



# Buddhist Circuit



## BUDDHIST CIRCUIT

Bihar is the acclaimed land where Prince Siddhartha commenced his journey in the quest of truth, reasons of suffering, their solutions and finally attaining enlightenment; he finally became the Buddha. He travelled through various places and was appalled to see the pain and agony of people. His divine footprints emerged as sacred pilgrimages where people visited in hordes to pray and find solace.

## WEST CHAMPARAN

### Rampurva

Two huge Ashoka pillars were excavated from the area lying close to the River Harbora, known as Anoma during Lord Buddha's period. One of them has six edicts etched on it; that side is preserved by a canopy of concrete. There is a peacock and a bird engraved on the pillar. A lion capital that formed the part of one pillar is now conserved at the Museum in Kolkata. The other pillar had the beautiful Bull Capital which graces the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi.

As per legend, when Lord Buddha reached the bank of Anoma River after leaving behind his family and kingdom, he changed his royal dresses to a sadhu's attire; he got his hair locks cut and looked like an ascetic and was now ready for his journey towards finding the reasons of suffering of all living beings in the world. It is believed that later Emperor Ashoka got these pillars constructed to monumentalize this significant occasion of the Buddha's life.

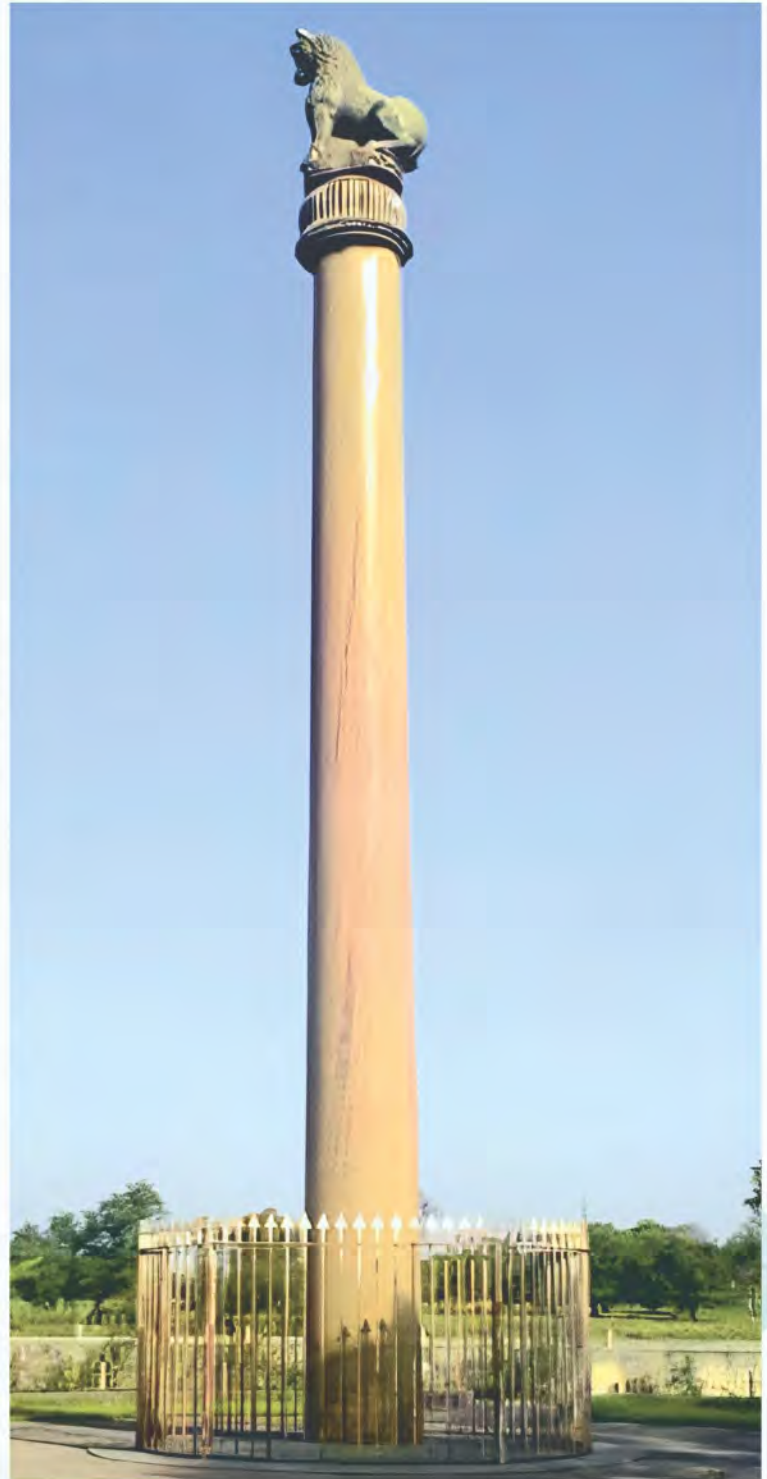
### Lauria Nandangarh

Lauria Nandangarh is a small town in the West Champaran district, which has been a witness to many important events of history. The main attraction of this city is the Ashoka Pillar found during excavation which shows the glorious history of the Maurya period.

