual festivals are also celebrated here.

Wat Mai Suwannaphumaham, Luang Prabang

Also referred to simply as Wat Mai or Wat May, this 18th century temple is renowned for its beautifully gilded facade and is one of the most important monasteries in Luang Prabang. Adorned with intricate gilded stucco bas reliefs, this temple is also significant as the largest Buddhist temple in Luang Prabang.

Kuang Si Falls, Luang Prabang

These beautiful waterfalls are surrounded by lush greenery and have a small temple complex where visitors can pay their respects. The three-tiered waterfall is located about 29 km from Luang Prabang.

Wat Phou, Champasak

Wat Phou is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an ancient Khmer Hindu temple complex that includes a sacred mountain and ancient temple ruins. The complex is more than 1,000 years old and is located at the base of the Phou Kao Mountain on the banks of the Mekong River with stunning views of the river.

Vat Phou Cruise

A river cruise along the Mekong River to Vat Phou offers stunning scenery and visits to rural monasteries and temples. It is a great opportunity to discover the splendour of the iconic Mekong

River.

Plain of Jars, Phonsavan

The enigmatic Plain of Jars is home to ancient stone jars and some Buddhist temples. It is a megalithic archaeological landscape with thousands of stone jars scattered across the valley.

Wat That Luang Neua, Luang Prabang

This hilltop temple offers panoramic views of Luang Prabang and features a large seated Buddha statue.

Pak Ou Caves, Luang Prabang

These caves are known for housing thousands of Buddha statues and have been places of worship for centuries.

Golden Stupa, That Luang

The Golden Stupa is a 45-metres-tall stupa that is believed to contain a relic of Lord Buddha. While the top of the stupa is gilded, the rest of the stupa is covered in golden colour. Today it is a significant pilgrimage site.

Wat Phra Kaew, Vientiane

This temple was originally built to house the Emerald Buddha, which now resides in Bangkok. It's known for its beautiful architecture and gardens.

Xieng Khuan (Buddha Park), Vientiane

This unique park is filled with about 200 sculptures of Hindu and Buddhist deities, making it an unusual and fascinating attraction in the capital city in Laos.

Buddhism in Laos is a fundamental aspect of the nation's identity, influencing its cultural, social, and religious traditions. These Buddhist tourism sites in Laos provide visitors with an opportunity to explore the country's spiritual and cultural heritage while enjoying its serene and picturesque landscapes. Whether you're interested in history, architecture, or simply seeking a peaceful environment for meditation and reflection, Laos offers a range of experiences for Buddhist enthusiasts and travellers alike.

Indonesia is home to a rich and diverse Buddhist heritage. Buddhism arrived in Indonesia as early as the 1st century AD, brought by traders and travellers. Back then, the ancient kingdom of Srivijaya, centred on the current day Sumatra, was a major Buddhist centre in the region.

Although predominantly a Muslim nation, today Indonesia has both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist traditions. Mahayana Buddhism is more prevalent in Java and Bali, while Theravada Buddhism is practiced in regions like Sumatra and Kalimantan. Buddhism in Indonesia has integrated with local cultures, particularly on the island of Bali. Balinese Buddhism is a unique blend of Buddhism and Balinese Hinduism.

There is no denying the fact that the island nation of Indonesia is a paradise for travellers. In addition to the attractions that it offers, it also has several significant Buddhist destinations that attract travellers, pilgrims, and history enthusiasts from around the world. These destinations offer a unique opportunity to explore the country's cultural and religious diversity and rich heritage.

Here are some prominent Buddhist tourism destinations in Indonesia:

Borobudur

Borobudur is one of the most iconic Buddhist temples in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Located in Central Java, it dates back to the 9th century AD and is known for its magnificent stupa and intricate reliefs that depict the life of the Buddha. It is notably the largest Buddhist temple in the world. The Sailendra dynasty, responsible for the construction of Borobudur, played a significant role in the promotion of Buddhism in the country.

Prambanan Temple

Situated near Borobudur in Central Java, Prambanan is a complex of Hindu and Buddhist temples. The three main temples here are dedicated to the Hindu Trimurti, with Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord

Shiva being represented. There are also smaller temples dedicated to various deities, including Lord Buddha.

Mendut and Pawon Temples

These two smaller temples are located near the Borobudur temple in Java. Mendut Temple, a 9th century Buddhist temple located in the Mendut village, only 3 km from Borobudur temple, is known for its large statue of Buddha, while Pawon Temple is a simple yet elegant structure. The latter, also a 9th century temple, is located at a place equidistant from Borobudur and Mendut, a little more than 1 km from Mendut.

Sewu Temple

Also located in Central Java, Sewu Temple is a Buddhist temple complex with numerous smaller stupas. It is believed to be the second-largest Buddhist temple in Indonesia after Borobudur.

Muara Jambi Temple Complex

Situated 26 km from the city of Jambi on the island of Sumatra, this Buddhist temple complex features several ancient Buddhist temples and stupas. It is an important archaeological site in Indonesia and the richest one on the island of Sumatra. The eight temple-like structures in the compound are believed to have been built around the 14th century AD. It may be noted here that Old Jambi was the erstwhile capital of the Malay Kingdom that ruled here.

Linggarjati Temple

Located in the Cirebon region of West Java, Linggarjati Temple is a lesser-known but historically significant Buddhist temple dating back to the 9th century. There is also the Linggarjati Museum here which has an important historical relevance.

Bali

Bali is one of the most famous tourist destinations in Indonesia. While Bali predominantly has a Hindu heritage, it does have some Buddhist temples, such as the Brahma Vihara Arama in Lovina and the Banjar Hot Springs Buddhist Monastery. These are peaceful and serene places for meditation and reflection.

Sumberawan Temple

Situated in East Java, Sumberawan Temple is known for its beautiful reliefs and is considered an important example of the Majapahit period. It is the only Buddhist shrine in East Java that was built in the shape of a Stupa.

Bekasi Dragon Temple

This unique Buddhist temple, located in Bekasi, West Java, features a striking dragon sculpture and is a popular destination for visitors.

Batamalai Temple

Located in the Riau Islands, this Temple is an important Buddhist pilgrimage site, especially for those of Tamil origin.

These Buddhist destinations in Indonesia offer travellers a diverse range of experiences, from exploring ancient archaeological sites to witnessing the country's unique blend of Hindu and Buddhist heritage. Whether you're interested in history, architecture, or seeking a peaceful environment for meditation and reflection, Indonesia's Buddhist sites have much to offer.

Over the centuries, Buddhism in Indonesia has faced challenges, including the spread of Islam. However, it has continued to be an integral part of Indonesia's religious landscape. In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in Buddhism in Indonesia, with more people exploring its teachings and practices. Buddhism is an important part of the nation's cultural and religious fabric, contributing to its diverse and pluralistic society.

INDONESIA





Afghanistan was a crucial hub along the ancient Silk Road, and it is quite interesting to note that it played a pivotal role in the spread of Buddhism from India to Central Asia. The region was once a vibrant centre of Buddhist culture and learning. The country was home to several Buddhist monastic centres and stupas. Today it bears the traces of its rich Buddhist heritage amidst the challenges of contemporary times. Buddhist tourism in Afghanistan has immense historical and cultural significance. However, due to decades of conflict and instability, many Buddhist heritage sites have been damaged or neglected.

Spread of Buddhism in the country

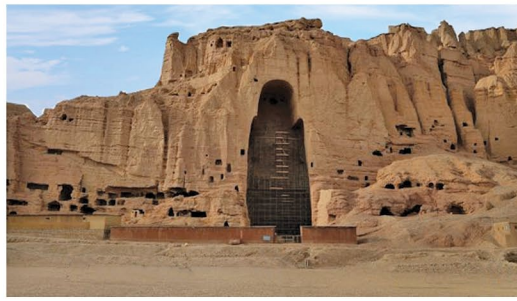
Buddhism got a stronghold in Afghanistan in the 3rd century BC, during the reign of the Indian Emperor Ashoka the Great who ruled over a vast majority of the region, including Afghanistan. Under his patronage, Buddhism spread rapidly across the Indian subcontinent, and he erected edicts and stupas to mark the religion's presence.

Important landmarks and elements

At its peak, Gandhara, an ancient kingdom spanning parts of present-day Afghanistan, now known as Kandahar, became a pivotal centre for the propagation of Buddhism. The iconic Gandharan style of art, an artistic tradition blending Greek, Indian, and Buddhist elements, thrived in this region. It is most famously represented by the Gandhara sculptures, which feature distinctive depictions of Buddha and Buddhist stories.

Some of the most notable Buddhist sites in Afghanistan include the Bamiyan Valley, where the world famous colossal Buddha statues once stood, and the nearby monastic caves. These statues were carved into the cliffs and were among the tallest standing Buddha statues in the world before their destruction by the Taliban in 2001.

The city of Ghazni, in eastern Afghani-



AFGHANISTAN

stan, was home to numerous Buddhist stupas, monasteries, and sculptures.

Hadda, located 10 km from Jalalabad, is another significant Greco-Buddhist archaeological site with important relics.

