

In the Footsteps of the Buddha -A Pilgrimage Retreat through India

Led by Brother Phap Huu and other monastics from Plum Village and Dharmacharya Shantum Seth

Peepal* Pilgrimage Saturday January 31 to Friday February 13, 2026

Optional Extensions:

Building Love - Agra (Taj Mahal and Agra Fort) February 13-14, 2026 (ending in Delhi)

The Exquisite Caves– Ajanta & Ellora February 14-February 17, 2026 (beginning and ending in Delhi)

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

PLACES TO VISIT



Thich Nhat Hanh, Br. Phap Huu, Shantum & Monastics walking up from the Ganges River at Varanasi, 2008

Shakyamuni Buddha discovered the path to overcoming suffering and bringing happiness to individuals, families, and societies. Before his passing, he suggested that it would greatly benefit those interested in his teachings to make a pilgrimage to the places associated with his life.

This 14-day journey begins in the vibrant capital of India, Delhi, where ancient history meets modern charm and sacred sites offer a meaningful gateway to our spiritual journey.

Arrival day is Saturday, January 31, 2026. We will meet as a group at 12 pm (noon) at our hotel in Delhi. We will then visit the place in **Delhi** where Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of India, lived and passed away. This is a meaningful starting point for our pilgrimage, as Gandhiji embodies the Buddha's teachings in our time. He exemplified a unique integration of spirituality and politics, transforming them into a practice of applied ethics. Our pilgrimage orientation will be on this day.

The next morning, February 1, 2026, we will fly to **Varanasi**, the 'City of Light.' Here, we will visit the banks of the Ganges River, where Hindu devotees come to wash away their bad karma. We will visit the Deer Park in **Sarnath**, where the Buddha met his first five disciples and offered his teachings on the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and Non-Self, thereby 'turning the wheel of the Dharma' that continues to turn 2,600 years later.



Ghats on the river Ganges, Varanasi

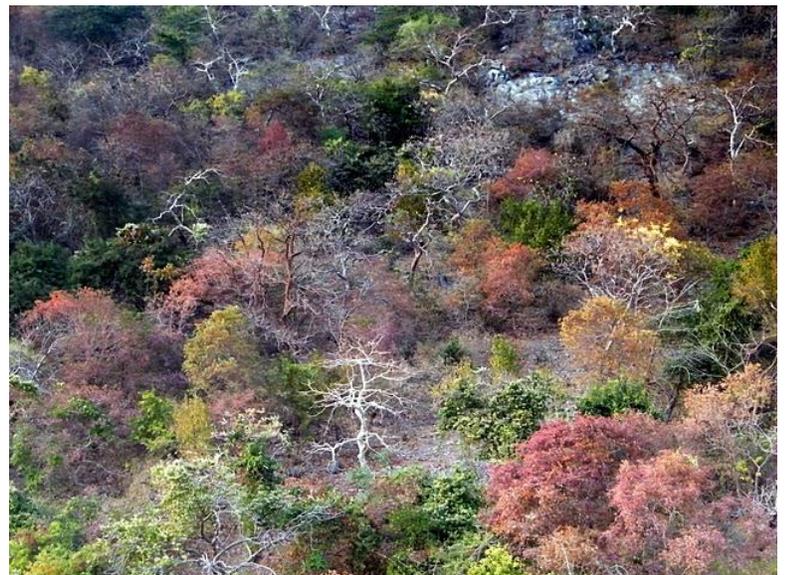


Deer Park, Sarnath, where the first teachings were given

Next, we will travel by private coach to **Bodh Gaya**, where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment to become the Buddha. We will visit the Maha Bodhi Temple, sit under the Bodhi Tree, and explore the seven sites he visited after his enlightenment. We will also walk across the countryside to the caves where the Buddha practiced austerities and to the village of Sujata, the young girl who offered him rice and milk when he was starving. Our journey continues to **Rajgir**, the capital of the Magadha kingdom during the time of the Buddha. We will visit Jethian, where the Buddha met King Bimbisara, sit in the Bamboo Grove (the first land donated to the sangha), walk up to his favourite meditation place, Vulture Peak, and, may climb to the Saptaparni Caves, where the first Buddhist council was held, via the Hot Springs where he bathed.



Maha Bodhi Temple, Bodhgaya



Vulture peak, Rajgir

We will visit **Nalanda**, the site of the famous university from the 5th to 12th centuries CE, where many Mahayana teachings were developed, including being the source of the Manifestation school lineage of the Order of Inter-being.



After a teaching at the ancient Nalanda University

Next, we travel across the Ganges to **Vaishali**, where the first nuns were ordained, and the Buddha spent his last rain retreat.