At a distance of 2 km from the Ashokan Pillar, there is a mound in its southwest direction called Nandangarh, which is the remains of a huge stupa.

### HOW TO REACH

- By Air :** Nearest Airport is Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport (Patna).
- By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Narkatiaganj Jn. and Bettiah Railway Station.
- By Road :** West Champaran is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.



Ashokan Pillar, Lauria Nandangarh



Kesaria Stupa

## EAST CHAMPARAN

### Kesaria Stupa

Archaeological Survey of India in the year 1998 excavated this gigantic stupa that is believed to be the world's highest at 104 ft with the circumference being about 1400 ft. It is understood to have been constructed between 200-750 CE; the six - terraced stupa is a marvellous example of Buddhist architecture. The splendour of the images of the Buddha and other artefacts found here are alluring attractions that make it an important point for tourists and visitors. The huge size as also the artistry impress the visitor as soon as the ancient stupa comes into the view. As the legend goes this is the point where the Buddha spent some time while on his last journey to Mahaparinirvana. He is believed to have made important revelations of wisdom here. The story is told in the Jataka tales. Experts believe this stupa was built by the Lichhavis, who were the rulers of the whole region around Vaishali.

#### HOW TO REACH

**By Air :** Nearest Airport is Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport (Patna).

**By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Motihari Railway Station.

**By Road :** East Champaran is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.



## VAISHALI

Excavations in the region have brought to fore a notable historical past. Historians affirm that one of the first democratic republics in the world with an elected assembly of representatives thrived here in the 6th century BCE. i.e. in the period of the Lichchavis and Vajjis. Lord Buddha visited Vaishali many times and at Kolhua, near by, preached his last sermon. To commemorate the event, Emperor Ashoka, in the third century BCE. built one of his renowned lion pillars here. About one hundred years after the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha - Vaishali played host to the 2nd great Buddhist council.

Two stupas were constructed to commemorate this occasion. Vaishali Museum is home to archaeological remnants found here. On one side of the Abhishek Pushkarni Lake is the newly built Vishwa Shanti Stupa.

### WHAT TO SEE

#### **Budha Stupa-I**

The exterior of this stupa has a plain surface. A part of the sacred ashes of Lord Buddha were enshrined here in a stone casket.

#### **Budha Stupa-II**

Excavation at the site of this stupa in mid 20th century led to the discovery of another casket which was believed to contain a part of ashes of Lord Buddha.

#### **Vishwa Shanti Stupa**

Laying on the southern side of the Coronation Tank, it was built by Buddha Vihar Society.

#### **Ashoka Pillar & Kolhua Stupa**

Ashoka erected The Lion Pillar at Kolhua. It is a highly polished pillar of red sandstone, topped by a bell-shaped capital. A life-size lion figure perched on the top of the pillar. This pillar, placed at the side of brick stupa, commemorates Buddha's last sermon.

#### **Abhishek Pushkarni (Coronation Tank)**

The lake contains water that was said to be holy, in the ancient period. Vaishali's elected representatives were blessed here before their oath taking ceremony. The Lichhavis were avid followers of the Buddha; they came up with the first republic to rule the state.

### **HOW TO REACH**

- By Air :** Nearest Airport is Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport (Patna).
- By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Hajipur and Muzaffarpur Railway Station.
- By Road :** Vaishali is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.



Ashoka Pillar, Vaishali

## PATNA

Patna, which in the ancient times was known as Pataliputra, is the capital of Bihar. The city is among the world's oldest capital cities with unbroken history of many centuries as an imperial metropolis. The history and heritage of modern-day Patna go back well over two and half millennia. Today, it is a much sought after destination for tourists, visitors, historians and scholars, alike.

### Buddha Smriti Park (Karuna Stupa)

The park was inaugurated by the Dalai Lama, in May 2010; it was built to commemorate the 2554th year of Lord Buddha's Mahaparinirvana (salvation). The Dalai Lama planted two saplings; one brought from Bodhgaya and the second from the holy Bodhi tree at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. Buddhist relics were brought from different countries and placed in the stupa here.