The monasteries and stupas across Afghanistan were adorned with intricate carvings and statues. The Bamiyan monastic complex, for instance, was a site of both spiritual practice and scholastic inquiry. Bamiyan, located in central Afghanistan, was especially renowned for its colossal Buddha statues, carved into the cliffs. The larger of these two statues stood 53 meters tall. These statues, now destroyed, were a testament to the region's rich Buddhist heritage.

Today the memory of the colossal Buddha statues in Bamiyan, once the largest standing Buddha statue that surpassed all others in the world in beauty and might, serves as a poignant reminder of the impermanence of empires and the enduring spirit of human creativity.

Decline of Buddhism

The decline of Buddhism in Afghanistan can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the arrival of Islam and periods of political instability. The spread of Islam in the region led to the gradual decline of Buddhism. The most devastating blow came in the 6th to 8th centuries AD. During this period, the region was subjected to a series of invasions by various forces, including the Hephthalites, the Turk Shahis and the Ghaznavids. These conflicts resulted in widespread destruction of Buddhist monasteries, stupas and art. However, the Mongol invasion of Afghanistan in the 13th century put the final nail into the coffin and nothing about the existence of Buddhism in the country were ever heard since the 14th century.

Efforts of restoration

It may be noted here that efforts were being

made by the Afghan government and international organizations to promote Buddhist tourism and encourage visitors to explore the country's rich Buddhist heritage. These also included efforts to restore and protect archaeological sites. However, the ongoing security concerns, political instability, and the aftermath of the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas have hindered the development of Buddhist tourism in Afghanistan. Travel to the country even in general is considered extremely risky, and most tourists are discouraged from visiting at present.

In conclusion, Buddhist tourism in Afghanistan, while facing significant challenges, offers a unique opportunity to explore a rich history that is deeply intertwined with the ancient Silk Road and the spread of Buddhism. With efforts to protect and preserve these cultural treasures, there is hope that Afghanistan's Buddhist heritage may once again become a significant attraction for travellers and scholars alike.

Future potential

If Afghanistan can achieve stability and peace, there is great potential for the development of Buddhist tourism. The country's rich heritage could draw pilgrims and tourists interested in exploring its historical and spiritual legacy.

Disclaimer

We at Touriosity DO NOT ENCOURAGE our readers to plan any trip to Afghanistan or visit the country as such, whether as a tourist, or on any other purpose. This article has been made a part of this issue only to give a complete idea about the spread of Buddhism around the world in its heydays and to provide an exhaustive idea to our readers about the existence of certain sites in the world.

Buddhism has played a significant role in Cambodia's history for over a millennium. It was the state religion during the Khmer Empire, which built the renowned Angkor Wat temple complex and numerous other religious sites. During the infamous Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s, many Buddhist monks and temples were persecuted. However, since then, there has been a revival of Buddhism in Cambodia, and many temples have been rebuilt or restored.

Cambodia predominantly follows Theravada Buddhism, which is the same school of Buddhism practiced in many Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand and Sri Lanka. Theravada Buddhism emphasizes the original teachings of the Buddha.

Buddhism is not just a religion but an integral part of Cambodian culture. It influences art, architecture, festivals, and daily life. Many traditional Cambodian dances and rituals have Buddhist themes.

Cambodians participate in various Buddhist devotional practices, such as making offerings at temples, attending Buddhist ceremonies, and engaging in acts of merit. The country has a strong monastic tradition, with numerous Buddhist monks (bhikkhus) playing an essential role in preserving and promoting the teachings of Buddhism.

Cambodia is home to several significant Buddhist tourism destinations, often intertwined with the country's rich history, ancient temples, and cultural heritage. These destinations attract travellers and pilgrims interested in exploring the spiritual and historical aspects of Buddhism. Here are some prominent Buddhist tourism destinations in Cambodia:

Angkor Wat

Built in the early 12th century, Angkor Wat, in Siem Reap, is one of the most iconic temple complexes in the world. Originally built as a Hindu temple,

it later became a Buddhist site. Its beautifully carved bas relief depict scenes from the Hindu epic of Ramayana and from the life of Khmer King Suryavarman II who built the complex. It is renowned for its stunning architecture, intricate carvings, and its central tower representing Mount Meru, the cosmic centre of Buddhism. Spread across an area of 162.7 hectares, Angkor Wat is the world's largest religious monument. It is not only a symbol of Cambodia but also a significant Buddhist site.

Angkor Thom

Located near Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom was the last capital of the Khmer Empire. The Bayon Temple within Angkor Thom is known for its massive stone faces, which some believe represent King Jayavarman VII and, in a spiritual sense, the compassion of the Buddha.

Ta Prohm

This temple, also near Angkor Wat, is famous for the way it has been left in a partially ruined state, with tree roots intertwining with the stone structures. It's a unique blend of nature and history. It is one of the most photographed attractions of Cambodia.

Preah Khan

Another temple near Angkor, Preah Khan is known for its striking architecture and historical significance. It is believed to have been a place of learning and a Buddhist university.

Bakong

Located in the Roluos Group of temples near Siem Reap, Bakong is one of the earliest temple mountains in the Angkor area, dating back to the late 9th century. It represents Mount Meru and serves as an important pilgrimage site.

Silver Pagoda (Wat Preah Keo Morokot)

Situated within the Royal Palace complex in Phnom Penh, this elegant temple is famous for its silver floors and the stunning Emerald Buddha. It is a symbol of the strong connection between Cambodia's royalty and Buddhism.

Wat Ounalom

Located in Phnom Penh, Wat Ounalom is the most important temple in the city and the centre of Cambodian Buddhism. It houses the eyebrow hair of Buddha and is the headquarters of the Cambodian Buddhist Sangha.

Wat Langka

This temple in Phnom Penh is a tranquil oasis in the bustling city. It is known for its serene atmosphere and meditation programs.

Wat Ek Phnom

Located near Battambang, this temple is known for its Angkor Wat-style architecture and carvings. For tourists, it is a quieter alternative to the more popular temples in Siem Reap.



CAMBODIA

Buddha Hill (Phnom Suntuk)

Situated in the coastal town of Sihanoukville, this hill offers panoramic views of the sea and a massive golden statue of Buddha.

These Buddhist tourism destinations in Cambodia offer a unique blend of history, spirituality, and awe-inspiring architecture. They provide visitors with the opportunity to explore the deep-rooted Buddhist traditions and the country's ancient heritage, all set against a backdrop of breathtaking natural beauty.

Buddhism was introduced to China from India via the Silk Road during the Han Dynasty (1st century AD). It quickly gained followers and began to integrate with Chinese culture and philosophies. Mahayana Buddhism, which emphasizes compassion and the role of bodhisattvas, became the predominant Buddhist tradition in China.

Chinese Mahayana Buddhism introduced



CHINA

the idea of the “Pure Land” and Chan (Zen) Buddhism, which emphasizes meditation.

Buddhism spread throughout China, with monasteries and temples dotting the landscape. The ancient Buddhist grottoes and caves, like those at Dunhuang, are testament to the faith’s widespread influence.

Buddhism had a profound impact on Chinese culture, influencing art, literature, philosophy, and even language. Iconic Chinese Buddhist art, such as the giant stone Buddhas at Longmen and the Dunhuang cave paintings, is celebrated worldwide.

Buddhism faced challenges during different dynastic periods, including periods of persecution. Despite these challenges, it continued to evolve and adapt to Chinese society. In the 20th century, following years of suppression during the early communist era, Buddhism in China experienced a revival. Today, it is once

again a vibrant and growing religion.

Today, the Chinese Buddhism has a diverse range of practices and traditions, from the elaborate rituals of the Pure Land tradition to the meditation-centred Zen practice. Many Chinese people visit temples and monasteries for religious rituals and to seek guidance from monks and nuns.

Here are some prominent Buddhist tourism sites in China:

Leshan Giant Buddha

Located in Sichuan Province, the Leshan Giant Buddha is a 71-meter-tall statue carved into the cliff face. It is the largest stone Buddha in the world and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Mount Emei

Emei Shan, also in Sichuan, is one of China’s Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains. It is known for its stunning natural beauty, ancient monasteries, and hiking trails.

Shaolin Temple

Located in Henan Province, the Shaolin Temple is one of the most famous Buddhist temples in China. It is renowned for its association with martial arts and Zen Buddhism.

Mogao Caves

The Mogao Caves, also known as the Dunhuang Caves, are a complex of Buddhist cave temples filled with exquisite murals and sculptures. They are located in Dunhuang, Gansu Province.

Putuo Shan (Mount Putuo)

Located on an island in Zhejiang Province, Mount Putuo is one of China’s Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains and a major pilgrimage site. It features numerous temples and beautiful coastal scenery.

Wutaishan (Mount Wutai)

Mount Wutai, in Shanxi Province, is another of the Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains.

It is known for its beautiful landscapes, monasteries, and ancient pagodas.

Labrang Monastery

Situated in Gansu Province, Labrang Monastery is one of the most important monasteries outside of Tibet. It is known for its Tibetan-style architecture and religious significance.

