

## **Deer Park/Plum Village Peepal# Pilgrimage February 2025:**

**In the Footsteps of the Buddha - A Pilgrimage retreat through India and Nepal led by the Plum Village Monastics of Deer Park Monastery and Dharmacharya Shantum Seth**

**February 9 – February 22, 2025**

*#Peepal (Ficus religiosa) is the species of tree under which the Buddha awakened in Bodh Gaya*

*Sponsorship: For every 6 people who sign up for the pilgrimage, one monastic is sponsored free on the pilgrimage. You are also welcome to independently sponsor a monastic to come on the pilgrimage.*

### **● IMPORTANT TO DOs after registration**

#### **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

**It is advisable for registrants to purchase travel insurance.** The range of coverage can vary significantly from policy to policy, and travelers are encouraged to identify a policy that suits their needs. Things to consider are travel delays, trip cancellation or interruption, medical coverage, and baggage loss or delay. Before purchasing insurance, you may wish to check with your **health insurance** carrier to see if your policy includes medical care overseas. Please note that many insurance carriers require that insurance be purchased at the time a deposit or final payment is made. *We can provide the names of recommended Travel Insurance providers.*

#### **ARRIVAL**

Arrival and departure are to and from New Delhi (Delhi), India. Participants are responsible for making their own round-trip flight arrangements from their point of origin to New Delhi, India and back. For international flights, tickets could be booked as early as possible as prices keep increasing as you get closer to the date of departure.

Most international flights arrive at night or early morning. We can help you with bookings. You may check with us before you confirm your flight bookings. We offer a **complimentary airport transfer** for your arrival.

**The pilgrimage will begin at 12:00 pm (noon) on February 9, 2025 in New Delhi.**

#### **DEPARTURE**

We also do a **complimentary airport transfer** for your departure.

The flight to Delhi arrives in Delhi around 12:00pm (noon) on February 22, 2025. You should book your departure for a flight departing after 8.00pm from Delhi on February 22, 2025.

If you take an extension to Agra, please note that we arrive back in Delhi on the evening of the 23 February. . You should book your departure flight for a late-night flight on February 23 or early morning of February 24, 2025

The Exquisite Caves of Ajanta & Ellora extension journey will end in the evening on February 26, 2025. You should book your departure flight for a late-night flight on February 26 or early morning of February 27, 2025.

#### **EXTRA NIGHTS**

For those wishing an extra day or two to recover from air travel before the pilgrimage begins, or who wish to stay longer after the pilgrimage ends, we would be happy to book for you. Please make/request your hotel bookings for New Delhi in advance.

If you would like to make any additional excursions within India or Asia, we would be happy to help.

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THIS TRIP

You will need a valid passport (*the passport expiry date should not be less than 6 months from date of entry into India*) and visas for both India and Nepal.

The **visa for Nepal can be obtained** at the Indo-Nepal border while on the pilgrimage (it costs US\$ 30, in cash – please bring clean new notes). Please ensure you have an empty page on your passport.

**The visa for India** should be obtained before travel and should be either a Double Entry or a Multiple Entry visa. The visa should be obtained before travel. Please make sure that the visa covers the dates of your travel.

An Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) as e-Tourist Visa on Arrival (eTVA) is available for 165 countries.

The Link for e-Tourist Visa

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>.

Home Page

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/>

You may need to submit the following information about the tour company:

**Company Name:** Seth Consultants Pvt. Ltd. (Government-Approved Tour Operators)

**Registered Address:** 50/8 First Floor, Tolstoy Lane, Janpath, New Delhi 110001, INDIA

**Tel:** +91-120-4334284

**Email:** [info@buddhapath.com](mailto:info@buddhapath.com)

### **Important information to be submitted:**

Each participant must submit a **scan of their passport** which carries the following details in order to reserve flights and hotels: Name, gender, date of birth, passport number, date of issue of passport, date of expiry of passport, place of issue of passport, and emergency contact information. In addition, registrants must provide the visa number, date of issue, date of expiry and place of issue as soon as the visa for travel to India has been issued. It would be helpful if you could scan the page with your visa and the page in your passport with your photograph and send it to us.

## CURRENCY EXCHANGE, ACCEPTANCE OF CREDIT CARDS & TIPPING

As stated above, hotels, food, transportation in India/Nepal and guide services are all covered by the tour fees. It is suggested that travelers carry cash for expenses like gifts or souvenirs. Travelers will also need money if they are planning to extend their stay in India before or after the pilgrimage. Credit cards such as VISA or American Express are accepted in some of the hotels and large shops in Delhi or Varanasi, but not in some of the other places we visit. There are ATM machines in many places where one can access cash, but their presence is not universal as it is in USA and some of them may be out of order. As of July 2024, 1 US\$ approximates 80 Indian Rupees. We recommend that you convert some cash at the airport when you arrive in New Delhi. There is no need to exchange it in your country – it is best to do so in India. There are a couple of banks with a standard exchange rate at the airport both before and after you clear customs.