#### HOW TO REACH

- By Air :** Nearest Airport is Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport (Patna).
- By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Patna Jn. Railway Station.
- By Road :** Patna is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.



Buddha Smriti Park (Karuna Stupa)



Barabar Caves

## JEHANABAD

### Barabar Caves, Jehanabad

It is a significant archaeological site. The caves have been chiselled out from solid rocks and bear details of the Buddha's life. The interiors are polished to a amazing brilliance. These caves were carved out in the 3rd century BCE and are exquisite examples of the craftsmanship of artisans of the Mauryan times.

#### OTHER CAVES :

- ◆ Sudama Cave,
- ◆ Lomash Rishi Cave,
- ◆ Vishwamitra Cave (Visva Zopari Cave),
- ◆ Nagarjuna Cave (Gopika, Vapi and Vedathika), etc.

#### HOW TO REACH

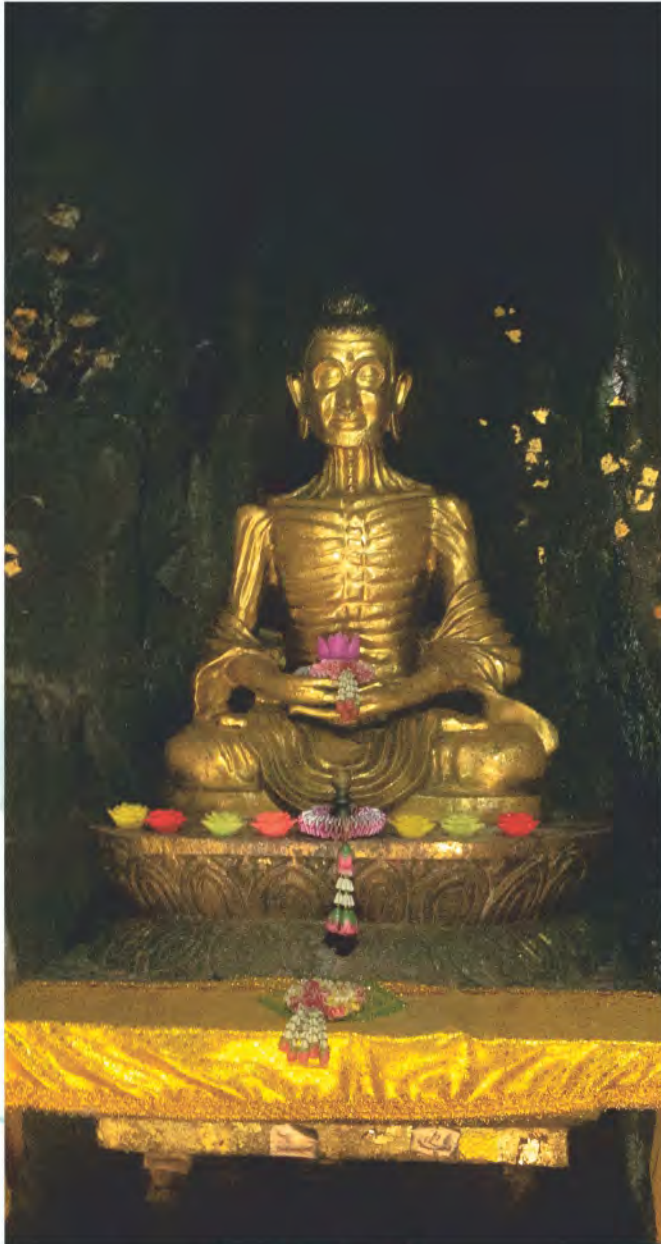
**By Air :** Nearest Airport is Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport (Patna).

**By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Jehanabad Railway Station.

**By Road :** Jehanabad is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.

## GAYA

Gaya is located at a distance of about 100 km south of the state capital, Patna. It lies on the bank of River Phalgu. Gaya derives its name from the mythological demon Gayasur. Hindus & Buddhists regard the city as a sacred place.



Meditating Buddha - Dungeshwari Hill Cave

### WHAT TO SEE

#### Rock Cut Sculptures of Kauvadol Hills

About 32 km from Gaya and 6 km from Barabar Caves Jehanabad, the huge rock lies here balanced on a hillock. A magnificent sitting Buddha statue in black stone measuring about 8 ft tall was excavated here. It is believed that in the 4th century BCE, the monastery lying on the base of Kauvadol Hills was a training school for young Buddhist monks, called shamner. Chinese Traveller Xuanzang visited this place in 7th century CE.