Yungang Grottoes

Located near Datong in Shanxi Province, the Yungang Grottoes feature over 50,000 Buddhist statues and sculptures, carved into the sandstone cliffs.

Longmen Grottoes

Situated in Luoyang, Henan Province, the Longmen Grottoes are a UNESCO World Heritage Site with thousands of Buddhist statues and inscriptions.

Jiuhua Shan (Mount Jiuhua)

Mount Jiuhua, in Anhui Province, is one of the Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains. It is known for its serene atmosphere and numerous temples.

Tian Tan (Temple of Heaven)

Located in Beijing, the Temple of Heaven is a complex of religious buildings used by emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an example of imperial Daoist architecture.

Ganden Monastery

Ganden Monastery is one of the “Great Three” Gelug monasteries in Tibet. It is known for its architectural beauty and religious significance.

These Buddhist tourism sites in China offer visitors a wide range of experiences, from exploring ancient temples and monasteries to enjoying the serene natural beauty of the country. They provide insight into China’s rich cultural and religious traditions and offer travellers a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in Buddhist history and spirituality.

The history of Buddhism in Bangladesh is a tapestry of ancient spirituality, culture, and heritage. The roots of Buddhism in the region date back to the time of the Buddha himself. Around 5th century BC, the Buddha is believed to have traversed the region during his spiritual quest for enlightenment. Later, under the patronage of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka the Great around the 3rd century BC, Buddhism began to flourish in Bangladesh. He erected edicts and monasteries across the country.

Gandhara art, characterized by a unique blend of Greek, Indian, and Buddhist elements, played a significant role in the evolution of art in the region. The Gandharan sculptures, found in places like Paharpur and Moinamoti, feature striking depictions of the Buddha and Buddhist narratives.

Bangladesh boasts several architectural marvels associated with Buddhism. Moinamoti, located near the city of Comilla, is a notable area with numerous archaeological sites, including the Shalban Vihara and Kutila Mura. The following are some of the prominent Buddhist tourism sites in Bangladesh that are worth visiting:

Vihara and Pagoda in Comilla

Comilla, located in eastern Bangladesh, has several Buddhist monasteries and pagodas, offering a glimpse into contemporary Buddhist culture in the country. The Shalban Vihara is an archaeological site in Moinamoti that contains ruins of a 7th century Buddhist monastery with 115 cells for monks. It is said to have been operative till the 12th century.

Somapura Mahavihara, Paharpur

Located in Paharpur, Naogaon district, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of the most important archaeological finds in Bangladesh. It

was once a thriving Buddhist monastery and centre of learning, with a massive stupa and numerous monastic cells. It was a prominent Buddhist monastery during the Pala Empire. Located inside it, the Rajshahi Vihara is one of the largest monasteries. It is famous for being the second largest Buddhist monastery located south of the Himalayas (after the Tawang monastery)

Pandua Dhamma Jadi

Located in Meherpur, this modern Buddhist temple and meditation centre is known for its serene ambiance and meditation facilities.

Jagaddala Mahavihara

Located in Paharpur in the Naogaon district, this ancient Buddhist monastery is thought to have been a

BANGLADESH



significant centre of learning during the Pala Empire. It is believed to have been built in the 11th century AD by King Ramapala of the Pala Dynasty.

Mahasthangarh

This is another significant archaeological site in Bogra district, believed to be one of the earliest urban centres in ancient Bangladesh. It has a rich history, with ancient Buddhist monastic remains, stupas, and artifacts.

Varendra Research Museum

Situated in Rajshahi, this museum holds a valuable collection of sculptures, artifacts, and relics related to Buddhism and the region's history. It is thought to be the oldest museum of Bangladesh (set up before partition in the year 1910).

Ramu, Cox's Bazar

This town located on the banks of Baghkhali River in Cox's Bazar, is home to several Buddhist monaster-

ies, temples and statues, including the Ramu Monastery and the Himchari Buddhist Temple. During the conquest of Ramu in the hands of the Mughals in 1666 AD, a 13-foot-high bronze statue of the Buddha was found here. This remains as the largest sculpture of the Buddha found in Bangladesh.

Vikramshila University

Although now mostly in India, Vikramshila was a prominent Buddhist university during the Pala Empire and played a crucial role in the spread of Buddhism in the region.

Sugandha

It is a small village in Chittagong where you can find the Sugandha Shikharini Vihara, a Buddhist temple known for its peaceful surroundings and scenic beauty. Sugandha is also a popular beach destination.

Rajban Vihara

This is a modern Theravada Buddhist monastery located in Rajban, Bandarban in Rangamati district of Bangladesh. It offers a peaceful atmosphere for meditation and spiritual practice. It was established here in 1970 in a sprawling area of 33 acres that overlooks the Kaptai Lake.

Over time, Buddhism began to wane in Bangladesh due to various factors, including the spread of Islam and periods of political instability. While the influence of Buddhism declined, it never entirely vanished. The ancient sites, architectural marvels, and artistic treasures scattered across the country serve as a living testament to the profound impact of Buddhism on the nation's history and cultural identity. In Bangladesh, Buddhism remains not just a historical relic but a living heritage that continues to inspire and resonate with people from all walks of life. Today, there are efforts to revive and preserve the Buddhist heritage. Several monasteries and viharas continue to serve as centres of worship and learning.



Aries

(21 March – 19 April)

This is a wonderful time to develop your pet projects or work. Your powers of attraction and personal magnetism are special and your own feelings tend to match the intensity you're projecting.

Places to visit: Samos in Greece - Samos is an island ruled by legend and beauty. It is the island of the father of mathematics, Pythagoras, the astronomer Aristarchus and the philosopher Epicurus.

Charminar - The structure is known for the signature 4 minarets, which are built in a marvellous Indo-Islamic style. It also houses a mosque, which is also a remarkable work of medieval architecture.

Favourable Dates: June 2, 7, 11, 16, 20, 25 Favourable Colours: White & Purple

The urge to start fresh, to break free from restrictive attitudes or circumstances, to totally redesign an area of your lives and to gain freedom through independence is strong during this cycle.

Places to visit: Rothenburg in Germany - The unique atmosphere of Rothenburg can be experienced when you stroll through the high-ways and byways of this town, where you will discover evidence of a bygone age on almost every corner:

Backwaters of Kerala - The pristine Backwaters of Kerala are known for their scenic beauty and a rich variety of flora, fauna, avi-fauna and marine life.

Favourable Dates: June 1, 2, 10, 11, 19, 20 Favourable Colours: Red & Purple



Taurus

(20 April – 20 May)



Gemini

(21 May – 20 June)

You can have good business sense, particularly for tapping into current or future trends. You take more pride in our tastes, relationships, and personal possessions. This is also a good time to move past or beyond an emotionally "stuck" place.

Places to visit: Azores – Portugal - The unforgettable sight of sunrise with the island of Pico in the background; the quiet inlets with beaches of soft sand; the hydrangeas standing are the places to see.

Valley of Flowers - As the summer arrives, the Valley of Flowers in Nainital turns into a palette of colorful flowers that covers the entire landscape.

Favourable Dates: June 5, 9, 14, 18, 23, 27 Favourable Colours: Yellow & Blue

This can be a strong period for networking, connecting, and enjoying friends, goals, and dreams. You would be open to new energies, approaches and attitudes. You can meet people who inspire you or introduce you to new ideas and perspectives this month.

Places to visit: Hvar - The city of Hvar in Croatia is a unique fusion of luxurious Mediterranean nature, rich cultural and historical heritage, and mundane, tourist present.

Elephanta Caves, Mumbai - A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Caves are famous for their ancient rock cut temples dedicated to the Hindu and Buddhist traditions

Favourable Dates: June 7, 9, 16, 25, 27, 29 Favourable Colours: Green & Grey



Cancer

(21 June – 22 July)



Leo

(23 July – 22 August)

There is a nesting urge experienced now, and also a stronger ability to find beauty in things. You are looking for more meaning or color to your lives and especially to your relationships.

Places to visit: Piran in Slovenia - One of the most photogenic cities in the Mediterranean, Piran has preserved its unsurpassed charm. The proximity to the sea and the rich history, which is mirrored in the architecture, draw magical scenes.

Havelock Island, Andamans - The shoreline is strikingly different from most other beaches found in India and is one of the few must visit exotic locations in the country.

Favourable Dates: June 3, 8, 12, 16, 21, 26 Favourable Colours: Blue & White

This period can push you to take better care of your finances, but it's also a strong period for building confidence in your own worth. Your feelings and tastes are grand, and you may be especially extravagant or indulgent.

Places to visit - Amir Chakhmaq Square -. The desert city, famous for its wind catchers is located in the middle of Iran and is the centre of Zoroastrian culture.

Amber Fort, Jaipur - The Amber fort is not only one of the most majestic monuments in India but its scenic location and preservation makes it a major tourist attraction in Jaipur.

