

Tour Code No. 4 NI B

KASHI - HARIDWAR–DELHI PACKAGE 2011

**Allahabad, Ayodhya, Kashi, Gaya, Bodh Gaya,
Haridwar, Rishikesh, Agra, Delhi**

Tour Duration (No. of days)	Starting Dates	Tour cost (with food)
13	April 4,11,18,25, May1, 9,16,23,30 June 13 ,27 July 11,25 Aug.8,15,22,29 Sep.5,12,19,26 Oct.3,10,17,24,31 ; Nov. 7,14,21, 28 Dec. 12	Rs.15,800/=

Details of Programme

DAY –1	Pick up from Allahabad railway station and transfer to hotel Night rest in Allahabad
DAY – 2	Triveni bath and Pithru Tharpanam and Allahabad local sightseeing . Places : Allahabad Fort, Bada Hanuman Temple, Shankaracharya temple , Anand Bhavan, Baradwaj Ashram, and 124 km(3 hours) journey to Varanasi; Night rest in Varanasi
DAY – 3	Pindathanam at Manikarnika maha smasanam and visit Kashi Viswanath Temple , Annapoorneswari Temple, Donty Ganapathy/Sakshi Ganapathy Darsan and night rest in Kashi.
DAY – 4	Road journey to Gaya , Bodh Gaya sight seeing places : Japan Budhist Temple , Thailand Budhist Temple, Tibet Budhist Temple , Bhutan Budhist Temple, Bodhi Tree and Main Temple of Bodh Gaya . Night rest in Bodh Gaya.
DAY – 5	Gaya Sradham at Gaya Vishnupada Temple and return journey to Varanasi . Night rest in Varanasi(Kashi)
DAY – 6	Vishwanath Temple Darshan and Local sightseeing Places and Kashi Maharaja Palace, Vyasa Kashi, Banaras

	Hindu University, Sankada Mochana Hanuman Temple, Tulsi Mansa Mandir, Durga Temple
DAY – 7	Early morning journey to Ayodhya . Ayodhya local Sightseeing places (holy Sarayu river bath, Valmeeki Ramayana Bhavan, Sreerama janma bhumi temple, Kanaka bhavan, Dasarath Gaddi) and then Lunch and return journey to Varanasi . Night rest in Varanasi
DAY – 8	Train journey to Haridwar 7 Am . Night journey in the train
Day - 9	4. am Pick up from Haridwar Railway station . Transfer to hotel; fresh up and go for Haridwar local sight seeing; places : Mansa devi temple rope way Sapt Rishi Ashram, Bharath Mata Temple, Bhumika Devi Temple, Vaishno devi Temple, Kailash Dham Temple . Night rest in Haridwar
DAY – 10	Rishikesh local sight seeing places Lakshman Jhula, Swargashram, Parmarth Niketan, Geetha Mandir, Ram Jhula , and night journey to Delhi by Train.
DAY - 11	Arrival in Delhi and transfer to the hotel , Delhi local sightseeing places : Qutub Minar, Lotus Temple, Teen Murti Bhavan, Indira Gandhi Museum, Rajghat, Birla Temple, Shakthistal, Veerbhoomi, Shanthivan, Redfort
DAY – 12	Agra local sightseeing - Taj Mahal, Agra Fort ,Sikendara . night rest in Delhi
DAY – 13	Drop at Delhi Railway station.

Terms&Conditions

1. Booking : - Passengers should remit Rs. 2000/- booking charge 90 days in advance of the tour starting date .The Balance amount should be remitted before 15 days of the tour starting dates. Remittance may be made through the company's Bank account (details given below).
2. Food: - Vegetarian food will be provided as per the tour schedule

3. Accommodation: - Medium type of accommodation will be provided by the company on twin - sharing basis in double bedded rooms only.
4. Cancellation: - 50% of the advance amount will be lost if cancellation is not received 30 days before the tour starting dates. Cancellations received thereafter will not be eligible for any refund.
5. Tour Manager will accompany the package from beginning to end .
6. Cost Exclusion : Boat charges, cost of Entry tickets etc.