#### Gurpa Hill

Gurpa Hills / Gurupada Giri is one of the natural and historical places located in the Gaya district. Here Mahakasyapa, the last disciple of Buddha, attained Nirvana. Gurupada Giri is now known as 'Gurpa Hill'. Another name for this hill is 'Kukkutpada Giri'. There is a temple named Gurupada on Gurpa hill which is assumed to have footprints of "Lord Vishnu". Natural scenery, forests, waterfalls, sunrise and sunset views, all have put Gurpa hill in great vogue.

#### Dungeshwari Hill Cave

It is believed that Gautam had meditated here for a long period before moving to Bodhgaya. A golden bony Buddha statue is enshrined in one of the cave temples; in the other, a tall Buddha's statue is placed. A Hindu goddess Dungeshwari is also enshrined inside the cave temple. A concreted walkway leads to the temples. This mountain is also known as Pragbodhi Mountain.

#### Gaya Museum

A few thousand antiquities belonging to Mauryan, Gupta, Pala and Mughal dynasties have been collected and exhibited here, eg. stone sculptures of Hindu deities, Dancing Ganesha, Tara, Surya in stone and a replica of the Mahabodhi Temple in bronze. Coins, old manuscripts, rare sculptures of Pala period, terracotta figurines and other art objects displayed here are outstanding.

#### Brahmayoni Hills

The hills are located at a distance of about 1 km from Vishnupad Temple. To reach the top, one has to ascend a flight of 424 steps. Lord Buddha stayed here for some days before going to Sujata Garh and Dungeshwari Hills. Ashoka built a stupa over here to mark his commitment.

### HOW TO REACH

**By Air :** Nearest Airport is Gaya Airport.

**By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Gaya Railway Station.

**By Road :** Gaya is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.

## BODHGAYA

One of the most venerated Buddhist pilgrim centres, Bodhgaya is where Gautama attained 'enlightenment' under the Bodhi Tree and became Buddha. Buddhism, as a religion took birth in Bihar and developed through his teachings; he set an example of purity, simplicity, restraint, renunciation and compassion for all living beings. The name of Bihar is derived from vihar, which means monastery. Ashoka devoted greatly towards the rejuvenation and advancement of Buddhism.

### WHAT TO SEE

#### **Mahabodhi Temple (Bihar's first world heritage site)**

The 170 ft. tall temple stands as a slender Pyramid till its neck, which is cylindrical in shape. The top has chatras which signify sovereignty of religion. The architecture is a blend of different cultures. It certainly has an influence of the Gupta era and exhibits inscriptions recounting visits of pilgrims from Sri Lanka, Myanmar and China between 7th and 10th century CE. Marvel at the huge image of the Buddha in sitting posture touching the earth by his right hand (bhoomisparsh); in this posture, Buddha attained enlightenment.

#### **Mahabodhi Tree**

The Buddha attained supreme knowledge and enlightenment sitting on Vajrasana, the seat of stability, a stone platform under the Bodhi Tree.

#### **Animesh Lochan Stupa**

Buddha continued to gaze at the great Bodhi tree, absorbed in divine contentment, in the 2nd week after attaining enlightenment, without blinking his eyes. A stupa lies at the site.

#### **Chankraman Asthal**

After attaining enlightenment Buddha, walked around the sacred place; his foot-prints are figured in black stone, as also are 19 lotus carvings.

#### **Ratnaghar**

Buddha spent the 4th week meditating here; a holy light in five different colours came out from his persona. These five colours are present in the Buddhist flag. See his statue here.

#### **Muchalind Tank**

After enlightenment, Lord Buddha spent the 6th week in meditation. It is said that a snake king, Muchalind protected him from heavy rains here.

#### **80 ft Buddha Statue**

The gigantic statue, famous as the 80 ft Buddha Statue, was commissioned and consecrated in 1989; the ceremony was attended by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It was the first great Buddha statue built in modern India.

### **OTHER PLACES TO VISIT :**

- ◆ Shree Mahabodhi Mahavihar
- ◆ Rajayatan
- ◆ Sujata Stupa
- ◆ Royal Bhutan Monastery
- ◆ Burmese Vihara
- ◆ Thai Monastery
- ◆ Japan Monastery
- ◆ Tibetan Monastery

### **HOW TO REACH**

- By Air :** Nearest Airport is Gaya Airport.
- By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Gaya Railway Station.
- By Road :** Bodhgaya is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.