Favourable Dates: June 4, 8, 13, 17, 21, 26 Favourable Colours: Red & Yellow



Virgo

(23 August – 22 Sept)



Libra
(23 Sept – 22 Oct)

This month brings easier and more natural energy for getting things done and pursuing your desires. Asserting your needs or purpose is not only natural, it goes over well with others.

Places to visit: Kruger National Park – Situated in South Africa, it offers visitors the chance to see the “Big Five”: lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant, and rhino, as well as an astounding diversity of other wildlife.

Ajanta and Ellora Caves, Aurangabad - The Ajanta Caves mainly consist of rock cut monuments dedicated to the ancient Buddhist traditions, while Ellora cave contain Hindu, Buddhist and Jain monuments built during the Rashtrakuta Empire.

Favourable Dates: June 2, 3, 11, 12, 20, 21

Favourable Colours: Red & Purple

You may get encouragement or motivation to pursue your desires and ambitions through a relationship during this period. You can find that you're less inhibited and more spirited now, and more willing to pursue activities that require a little extra courage.

Places to visit: Ploumanac'h in France – The area is renowned for its unusual rock formations, the best of which can be found on the coastal path between Perros-Guirec and the port of Ploumanac'h.

Ruins of Hampi, Karnataka – This is famous for its stone carved structures, built in marvellous Dravidian style architecture, temples and monuments.

Favourable Dates: June 1, 4, 10, 13, 19, 22

Favourable Colours: Blue & Yellow



Scorpio
(23 Oct – 21 Nov)

The month is a powerful one, even if it is tumultuous at times. You will be finding new and improved ways to make your mark on the world. You would give thought to your finances and how you can make important changes that free you from worry and limiting attitudes.

Places to visit: Mellieha in Malta - Its elevated maritime position, being surrounded on three sides by the Blue Mediterranean Sea, gives it magnificent views all around.

City Palace, Udaipur - The palace is one of the most visited monuments in India and is known for its opulent Hindu Rajput Architecture.

Favourable Dates: May 1, 3, 10, 12, 19, 21

Favourable Colours: Brown & Yellow



Sagittarius
(22 Nov - 21 Dec)

A romance or creative project may not be moving at the speed you'd like and on the other, the drive to produce and perform is strong. There would be a quest to become dedicated to the service of others.

Places to visit: Aquitaine in France - It is known as a place of leisure for the high French society and remains a trendy destination for summer holidays.

Kaziranga National Park, Assam - This national park is spread across an area of 430 square kilometers and is known for its varied terrain and vegetation that houses a large number of wildlife species including the one-horned rhino.

Favourable Dates: June 5, 6, 14, 15, 23, 24

Favourable Colours: Green & Blue



Capricorn
(22 Dec – 19 Jan)

The month continues to bring good fortune when it comes to family and your personal life, and will introduce plenty of positivity for romance and recreation. It also brings out a need to share your

Places to visit: Cavtat in Croatia - Its scenery, the rich cultural and historical heritage along with the range of services offered to tourists meet the demands of the present day tourists. Croatia in general is an upcoming tourist destination.

Ghats at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh - The Ghats are known to attract a large number of devotees and tourists who visit Varanasi to seek spiritual salvation.

Favourable Dates: June 2, 5, 11, 14, 20, 23

Favourable Colours: Green & Red



Aquarius
(20 Jan – 18 Feb)

This month will introduce fortunate energy for establishing yourself and getting comfortable. You'll be taking in information and letting inspiration or intuition work its magic rather than try to push an idea.

Places to visit: Mount Elbrus in Russia - Elbrus is included as one of the Seven Summits (which lists the highest summits on each of the planet's seven continents) and attracts both experienced and novice mountain climbers every year.

Tawang Monastery, Tawang - The building is located at an elevation of 3000 meters above sea level and is known for its scenic views and remarkable architecture

Favourable Dates: June 3, 5, 12, 14, 24, 25

Favourable Colours: Purple & Cream



Pisces
(19 Feb – 20 March)

Manish Kumar Arora is a renowned KP Astrologer, Numerologist, Tarot Reader and Vastu Consultant. He will be with Touriosity Travelmag to bring to our readers monthly predictions based on zodiac signs with special emphasis on travel predictions. Our readers can plan their tours accordingly. He can be reached at manish@manishastrologer.com





VIETNAM

The entry of Buddhism as a faith in Vietnam is not known with certainty. It is possible that it came to the country in the 1st or 2nd century AD from China or in the 3rd or 2nd century AD from India. Whatever be the case, there is no denying the fact that Buddhism has had a profound influence on Vietnamese society, promoting values of compassion, tolerance, and mindfulness. Buddhism is deeply ingrained in Vietnamese culture, influencing art, architecture, literature, and traditional rituals.

Vietnam follows Mahayana Buddhism, which is one of the major branches of Buddhism. This branch emphasizes the broader spiritual well-being of all beings. Vietnamese Buddhism incorporates some elements of Taoism, Chinese spirituality and Vietnamese folk religious beliefs.

Monks and nuns play a crucial role in Vietnamese Buddhism, and they are highly respected within the society. They provide spiritual guidance, conduct religious ceremonies, and are often involved in social welfare activities.

In the last decade, Vietnam has come up as a great travel destination, with pristine nature, boundless luxury, unparalleled history, great cuisine as well as entertainment to offer. The country is also home to numerous temples and pagodas, with some being historically and architecturally significant. The One Pillar Pagoda and Tran Quoc Pagoda in Hanoi are famous examples.

Vietnamese people celebrate various Buddhist festivals and rituals, such as the Vu Lan Festival (Feast of the Wandering Souls) and Tet Han Thuc (Buddha's Birthday), with offerings

and prayers. Here are some prominent Buddhist tourism sites in Vietnam:

Tran Quoc Pagoda, Hanoi

Located on a small island on the shores of West Lake, Tran Quoc Pagoda is one of the oldest Buddhist temples in Vietnam and features a 15-meter-tall stupa. In the temple Amitabha Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva are worshipped.

One Pillar Pagoda, Hanoi

This historic and iconic temple, built on a single stone pillar, is a symbol of Hanoi. This pagoda has the most unique architecture.

Huong Pagoda (Perfume Pagoda), Hanoi

It is a huge complex of Buddhist temples and shrines nestled in the limestone cliffs of the Huong Tich Mountains. This is one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Vietnam. It hosts a religious festival that draws crowd from all across Vietnam.

Thien Mu Pagoda, Hue

Thien Mu Pagoda is an iconic seven-story pagoda overlooking the Perfume River in Hue.

Marble Mountains (Ngu Hanh Son), Da Nang

These limestone hills house several Buddhist and Hindu grottoes and temples, including the Linh Ung Pagoda.

Truc Lam Monastery, Da Lat

This Zen Buddhist monastery is set in a serene forested area and offers meditation sessions.

Po Nagar Cham Towers, Nha Trang

These ancient Cham towers are dedicated to the goddess Po Nagar and are a significant religious and historical site.

Thien An Hill, Quy Nhon

Thien An Hill is home to a giant seated

Buddha statue and several pagodas, offering panoramic views of Quy Nhon.

Tay Thien Complex, Vinh Phuc

This complex includes several pagodas and temples on Tay Thien Mountain and is a major pilgrimage site for Buddhists.

Linh Phuoc Pagoda, Da Lat

Known for its unique architecture, Linh Phuoc Pagoda is adorned with colourful mosaics made from broken glass and pottery.

Vinpearl Land, Nha Trang

Located on an island, Vinpearl Land features the Vinpearl Land Amusement Park as well as the Vinpearl Land Buddhist Complex.

Vinh Nghiem Pagoda, Ho Chi Minh City

Vinh Nghiem Pagoda is known for its modern architecture and is home to a large bronze statue of Buddha.

Phat Tich Pagoda, Bac Ninh

Phat Tich Pagoda is one of the most beautiful and well-preserved pagodas in northern Vietnam.

Bai Dinh Pagoda, Ninh Binh

Bai Dinh Pagoda or Bai Dinh Temple Spiritual and Cultural Complex is a massive complex with numerous temples and statues, including one of the largest Buddha statues in Southeast Asia, all located on the Bai Dinh mountain.

Buddhism in Vietnam is deeply intertwined with the country's culture and spiritual life, and it continues to be a prominent and enduring aspect of Vietnamese identity. The country provides a range of experiences for Buddhist enthusiasts and travellers alike. Whether you're interested in history, architecture, or simply seeking a peaceful environment for meditation and reflection, these Buddhist tourism sites in Vietnam are great place to visit.

Sri Lanka is a country rich in Buddhist heritage, with a history of Buddhism dating back over two millennia. It boasts numerous Buddhist tourism destinations that attract pilgrims, travellers, and scholars from around the world.

Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BC during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa when Mahinda, the son of Emperor Ashoka, brought the teachings of Buddhism to the island. This event, known as the 'Great Conversion', laid the foundation for Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Hence, Sri Lanka is home to one of the oldest recorded Buddhist traditions in the world.