Name of the Bank: Axis Bank Ltd., Calicut,

Account No.: 910020036088153

Code : UTIB0000136

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History of Allahabad

Allahabad sanctity is manifest by references to it in Purans, the Ramayan and the Mahabharata. According to Hindu Mythology, Lord Brahma, the creator God of the Trinity, chose a land on earth (ie Prayag) to perform 'Prakrista Yag', at the beginning of the creation and he also referred to it as Tirth raj or the King of all pilgrimage centres' As per writing of 'Padam Puran' – "As the sun is amongst the moon and the moon amongst the stars, likewise 'Prayag is best amongst all places of pilgrimage"

The bathing at Prayag is mentioned in Brahma Puran s " in the month of Magha at the bank of Ganga Yamuna in Prayag bestows results of millions and millions of Ashvmedha Yajna"

Prayag is birth place of Som, Varuna and Prjapati. Prayag has been associated with mythological personalities in Brahmanical(Vedic) and Buddhist Literatures. It was the seat of the great sage Bhardwaj, sage Durvasa and Sage Pannas sage Bhardwaj lived here circa 5000BC and taught more than 10000 disciples. He was the greatest philosopher of ancient world.

The Present Jhansi area very close to sangam was the kingdom of Chandrabanshiya (lunar clan) king Pururava. Nearby Kaushambi bloomed to prosperity during Vatsa and Maurya Rule. The earliest monument of antiquities Ashok Pillar with inscriptions of third century B.C. bears the inscriptions of his directions to his fellow rajas and praise of King Samudragupta. The Chinese traveler Huan Tsang in 643 BC found Prayag inhabited by many Hindus who regarded the place very Holy. 1575 AD Emperor Akbar founded the city in by the name of "ILLAHABAS" which has now become ALLAHABAD meant " The City of Allaha" impressed with the strategic importance of the SANGAM. In medieval India the city enjoyed the honour of being the religio-cultural center of India. For a long time it was Provincial capital of the Mughals. Later it was captured by Marathas.

1801 AD British History of the city begun in this year when the Nawab of Oudh ceded it to the British Throne. British army used the fort for their military purposes.

1857 AD The town was the centre of war of Independence and later became the crucible of Indian Freedom Movement against British.

1858 AD The East India Company officially handed over India to British Government here at Minto Park After the first war of independence the town was named "ALLAHABAD" and was made the capital of United Province of Agra and Oudh.

1868 AD it became a seat of Justice when Allahabad High Court was established.

1871 AD British architect Sir William Emerson erected a majestic monument All Saint Cathedral thirty years before he designed the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata.

1887 AD Allahabad became the fourth oldest University. Allahabad has been rich in numerous Victorian and Georgian buildings made in synthesis with Indian architectural traditions.

This city was the heart of the Indian Freedom Movement against the British rule with Anand Bhawan being the epicentre, It was in Allahabad the Mahatma Gandhi proposed his program of non-violent resistance to liberate India. Allahabad has provided the largest number of prime ministers of Post independence India Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, V.P.Singh. Former Prime Minister Chandreshekhra was student of Allahabad university.

Allahabad Fort

The lofty Allahabad fort, built by emperor Akbar in 1583 AD, on the bank of river YAMUNA stands close to the SANGAM. Inside the fort stands the polished sand stone Ashokan pillar dating back to 232 BC this

10.6 mtr high pillar has several rare edicts.

Jawahar Planetarium

For a celestial trip of the scientific kind, visit the planetarium its worth every moment here you can take your weight on Moon and Jupiter, a moon model on display.

Anand Bhawan

Several history making events of freedom struggle took place here. today this ancestral home of the Nehru family, houses a museum displaying the memorabilia of the family. One room is devoted to Mahatma Gandhi

where he used to stay.