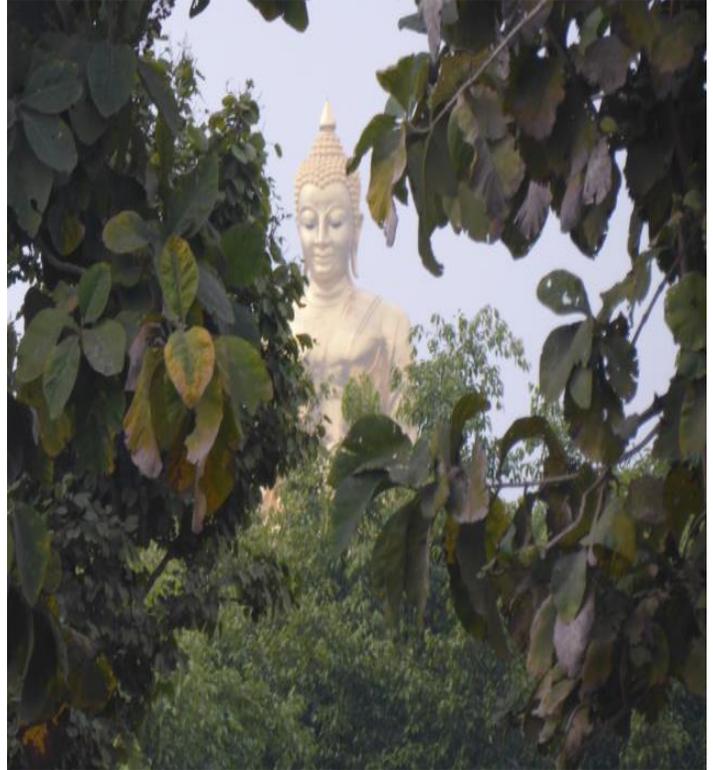


Where the first nuns were ordained, Vaishali

We then proceed to **Kushinagar**, where the Buddha passed away. We will visit the stupas and temples marking the spots of his last teachings, death, and cremation. En route, we will pass **Kesariya**, where the largest stupa in the world is located, and where it is thought the Buddha delivered the Kalama Sutra, on the spirit of free inquiry.



The Reclining Buddha, 5th century CE, Kushinagar



The Buddha through the trees from the Jeta Grove, Sravasti

Our journey takes us to the palace at **Kapilavastu**, where Siddhartha the Prince spent the first 29 years of his life. We continue to **Sravasti**, where the Buddha spent 24 of his rain retreats. We will visit the famous Jeta Grove, where the Buddha offered many teachings, including the Anapanasati Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing, and the old city where he converted the dreaded terrorist, Angulimala, to the path of peacefulness. These places are very moving and allow us to experience what the Buddha did and internalize his teachings.

We will then travel to **Lucknow**, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, known for its rich history and its vibrant cultural scene

On the morning of Friday, February 13, 2026, we will fly back to Delhi, concluding the pilgrimage. It is recommended to book your departure flight for the evening/night of February 13, 2026, after 8.00 pm

Optional Extension Journeys:

For those interested, optional extension journeys to the exquisite **Taj Mahal** and the phenomenal **Ajanta/Ellora** caves are available.



India's cities stand in contrast to her villages and have their own interesting modes of living and economy. Varanasi/Sarnath and Bodh Gaya are significant pilgrimage sites, having their own distinct characters with large transient populations. These places offer a close-up view of how modern and traditional India coexist. In contrast, Rajgir, Nalanda, Vaishali, Kushinagar, and Sravasti are smaller, quieter towns, giving pilgrims the chance to absorb the nuances of local culture and society. We will take extended walks to stay grounded and feel more deeply connected to the land and life around us.

Join us on this journey through a fascinating and mysterious India – as we walk 'In the Footsteps of the Buddha'. The pilgrimage is an unforgettable opportunity to explore areas that few tourists visit and to see and experience aspects of Indian life that, in many ways, that have not changed since the time of the Buddha. We invite you to journey with other practitioners on a transformative journey that will allow you to touch an ancient culture and civilization, and experience the life of the Buddha through the places he lived and taught. Shantum has curated three pilgrimages for Thich Nhat Hanh, and many for the Plum Village sanghas. As we walk on the Buddha's Path, we also walk in the footsteps of Thay and the Sangha. Shantum shares about many of the places Thay paused and what he taught and some of the history of the Plum Village pilgrimage sanghas over the years.

As we have both Brother Phap Huu and Jo Confino on our pilgrimage, we shall take the opportunity to record some episodes for 'The Way Out Is In' podcast that they co-host.

DAILY SCHEDULE & SPECIAL EXCURSIONS

Our retreat schedule will include daily sitting and walking meditation, often starting with a morning meditation at one of the Buddhist sites. This will be followed by breakfast at the hotel, after which we'll visit one of the Buddhist sites listed in the itinerary. Shantum will offer a detailed talk on that site in the context of the Buddha's life and teachings, and what was happening in the area many centuries ago, while also making it relevant to our times. Pilgrims will have some time at the site to walk around, after which we will have lunch. We'll rest after lunch, after which we may visit another site associated with the Buddha or go to a village, school, home and meet with interesting people etc. We return to the hotel by evening in time for dinner and Dharma sharings on some days. The monastics will lead us in many of the practices.

On travel days, the schedule may shift slightly. The itinerary allows flexibility to suit the group's size, needs, and interests.