Theravada Buddhism

The form of Buddhism practiced in Sri Lanka is Theravada Buddhism, often considered the most orthodox and conservative school of Buddhism. It is based on the earliest scriptures, or Pali Canon, which are written in the Pali language.

Sri Lankan culture and architecture have been profoundly influenced by Buddhism. The island is dotted with beautifully designed stupas (dagobas), intricate temple complexes, and rock cave temples adorned with frescoes and sculptures. The artistic and architectural heritage of these sites reflects the country's deep Buddhist roots.

Buddhism plays a central role in the lives of Sri Lankans. Monastic life is highly respected, and the country has a large number of monasteries and monks (bhikkhus). Devotional practices, including offerings of flowers, incense, and lighting of oil lamps, are common in daily life. Buddhist festivals, such as Vesak, Poson, and Perahera, are celebrated with great fervor. Here are some of the prominent Buddhist tourism destinations in Sri Lanka:

Anuradhapura

Anuradhapura is one of the ancient capitals of Sri Lanka and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is home to

numerous stupas (dagobas), monastic complexes, and ancient ruins, including the Ruwanwelisaya, Jetavanaramaya, and Thuparamaya stupas. Sri Maha Bodhi, a sacred fig tree in Anuradhapura believed to be a sapling from the original Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Polonnaruwa

Another UNESCO World Heritage Site, Polonnaruwa features well-preserved ruins, including the Gal Vihara with its colossal Buddha statues, the Rankot Vihara stupa, and the Vatadage.

Sigiriya

Sigiriya is known for the Sigiriya Rock Fortress, which features frescoes and a massive lion's paw entrance. It is associated with Buddhist monastic establishments.

Dambulla

Dambulla Cave Temple, also known as the Golden Temple of Dambulla, is a complex of rock caves adorned with intricate murals and hundreds of Buddha statues.

Lankatilaka Temple

Located near Kandy, the Lankatilaka Temple is known for its beautiful frescoes and a towering Buddha statue.

Kandy

Kandy is home to the Temple of the Tooth Relic (Sri

SRILANKA



Dalada Maligawa), one of the most sacred Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka. It houses a tooth relic of Buddha and hosts the Esala Perahera, a grand annual festival.

Mihintale

Mihintale is the spot where Buddhism was introduced

to Sri Lanka by Mahinda, the son of Emperor Ashoka. It features a grand staircase, monastic ruins, and a stupa.

Ritigala

Ritigala is an ancient monastic complex nestled in a dense forest. It features ruins of monastic buildings and meditation platforms.

Katharagama

Katharagama is a sacred city associated with the deity Skanda/Karthikeya and is a site of pilgrimage for Buddhists, Hindus, and indigenous Vedda people.

Isurumuniya

Isurumuniya is a rock temple in Anuradhapura known for its rock carvings, including the famous "Isurumuni Lovers."

Kelaniya

Kelaniya is home to the Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara, a historic temple with beautiful frescoes and a significant stupa.

Kalutara

Kalutara houses the Gangatilaka Vihara, which is renowned for its stunning location along the Kalu Ganga river and its impressive reclining Buddha statue.

Maligawila

Maligawila features a colossal standing Buddha statue, one of the tallest free-standing Buddha statues in Sri Lanka.

Bambaragala Viharaya

Bambaragala Viharaya is known for its rock carvings, which depict various scenes from Buddhist legends.

These sites in Sri Lanka offer visitors an opportunity to explore ancient monastic sites, sacred temples, architectural marvels, and rich Buddhist traditions as also have a glimpse into the country's deep-rooted Buddhist heritage.



Buddhism has been integral to Myanmar's history for over a thousand years. The country is home to numerous ancient temples, stupas, and monasteries. The Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon is one of the most revered Buddhist sites in the world. Myanmar predominantly follows Theravada Buddhism, the same school of Buddhism practiced in many Southeast Asian countries, emphasizing the original teachings of the Buddha.

The Sangha, the community of Buddhist monks and nuns, plays a pivotal role in the country. Monks are highly respected, and monastic life is a revered institution. Young men traditionally spend some time as novice monks.

Buddhism is not just a religion but an integral part of Myanmar's culture. It influences art, architecture, rituals, and daily life. Myanmar celebrates several Buddhist festivals with great enthusiasm, including Thingyan (the Water Festival) and Thadingyut (Festival of Lights). Thingyan marks the end of the Buddhist Lent.

In recent years Myanmar has seen a steep rise in Buddhist nationalism, and a movement that emphasizes the preservation and protection of Burmese Buddhist culture. The treatment of its Rohingya Muslim population has raised ethical questions concerning the relationship between Buddhism and ethnicity in the country, resulting in international criticism. But the fact that remains is that Buddhism is an essential part of Myanmar's identity, shaping its culture, values, and way of life. The country's rich Buddhist heritage is visible in its countless religious monuments and the widespread reverence for the Buddha's teachings.

Myanmar has numerous pilgrimage sites which reflect its unique cultural and spiritual heritage. The most notable Buddhist sites are the following:

Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon

The Shwedagon Pagoda is one of the



MYANMAR

most iconic Buddhist sites in Myanmar. This massive, gilded stupa is believed to enshrine relics of four Buddhas. It's a hub of pilgrimage, meditation, and religious activities.

Bagan

Bagan, an ancient city, is known for its vast plain of thousands of temples and pagodas. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the most significant archaeological and religious sites in Asia. Every year it sees tourists from all over the world.

Mahamuni Pagoda, Mandalay

The Mahamuni Buddha image in Mandalay is among the most revered in Myanmar. Pilgrims visit the temple to apply gold leaf to the statue as an act of merit. The temple was built in 1784 by King Bodawpaya.

Kyaiktiyo Pagoda (Golden Rock)

Located in Mon State, this pagoda is perched on a precariously balanced boulder. It is a major pilgrimage site and a symbol of Myanmar's spiritual devotion.

Inle Lake

Inle Lake is known for its floating villages and monasteries, such as Nga Phe Chaung Monastery. The monks here have a unique rowing technique, using one leg to paddle. It is also a very popular tourist destination.

Sule Pagoda, Yangon

The 2000-years-old Sule Pagoda is situated in the heart of Yangon and is an important landmark. It is believed to house a hair relic of the Buddha.

Mawlamyine

This city in Mon State features the Kyaik Than Lan

Pagoda, offering panoramic views of the city and the sea. It was the setting for Rudyard Kipling's "The Road to Mandalay".

Sagaing Hill

Sagaing Hill, near Mandalay, is a hill studded with numerous pagodas, monasteries, and meditation centres. It is often referred to as 'Little Bagan'. It is located by the Irrawaddy River.

Popa Taungkalat Monastery

Perched atop Mount Popa, this sacred monastery is associated with nat (spirit) worship. It offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape.

Hpa-An

Hpa-An is known for its natural beauty and cave temples, including Kawgun Cave and Saddan Cave. These caves contain Buddhist art and statues.

Kyakhawine Monastery, Bago

Kyakhawine Monastery is famous for its unique practice of feeding thousands of monks in a procession known as the 'Monk Queue'.

Shwemawdaw Pagoda, Bago

This pagoda in Bago is one of the tallest pagodas in Myanmar. It is a significant pilgrimage site for Buddhists.

Sittwe, Rakhine State

It is home to Kuthodaw Pagoda, known for its massive marble inscriptions of the Tripitaka, the Theravada Buddhist scriptures.

These Buddhist tourism sites in Myanmar offer travellers a chance to explore the rich Buddhist heritage, witness unique traditions, and appreciate the architectural and natural beauty of the country. Myanmar's spiritual and cultural significance make it a captivating destination for those interested in Buddhism and history.

The history of Buddhism in Pakistan is a tale of spiritual enlightenment, cultural exchange, and artistic magnificence. Buddhism emerged in the region during the reign of Emperor Ashoka (3rd century BC). Notably, the ancient region of Gandhara, which straddled parts of present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, played a pivotal role in the development of Buddhism. This article delves into the story of Buddhism in Pakistan, highlighting its rise, influence on art and culture, and eventual decline.

During the reign of the Kushan Empire (1st to 3rd century AD), Pakistan became a hub of artistic creativity. The blend of Hellenistic and Indian artistic styles gave birth to a unique aesthetics, with monasteries and stupas being adorned with intricate carvings and statues.

Back then, Pakistan was home to numerous monastic centres and educational hubs that attracted scholars and monks from across the Buddhist world. These institutions were not merely places of worship but also centres of learning and intellectual exchange. Notable monastic complexes, such as Takht-i-Bahi and Taxila, served both as spiritual sanctuaries and repositories of knowledge.

One of the most significant contributions of Buddhism to the region is its influence on art and culture. The Gandharan style, a fusion of Greek, Indian, and Buddhist elements, reached its zenith in the Gandhara region. This artistic tradition is most notably represented through the Gandhara sculptures, characterized by distinct depictions of the Buddha and Buddhist narratives.

Pakistan, with its rich history and diverse cultural heritage, has several significant Buddhist tourism sites that reflect the country's deep-rooted Buddhist past. While these sites are not as popular or well-maintained as those in India, the country is contemplating to explore Buddhist Tourism as a means

of cultural diplomacy to build better relations with other countries of the world. It will be interesting to see that happen as the country is home to some iconic Buddhist heritages.