High Court

High court was transferred from Agra to Allahabad in 1869. Located in an imposing stone building built in 1916. Its Chief Justice's Court room is the biggest of all the High Courts of India

Swaraj Bhawan

It is old Anand Bhawan in 1930 Moti Lal Nehru donated it to the nation and named it as "Swaraj Bhawan" to be used as the headquarters of Congress Committee. When Gandhiji started Salt Satyagraha in 1930, Allahabad took a leading part at present it houses office of Jawahar Lal Nehru Fund and a children school for creative Art. Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi was born here that room is opened to tourists.

Sangam

The holy place SANGAM is the place where the three holy rivers GANGA, YAMUNA, and the mythical SARASWATI

merge into one. It offers fascinating view at sunrise and sunset. At SANGAM few drops of nectar is believed to be fallen making the water truly magical. The place comes alive, during the Kumbh Mela

and the Ardh Kumbh, attracting millions of devotees from all across the country. The Sangam is the site for important fairs and festivals, the year around.



History of Varanasi

The land of Varanasi (Kashi) has been the ultimate pilgrimage spot for Hindus for ages. Often referred to as Benares, Varanasi is the oldest living city in the world. These few lines by Mark Twain say it all: "Benaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together". Hindus believe that one who is graced to die on the land of Varanasi would attain salvation and freedom from the cycle of birth and re-birth. Abode of Lord Shiva and Parvati, the origins of Varanasi are yet unknown. Ganges in Varanasi is believed to have the power to wash away the sins of mortals.

Ganges is said to have its origins in the tresses of Lord Shiva and in Varanasi, it expands to the mighty river that we know of. The city is a center of learning and civilization for over 3000 years. With Sarnath, the place where Buddha preached his first sermon after enlightenment, just 10 km away, Varanasi has been a symbol of Hindu renaissance. Knowledge, philosophy, culture, devotion to Gods, Indian arts and crafts have all flourished here for centuries. Also a pilgrimage place for Jains, Varanasi is believed to be the birthplace of Parsvanath, the twenty-third Tirthankar.

Vaishnavism and Shaivism have co-existed in Varanasi harmoniously. With a number of temples, Mrs. Annie Besant chose Varanasi as the home for her 'Theosophical Society' and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, to institute 'Benares Hindu University, the biggest University in Asia. Ayurveda is said to be originated at Varanasi and is believed to be the basis of modern medical sciences such as Plastic surgery, Cataract and Calculus operations. Maharshi Patanjali, the preceptor of Ayurveda and Yoga, was also affiliated with Varanasi, the holy city. Varanasi is also famous for its trade and commerce, especially for the finest silks and gold and silver brocades, since the early days.

Varanasi has also been a great center of learning for ages. Varanasi is associated with promotion of spiritualism, mysticism, Sanskrit, yoga and Hindi language and honored authors such as the ever-famous novelist Prem Chand and Tulsi Das, the famous saint-poet who wrote Ram Charit Manas. Aptly called as the cultural capital of India, Varanasi has provided the right platform for all cultural activities to flourish. Many exponents of dance and music have come from Varanasi. Ravi Shankar, the internationally renowned Sitar maestro and Ustad Bismillah Khan, (the famous Shehnai player) are all sons of the blessed city or have lived here for major part of their lives

Kasi Viswanath Temple

The Kasi temple is dedicated to Lord Visweswara (Lord Shiva). It is known to be as one of the twelve **Jyothir lingas** of Shiva in India which attracts a lot of pilgrims throughout the year. It is believed to be the holiest place, due to the permanent presence of Lord Shiva, as Kasi Viswanath.

History of the temple

This temple was destroyed several times by the rulers like Mohammed Ghori, Aurangzeb, and Warren Hastings and was rebuilt several times. The present existing temple was built by Rani Ahillyabai Dikar in 1776 A.D

About Varanasi

The Kasi temple is located in Varanasi, which as the name indicates that is located between two rivers **Varana** and **Asi**. Varanasi is also known for its classical Hindustani music, and has produced many well known musicians like Pandit Ravi Shankar, and Ustad Bismillah Khan.