Mahabodhi Template



Vishwa Shanti Stupa

## RAJGIR

The ancient city, Rajagriha, now Rajgir lies at about 15 km from Nalanda. In ancient period it was named Vasumati by King Vasu. "The house of kings' as it was known, reached its zenith during the Magadhan period. Once the capital of Bimbisara, it was a prominent centre for Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. Also mentioned in the writings of Buddhaghosha, a Buddhist scholar, it had 32 main gates and 64 minor gates, surrounded by hills. It radiates immense historical and archaeological importance. Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavir spent many years here. Remains of a fort, temples, stupas, caves and other relics were discovered during excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

### WHAT TO SEE

#### Vishwa Shanti Stupa

The white marble stupa was built in 1969 on Ratnagiri Hill. Four golden statues of the Buddha adorn its circular dome. It rises 129 ft and can be reached by a stairway or chairlift car. A new cabin car ropeway also has been constructed to reach at this place. Gentle sounds of the gong awaken one's spirituality!

### OTHER PLACES TO VISIT :

- ◆ Jeevak Amra Van
- ◆ Saptarni Hills
- ◆ Gridhakuta Hill-Top
- ◆ Pippala Cave
- ◆ Cyclopean Wall
- ◆ Bimbisara Jail
- ◆ Venu Van
- ◆ Chariot Wheel Mark & Stone Inscriptions
- ◆ Fort of Ajatsatru
- ◆ Giriya Hill Stupa

### HOW TO REACH

- By Air :** Nearest Airport is Gaya International Airport.  
**By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Rajgir Railway Station.  
**By Road :** Rajgir is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.



## NALANDA

Famed as one of the most sought-after destinations for archaeologists, historians and tourists, the erstwhile centre of world's greatest education was the core of famous religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. The earliest residential international university was established here as the inspirational foundation for Buddhist learning. The Gupta, Pala King and Harshavardhana were great patrons of the ancient city. Excavations discovered ruins of the university and several other relics and structures.

### WHAT TO SEE

#### Ancient Nalanda University Ruins

Remains of the eminent Nalanda University of the 5th century CE are one of the most popular destinations. It accommodated about 2000 teachers and 10,000 students of Buddhism. It shone as an admiration for quality in education, architecture and as a revered seat of Buddhism. Originally the area covered by the university was quite large as has been mentioned in the writings of famous 7th century CE Chinese traveller Xuanzang, also known as Hiuen Tsang. It reached the zenith of perfection in education and architecture during the periods of Guptas and Palas. Built in red brick, it exhibits ruins of stupas, viharas, etc. **It is Bihar's second world heritage site.**

#### Archaeological Museum

It has an outstanding collection of undamaged statues of Lord Buddha, sculptures carved on basalt stones, bronze, etc. Exhibits include terracotta items, iron implements, stuccos, inscriptions on stones and copper, coins and potteries, stupas on leaf of pipal tree, charred rice samples, etc.

#### Zuafardih

Zuafardih is famous for the ancient stupa, discovered during excavations by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Many artefacts eg., iron implements, utensils, pieces of glass, bangles, etc. belonging to the Mauryan period were found here.

#### OTHER PLACES TO VISIT :

- ◆ Sarilchak
- ◆ Mustafapur
- ◆ Ruins of Telhara
- ◆ Mahamaya Place (Jagdishpur)
- ◆ The Xuanzang Memorial Hall

#### HOW TO REACH

- By Air :** Nearest Airport is Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport, (Patna).
- By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Nalanda and Rajgir Railway Station.
- By Road :** Nalanda is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.



Ruins of Vikramshila University

## BHAGALPUR

Lying in eastern Bihar, Bhagalpur is one of the oldest districts and is famous for the production of excellent quality tussar silk fabric; in good old days it was renowned as the 'Silk City'. The alluvial soil of the plains makes the region green; it is full of mango and litchi groves.

### WHAT TO SEE

#### Ruins of Vikramshila University

See the ruins of Vikramshila University which once thrived between 9th to 13th century CE. It was founded by the Pala King Dharmapala. It was a bustling education centre with a large number of teachers and students. Subjects taught included Philosophy, Theology, Metaphysics, Grammar, Logic, Tantrism, etc. A colossal square remnant of the double-storeyed stupa with a cruciform structure in the middle, a library and an array of votive stupas have been unearthed. A Tibetan and a Hindu temple have also been discovered.

#### HOW TO REACH

- By Air :** Nearest Airport is Jay Prakash Narayan International Airport, (Patna).
- By Rail :** Nearest Railway Station is Bhagalpur Railway Station.
- By Road :** Bhagalpur is well connected by road. Bus and Taxi Services can be used to reach here.

Gridhakut Hill, Rajgir



Venuvan , Rajgir



Dungeshwari Hills, Bodh Gaya



Son Bhandar Cave , Rajgir



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