The following are some of the prominent Buddhist sites in Pakistan:

Taxila

Taxila is one of the most renowned Buddhist sites in Pakistan and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It served as a major centre for Buddhist learning during the Gandhara period. Some key sites within Taxila include the Dharmarajika Stupa, Jaulian Monastery, Mohra Muradu Monastery, and the Taxila Museum, which houses a remarkable collection of Buddhist artifacts.

Takht-i-Bahi

Located near Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this Buddhist monastic complex is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It features an impressive array of stupas, monastic cells, and other structures that provide insight into the ancient Buddhist way of life. It is interesting to note that this site was originally a Zoroastrian complex which was converted into a Buddhist monastic site after the arrival of Buddhism.

Swat Valley

Swat is known for its stunning natural beauty and rich cultural history. It contains various Buddhist sites, including Udegram, Butkara Stupa, and Shingardar Stupa. There are 2000-years-old temples, large inscriptions and sculptures of the Buddha in the valley.

Butkara Buddhist Stupa

Located in the Swat District, this stupa near Mingora is a prominent historical site featuring intricate carvings and offering insights into the region's Buddhist history. It is thought to have been built by the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. But it was later expanded at least five times over the next centuries.

Gumbat Stupa

This 2nd century Buddhist stupa located in Swat Valley is known for its ornate carvings and historical significance. It is a double-domed stupa is surrounded by 20 smaller stupas.

Bhamala Stupa

This recently excavated stupa, located near Haripur, is considered one of the oldest and largest stupas in the region, with elaborate carvings. Dating back from the 2nd century AD, it has been given the status of a national heritage.

PAKISTAN



Ketas

Situated near Nowshera, Ketas is an important Buddhist archaeological site with remains of stupas and monastic complexes.

Mankiala Stupa

Near the Attock Bridge, this stupa is an ancient and picturesque site with a beautiful view of the Haro River.

Pakistan's rich Buddhist legacy, characterized by its influence on art and culture, has left an enduring mark on the country's historical identity. The remnants of ancient stupas, monastic complexes, and Gandharan sculptures stand as a testament to the country's rich heritage.

The decline of Buddhism in Pakistan can be attributed to several factors, including the spread of Islam, political instability and invasions. While the new faith coexisted with Buddhism for a time, the practice of Buddhism gradually waned. However, despite the decline, Pakistan is still home to a number of ancient Buddhist sites and artifacts. These remnants bear testimony to the rich Buddhist heritage that once thrived in the region. The archaeological sites in Taxila and the ancient stupas of Swat continue to attract scholars and enthusiasts.

Singapore is known for its religious tolerance and harmony. Buddhism coexists peacefully with other major religions, including Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. The religion was introduced to the country by immigrants from China, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. As of 2020, Buddhism is the largest religion in Singapore with a population of 31% following the faith.

The country is home to various Buddhist traditions, including Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism. This diversity reflects in the multicultural nature of the city-state, with a substantial Buddhist population among the Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities.

Buddhism has become an integral part of Singapore's culture and is evident in the architectural landscape with numerous temples and monasteries. The Buddha Tooth Relic Temple in Chinatown is one of the most iconic Buddhist landmarks in the country.

The Buddhist population in Singapore celebrates various festivals, including the Vesak Day, which commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha). These festivals often include processions, prayer services, and charitable activities.

Singapore has a strong monastic tradition, and monks and nuns play an essential role in the local Buddhist community. They provide spiritual guidance, conduct religious ceremonies, and are often involved in charitable work. Buddhism is taught in educational institutions, and various organizations offer

Dharma classes and meditation programs to reach a broader audience.

Here are some prominent Buddhist tourism sites in Singapore:

Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum

Located in Chinatown, this temple is known for housing a sacred tooth relic of the Buddha (the left canine, said to have been recovered from his funeral pyre in Kushinagar, India). The temple's architecture is inspired by the Tang Dynasty, and it features a stunning interior and a museum with Buddhist artifacts. It is a five-storied impressive building in the heart of the iconic Chinatown in Singapore.

Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple (Temple of a Thousand Lights)

This temple is famous for its 15-meter-tall Buddha statue and thousands of lights that illuminate it in the evening. It is one of the largest Buddha statues in Southeast Asia. The architecture of the temple is said to be influenced by India, Chinese and Thai temple architecture.

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (Bright Hill Temple)

Located in Bishan, this is one of the largest monasteries in Singapore. It features a serene environment, beautiful gardens, and numerous temples and halls. It also houses one of Asia's largest Buddha statues in the Hall of No Fame.

Sri Lankaramaya Buddhist Temple

This temple is a hub for the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Singapore. It features traditional Sri Lankan architecture and hosts various Buddhist festivals.

Burmese Buddhist Temple

Also known as Maha Sasani Ramsi, this Burmese Buddhist temple located near the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall is a very popular Buddhist temple in Singapore. It is a colossal temple

guarded by two lion-like figures. It is home to a pure white marble statue of the Buddha.

Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple

It is one of the major Buddhist temples of Singapore. It is dedicated to Guan Yin or Avalokitesvara, the Goddess of Mercy. The divination predictions here are said to be quite accurate.

Tai Pei Buddhist Centre

Situated in Toa Payoh, this temple offers meditation classes and has a peaceful garden with Buddhist sculptures.

Poh Ern Shih Temple

Located near Thomson Plaza, this temple is known for its serene environment and exquisite architectural design.

Leong San See Temple

Located in Little India in Singapore, this temple is known for its elaborate decorations and colourful roof. It is an important place of worship for the local Buddhist community. It is dedicated to Guan Yin or Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, the Goddess of Mercy.

Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery

Located in Toa Payoh, it is one of Singapore's oldest monasteries (1898). It is known for its intricate architecture and serene ambiance.

Wei Tuo Fa Gong Temple

Located in the gorgeous island of Pulau Ubin, away from the mainland Singapore, this is a major place of worship for the Buddhists. Seated on a small hillock, the temple offers a scenic view of the nearby pond teeming with fish and turtles.

These Buddhist tourism sites in Singapore provide travellers with the opportunity to explore the diverse Buddhist traditions that exist within the city-state.

SINGAPORE



Interestingly, Bhutan is the only country in the world to have adopted Buddhism as its official state religion. No wonder that the religion plays a central role in the nation's culture and way of life. Buddhism is also deeply ingrained in Bhutanese art, architecture, music and traditional rituals. Bhutan's monasteries, stupas, and dzongs (fortresses) are significant examples of Buddhist architecture. The country celebrates various Buddhist festivals, or "tshechus," which are marked by colourful mask dances and rituals. These festivals are important cultural and religious events.

Buddhism was officially introduced to Bhutan in the 8th century by Guru Rinpoche, also known as Padmasambhava. His teachings and influence are pivotal in Bhutanese Buddhism. Today, the majority of Bhutanese people are Buddhists, and the country has a strong monastic tradition. The monastic community, or sangha, plays a central role in religious and cultural affairs.

Bhutan follows Vajrayana Buddhism, which is a form of Mahayana Buddhism. This branch emphasizes the use of tantra and esoteric rituals to attain enlightenment.

Gross National Happiness Index

Bhutan is known for its unique approach to governance, emphasizing Gross National Happiness (GNH) over economic development. Buddhist principles, such as spiritual well-being and environmental sustainability, are central to this philosophy.

Bhutan's approach to environmental conservation is influenced by Buddhist beliefs. The country is committed to preserving its natural beauty and biodiversity.

Bhutan, often referred to as the 'Land of the Thunder Dragon', is a Himalayan kingdom with a strong Buddhist heritage. It's known for its stunning monasteries, temples, and fortress-like dzongs. Here are some of the most prominent Buddhist tourism sites in Bhutan:

Taktasang Monastery (Tiger's Nest)

Precariously perched on the edge of a cliff 900 metres above the ground in the Paro Valley, Taktasang is one of the most iconic and

sacred monasteries in Bhutan. It offers breathtaking views of the surrounding area. A trip to Bhutan is incomplete without a visit to the Tiger's Nest monastery.

Punakha Dzong

The Punakha Dzong is one of the most beautiful and important dzongs in Bhutan. It's located at the confluence of the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers and is known for its rich history and striking architecture. It is known as one of the oldest and largest monasteries in Bhutan over which many wars were fought with Tibet.

Trongsa Dzong

Situated in central Bhutan, Trongsa Dzong is the largest dzong in the country and a crucial administrative and monastic centre.

Bumthang Valley

The Bumthang Valley is often considered the cultural and spiritual heart of Bhutan, with several important monasteries and temples, including Jambay Lhakhang and Kurjey Lhakhang.

Chimi Lhakhang

Also known as the 'Temple of the Divine Madman', this temple in Punakha is dedicated to Drukpa Kunley, a revered Buddhist saint known for his eccentric and unorthodox teachings.