Travelers often have questions about **tipping**. In the last few years, we have developed a system where a kitty is collected at the beginning, and the tips are distributed from it (contributing is optional). Thus far, this has worked well. We estimate tips come to about US\$ 200 per person for the whole trip.

If you arrive before the start of the pilgrimage or stay after it concludes, the general rule is as follows: tipping someone who has carried your luggage is common and we would suggest Rs.100. In restaurants, one normally leaves a tip of 5% to 7% of the entire bill, unless a service charge has already been levied. If you have hired a car for the day and you are happy with the driver, a tip of Rs. 1000 is fine.

## HOTELS/HOUSING

We choose accommodations in the vicinity of the sites based on shared twin-bedded rooms with a private bath or shower and toilet. The accommodations are clean and comfortable and some of the best available in the area — in some cases monastic-style, and in some cases rather luxurious. If you prefer a single room (where available), there is a price supplement.

## **ELECTRICITY**

220 to 240 volts, 50 cycles AC. Plugs/sockets are usually an issue, so please make sure you travel with a universal plug adaptor. The plug sockets have round holes, so ensure your adaptor plug has round stems.

## **WEATHER & CLOTHING NEEDS**

Given that there can be a high variation between the daytime and evening temperatures (the general range is from 10 degrees to 30 degrees Celsius, (50 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit), layering is a practical approach. It's important to be comfortable and modestly dressed. We recommend that you bring one coat or jacket and a light sweater for the evening; perhaps a shawl if you want to meditate in the morning. For the warmer part of the day, cotton shirts, T-shirts and cotton trousers will work well. There is no need to bring formal clothing.

Generally, the weather is dry with a small possibility of light rain or fog in some places. It is handy to have an umbrella that can double as a sunshade if it gets too sunny or even be used as a walking stick. Please bring comfortable sneakers or sandals (which you can wear with socks if it gets cold). We do not go on treks, but one or two of the (optional) walks across the countryside. We also visit a number of temples where you will need to remove your shoes, so it is helpful to bring a pair of socks (the airline slip-ons are very convenient). It is always useful to have a hat or cap to protect you from the sun. We are allowed 15 kilos (33 lbs.) check in baggage and 7kgs (15 lbs) as cabin baggage on Indian airplanes, so we recommend that you travel light. You can carry extra baggage, at an additional cost. Laundry facilities are available at all the places we stay, and laundry is returned within 24 hours.

Please do bring along your meditation cushion or a folding campstool (if you are not comfortable sitting on a cushion).

## **HEALTH CONCERNS**

We stay in clean, safe places, and the food in the places we stay will be clean, fresh and prepared to suit a delicate digestive system. You will be provided bottled mineral water for drinking.

If you are coming from **Africa** or some parts of **Latin America**, a certificate of yellow fever inoculation is required by the Indian authorities. There is no other medical restriction upon your entry into India. We normally recommend a Hepatitis-A shot and a Tetanus shot. If you prefer to be more careful, then please speak to your physician.

We do carry a first-aid kit with us, but many people prefer to bring their own supply of medicines.

Presently there are no Covid restrictions.

## **SIM CARD, MOBILES ETC**

It is quite easy and inexpensive to get a local SIM card for your mobile phone at Delhi airport. It is more difficult to get one outside of the airport. As you leave the customs area, there is a mobile phone booth. You need to show your passport and visa to buy an Indian SIM card with data. If you have a 'locked' phone, you may need to 'unlock' it before you come to India. Mobile telephony in India is inexpensive.

## **ADDITIONAL TRAVEL SERVICES (e.g. taxis)**

We provide airport transfers both ways and all the transport services during the pilgrimage, including having you met on arrival in New Delhi. There is no extra charge for meeting you at the airport. For those who want to make your own arrangements, the Delhi Airport has taxis lined up and you can register with them. You can also get an Uber, but it is a little more complicated, in terms of the meeting place.

## **DISCLAIMER AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY**

Seth Consultants Pvt. Ltd. (Buddhapath) and Shantum Seth while undertaking tours, transportation, hotel accommodation and other services only act on the clear understanding that they shall not be in any way responsible or liable for any accident, damage, loss, delay or inconvenience caused in connection with travel and other facilities arranged by the company, their employees or agents. All bookings are accepted and executed with utmost care, yet no responsibility is taken for any change or deviation on account of factors beyond their control.

By making a deposit for the tour, participants acknowledge that they have read and understood this document in its entirety, and have consented to all conditions herein, including the Disclaimer and Release of Liability. For participants under 18 years of age, their parent or legal guardian shall sign on their behalf and the same Disclaimer and Release shall apply.