Phajoding Monastery

Located near Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, Phajoding Monastery offers panoramic views of the Thimphu Valley and is a peaceful place for meditation and retreats.

Dochula Pass

This mountain pass, on the way from Thimphu to Punakha, is known for its collection of 108 chortens (stupas) and offers breathtaking views of the Himalayan peaks.

Kyichu Lhakhang

Located in Paro, Kyichu Lhakhang is one of the oldest temples in Bhutan and is believed to have been built to subdue a giant ogress who once terrorized the region.

Gangtey Monastery

Situated in the Phobjikha Valley, this beautiful Buddhist monastery provides visitors an opportunity to experience the unique Bhutanese culture of the region and the annual Black-necked Crane festival.

Haa Valley

This picturesque valley is known for its natural beauty and the Lhakhang Karpo (White Temple) and Lhakhang Nagpo (Black Temple), which are significant monasteries in the region.

Nalanda Buddhist Institute

Located in Punakha, this institute offers a place for the study and practice of Buddhism, as well as cultural immersion experiences. It is named after the famous university in Bihar, India.

BHUTAN



The influence of Buddhism in Bhutan extends to governance, social well-being and environmental policies. It remains a central and cherished part of Bhutanese life. When visiting these Buddhist sites in Bhutan, it is important to practice responsible tourism to preserve the natural beauty of Bhutan.

Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the 6th century, primarily by immigrants from Korea and China. It quickly became integrated with the indigenous Shinto religion and played a significant role in shaping Japanese culture. Today, Japan primarily follows Mahayana Buddhism, with various schools and sects, including Pure Land Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and Nichiren Buddhism, having a strong presence. Japan practices religious syncretism, where Buddhism and Shintoism often



JAPAN

coexist harmoniously. Many religious festivals and customs in Japan involve elements of both traditions.

Buddhism in Japan has adapted to modern life, with a focus on meditation, mindfulness, and secular practices. It continues to be relevant to contemporary Japanese society.

The Shingon Buddhism is a form of Vajrayana Buddhism that developed uniquely in Japan. It is known for its esoteric rituals and practices. Zen Buddhism, that originated in China during the Tang Dynasty, with its emphasis on meditation and mindfulness, has had a profound impact on Japanese culture and the arts. It is known for its simple and austere monastic practices.

Buddhism has influenced various aspects of Japanese culture, including art, architecture, calligraphy, tea ceremonies, and martial arts. The concept of impermanence and the pursuit of enlightenment are central themes in Japanese art and philosophy.

Japan is renowned for its Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. Some of the most iconic temples include Kinkaku-ji (the Golden Pavilion) in Kyoto and Senso-ji Temple in Tokyo. Japan celebrates various Buddhist festivals, including Obon, a festival honouring deceased ancestors, and Hana Matsuri, the Buddha's birthday celebration.

There are numerous Buddhist tourism sites across the country. These attract both people of the faith and non-believers. The following are some important ones:

Kinkaku-ji (The Golden Pavilion)

Located in Kyoto, this Zen Buddhist temple is known for its stunning, gold-leaf-covered exterior and beautiful surrounding gardens. It is quite a popular attraction in Kyoto and gets visitors round the year.

Ryoan-ji Temple

Also in Kyoto, Ryoan-ji is famous for its rock garden, which is one of the most iconic Zen gardens in Japan. The temple itself is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Horyu-ji Temple

Situated in Nara, Horyu-ji is one of Japan's oldest temples and contains some of the world's oldest surviving wooden structures. It is home to numerous national treasures and important Buddhist artifacts. It was once one of the seven great temples of Japan.

Todai-ji Temple

Another significant temple in Nara, Todai-ji is famous for its colossal bronze statue of the Great Buddha (Daibutsu), one of Japan's largest bronze statues. It was also one of the seven great temples of Japan.

Koya-san (Mount Koya)

This sacred mountain in Wakayama Prefecture is the centre of Shingon Buddhism and home to numerous monasteries. Visitors can experience temple stays, meditative practices, and explore the Okunoin Cemetery, the largest cemetery in Japan.

Byodo-in Temple

Located in Uji, near Kyoto, this temple is famous for its Phoenix Hall, which appears on the 10-yen coin. It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a fine example of Heian-period architecture.

Engyo-ji Temple

Perched atop Mount Shosha in Himeji, this temple offers spectacular views and was featured in the movie "The Last Samurai." It's known for its serene atmosphere and stunning surroundings.

Chuson-ji Temple

Found in Hiraizumi, Chuson-ji is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a rich history, beautiful buildings, and numerous national treasures.

Miyajima (Itsukushima Shrine)

Located on the island of Miyajima in Hiroshima Bay, this is a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its "floating" torii gate and the Itsukushima Shrine.

Narita-san Shinsho-ji Temple

Situated in Narita, this temple is famous for its beautiful buildings and gardens. It's a popular stop for travellers arriving at or departing from Narita International Airport.

Zenko-ji Temple

This is one of the most important and revered temples in Nagano, known for its dark passageway in which visitors seek the 'key to paradise'.

When visiting these Buddhist sites in Japan, it's important to be respectful of local customs and temple etiquette. Some temples may require modest clothing, and it's customary to bow or show other signs of respect when entering temple buildings. Additionally, you may have the opportunity to participate in meditation or prayer sessions at some of these sites, enhancing your understanding of Japanese Buddhism.

Buddhism is deeply ingrained in the everyday life of the Thai people. It serves as a moral and spiritual compass, influencing their behavior, customs, and rituals. Buddhism in Thailand is deeply intertwined with the country's culture and art. It has influenced architecture, sculpture, traditional dance, and even the Thai writing system. Thailand observes various Buddhist festivals and rituals throughout the year. Monks, as the spiritual leaders, are highly respected in Thai society. People offer food, money, and other items to monks as a way to accumulate good karma and improve their future lives.

Thailand has a strong tradition of monasticism. Many Thai men traditionally spend some time as monks, often for a short period, to gain merit and spiritual insight. These monastic experiences are an integral part of the Thai cultural experience.

Thailand predominantly follows Theravada Buddhism, which is one of the oldest and most conservative branches of Buddhism. Theravada emphasizes the original teachings of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama.

The Thai monarchy has a long history of supporting and patronizing Buddhism. The King and other members of the royal family play significant roles in religious ceremonies and temple activities. The Sangha, or the community of monks, is a critical institution in Thai Buddhism. The Sangha helps maintain religious order, teach Buddhist principles, and provide spiritual guidance to the population.

Thailand is dotted with an abundance of temples (wats) and Buddhist shrines. Some of these are architectural marvels, while others are simple village monasteries. Wat Pho and Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok are famous examples of grand Buddhist temples. Here are some prominent Buddhist tourism sites in Thailand:

Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha), Bangkok

Located within the Grand Palace in Bangkok, this temple houses the Emerald Buddha, Thailand's most revered religious

image.

Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha), Bangkok

Known for its giant reclining Buddha statue, Wat Pho is one of the oldest and largest temples in Bangkok. It's also a renowned centre for traditional Thai massage.

Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn), Bangkok

This iconic temple on the Chao Phraya River is famous for its towering spire, adorned with porcelain and seashells.

Ayutthaya

The historical city of Ayutthaya, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is known for its ancient temples and ruins, including Wat Mahathat and Wat Phra Si Sanphet.

Chiang Mai

Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand, is home to several significant temples, such as Wat Phra Singh, Wat Chedi Luang, and Wat Suan Dok.

Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai

Wat Phra That Doi Suthep is a stunning temple located on a mountain with panoramic views of Chiang Mai. It's a major pilgrimage site.

Wat Phra Singh, Chiang Rai

Wat Phra Singh in Chiang Rai features beautiful Lanna-style architecture and houses an important Buddha image.

Sukhothai Historical Park

Sukhothai, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the site of the first capital of the Kingdom of Sukhothai. It is known for its historical and well-preserved temples.

Wat Phra That Lampang Luang, Lampang

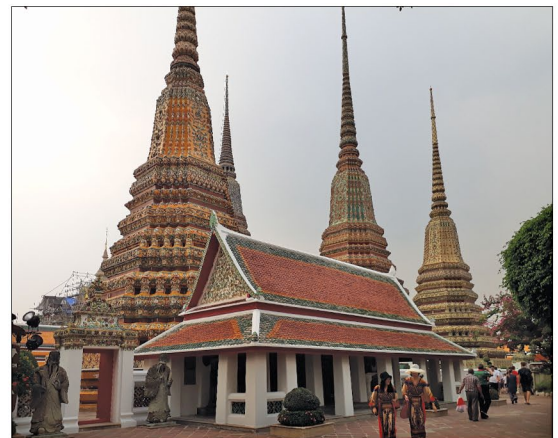
This historic temple is known for its well-preserved Lanna-style architecture and is considered one of the most significant temples in northern Thailand.

Phuket Big Buddha

It is a 45-meter-tall white marble statue that offers panoramic views of Phuket.

Wat Phra Borommathat Chaiya, Surat Thani

This ancient temple is known for its unique pagoda and historical importance.



THAILAND

Nakhon Pathom

It is home to Phra Pathom Chedi, considered the world's tallest stupa. It is an important pilgrimage site for Buddhists.

Wat Rong Khun (White Temple), Chiang Rai

This contemporary and striking temple is known for its intricate white architecture with mirrored glass accents.

Phang Nga Province

This province is home to several unique and beautiful temples, including Wat Suwan Kuha (Monkey Cave Temple) and Wat Tham Ta Pan (Buddha Cave Temple).

These Buddhist tourism sites in Thailand offer a diverse range of experiences, from exploring ancient and historic temples to appreciate the country's vibrant and living Buddhist culture. Travellers can witness religious ceremonies, participate in meditation sessions, and admire the stunning architecture and artistry of Thai Buddhism.

Nestled on the towering plateaus of the Himalayas, Tibet is often referred to as the 'Roof of the World'. This remote region, with its breathtaking landscapes, is not only known for its natural beauty but also for its profound connection to Buddhism.

Tibet follows the Vajrayana Buddhism, a part of the Mahayana tradition, that emphasizes esoteric practices and the swift attainment of enlightenment. Tibetan Buddhism is not only a religion but a way of life that permeates every aspect of Tibetan society. Monasticism is a cornerstone of Tibetan Buddhism. Monasteries, often perched on mountain slopes, serve as centres of learning and spiritual practice. Monks, nuns, and spiritual leaders play pivotal roles in preserving and transmitting Buddhist teachings and overseeing religious ceremonies.

Historically, the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet is credited to the efforts of King Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century. His marriage to Nepalese and Chinese princesses led to the establishment of Buddhism as a state religion. Guru Padmasambhava, the Second Buddha, was instrumental in translating Buddhist scriptures into Tibetan and introducing esoteric teachings. The collaboration of Indian and Tibetan scholars resulted in the creation of a unique Tibetan script and an extensive body of Buddhist literature.

The Dalai Lama, a spiritual leader of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, has been a symbol of Tibetan Buddhism's global presence. His Holiness has worked tirelessly to promote peace, compassion, and the preservation of Tibetan culture. However, the complex relationship between Tibet, China, and the exile of the Dalai Lama in India has added political dimensions to the spiritual landscape.

Tibetan Buddhism has influenced art, literature, and music. Thangka paintings depict intricate scenes from Buddhist narratives, while Tibetan opera and dance tell religious stories. The Kalachakra, a complex cosmological system, permeates Tibetan art and informs sacred architecture.

Here are some of the prominent Buddhist tourism sites in Tibet:

Potala Palace

Located in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, the Potala Palace was the winter residence of the Dalai Lamas and is one of the most iconic landmarks of Tibet. This Dzong fortress is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a stunning example of Tibetan architecture.

Jokhang Temple

Situated in the heart of Lhasa, the Jokhang Temple is one of the holiest sites in Tibetan Buddhism. It houses the revered Jowo Shakyamuni statue and is a focal point for pilgrims.

Sera Monastery

Known for its lively debates among monks, Sera Monastery is one of the three great Gelug monasteries in Lhasa. The architectural style is distinctive, and the murals are noteworthy.

Drepung Monastery

Another of the three great Gelug monasteries in Lhasa, Drepung was once the largest monastery in the world. It is historically significant and set in a beautiful location.

Ganden Monastery

Located on Wangbur Mountain, Ganden Monastery is the original seat of the Gelugpa sect and offers stunning panoramic views of the surrounding area.

Samye Monastery

Known as Tibet's first monastery, Samye is historically significant and features a unique mandala design. It's in the Yarlung Valley, not far from Lhasa.

Nechung Monastery, Lhasa

This monastery is the seat of Nechung, the State Oracle of Tibet. It is an important place for seeking spiritual guidance.

Tashilhunpo Monastery

Found in Shigatse, the second-largest city in Tibet, Tashilhunpo is the traditional seat

of the Panchen Lama and is famous for its large Maitreya statue.

Norbulingka Palace

This summer palace in Lhasa served as the traditional residence of the Dalai Lamas. It's known for its beautifully landscaped gardens.

Yumbulagang Palace

Located in the Yarlung Valley, this is believed to be Tibet's first palace and holds historical and cultural significance.

Drak Yerpa

A complex of caves and temples northeast of Lhasa, Drak Yerpa is known for its meditation retreats and the ancient meditation caves of Tibetan kings and yogis.

Sakya Monastery

Located in Sakya, this monastery is known for its gray exterior and historical significance. It houses a vast collection of Buddhist scriptures and art.

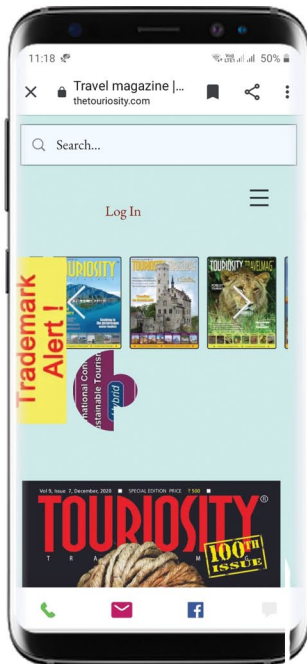
TIBET



Buddhism in Tibet is a captivating journey into the heart of the Himalayas, where spirituality and culture are inseparable. Its influence extends far beyond its geographical borders, inspiring individuals across the globe. Tibetan Buddhism's commitment to compassion and enlightenment continues to offer a profound and enduring legacy, making it an integral part of both Tibetan and world heritage. Travellers to Tibet will require special permits, and it is advisable to be aware of any travel restrictions and regulations, which can change due to political considerations.

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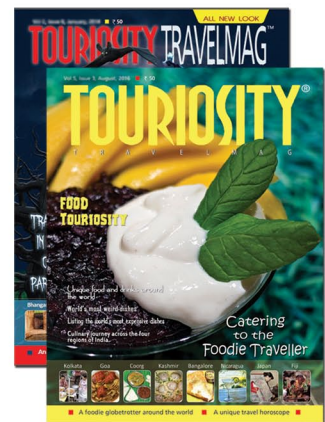
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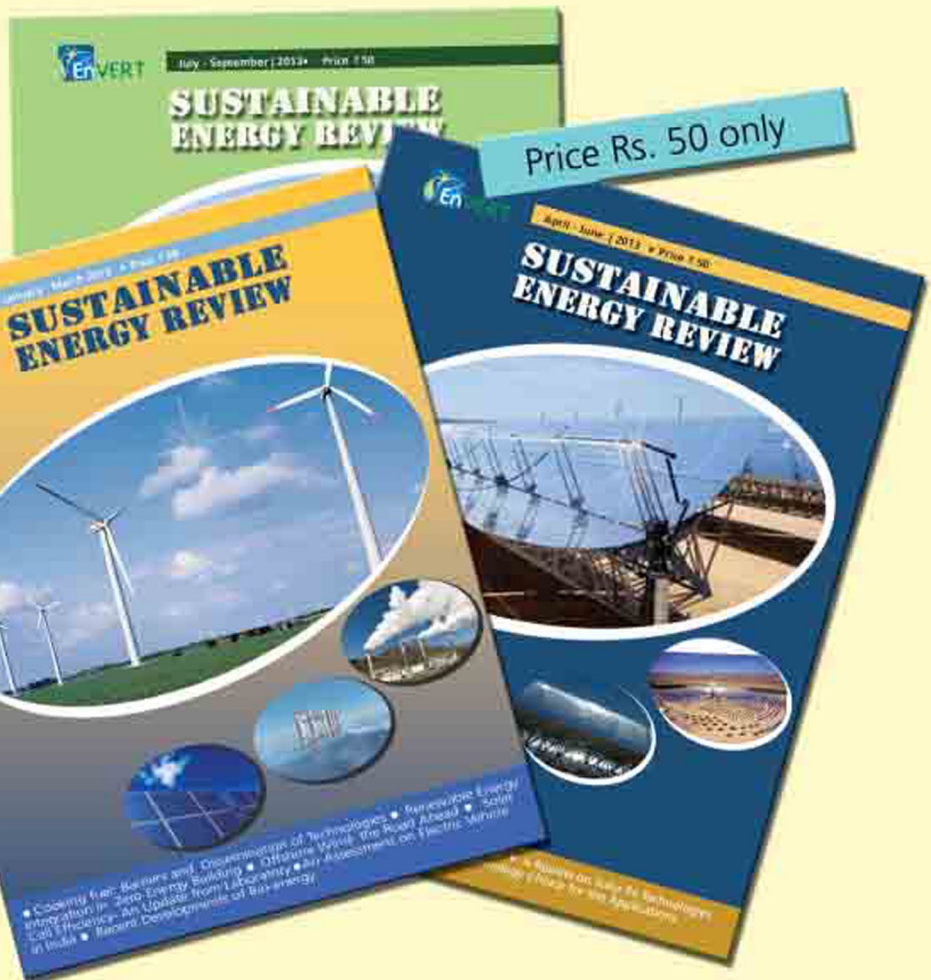
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