Benaras Hindu University

also located in Varanasi is perhaps the largest university in Asia. It has 32 areas of study spread over 2000 acres which was donated by the Maharaja of Benaras in the early part of the century. The University was founded by the scholar Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. The University is noted for its studies in Sanskrit and in Indian culture, including art and music and attracts students from India and abroad.

History of Sarnath



One of the four most important Buddhist pilgrimage destinations in India, Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh is the site where Lord Buddha – the great sage delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment. The rich and eventful History of Sarnath Uttar Pradesh is an interesting and captivating one.

The History of Sarnath Uttar Pradesh mentions that Sarnath had also been referred as ‘Mrigadava’ meaning ‘deer park’ and ‘Isipatana’ denoting the place where holy men fell to earth. Legend has it that before the Buddha was born, devas descended upon earth to announce the birth to 500 holy men. The holy men all rose into the air and disappeared, and all their relics fell onto the ground.

The History of Sarnath India began with the arrival of Gautam Buddha at this place in 528 B.C. after he attained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya. Here he preached his first discourse to his five former companions. This event is described in Buddhist texts as dharmachakra – pravartana, meaning the turning of the Wheel of Law. The Buddha taught them all that he had learned and thus they also became enlightened. This marked the foundation of the first Buddhist Sangha or the community of monks.

According to the History of Sarnath Uttar Pradesh, the Chinese traveler Hiouen Thsang had mentioned that the Deer Park at Sarnath was the forest gifted by the king of Benares of the Jataka, as a place where the deer might roam around unmolested. Thus Sarnath came to be named as ‘Migadaya’, so called because the deer could wander unharmed.

History of Sarnath India also mentions that the first preaching delivered by the Buddha at

Sarnath is known in Pali as the Dhammacakkhapavathana Sutta. Other Suttas delivered here include Anattalakhana Sutta and the Saccavibhanga Sutta. The Buddha's main teachings after his enlightenment centered around the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

After preaching his first discourse at Sarnath, the Buddha spent the next rainy season at the Mulagandhakuti vihara in Sarnath. By then, the Buddhist Sangha had grown to 60 in number. The Buddha then sent the members of the Sangha to preach his teachings all around.

The flourish of Buddhism in Sarnath can be attributed to a large extent to the support of kings and wealthy merchants inhabiting the region. By the 3rd century B.C., Sarnath had flourished as a major center for arts, and the town reached its zenith during the Gupta reign (4th -6th century A.D.). According to the History of Sarnath Uttar Pradesh, when the Chinese traveler Hsuan Tsang visited Sarnath in the 7th century, there were 30 monasteries and 3000 monks living in Sarnath.

Sarnath came to be a major center of the Sammatiya school of Buddhism, one of the Nikaya or Hinayana schools. The occurrence of images of Heruka and Tara at Sarnath monasteries indicate that Vajrayana Buddhism also flourished here.

The end of the 12th century saw Sarnath being ransacked by Turkish Muslims. The site was extensively plundered for building materials and has been lying in ruins since then. Thereafter, Sarnath remained completely deserted until 1836, when the British began excavations and restoration of this historic city.



A History of Bodh Gaya

by Venerable S. Dhammika

Just before the full moon day of the month of Vesakha in about the year 528 BCE, a young ascetic of noble birth, worn out by years of self denial, arrived on the outskirts of the small village of Uruvela nestled on the banks of the sandy Neranjara River. Many years later he described the scene that unfolded before him. "There I saw a beautiful stretch of countryside, a beautiful grove, a clear flowing river, a lovely ford and a village nearby for support. And I thought to myself; 'Indeed, this is a good place for a young man set on striving' ". He settled himself under the spreading branches of the a nearby tree and prepared to begin his meditation. Just then a young woman named Sujata happened to be passing and noticing how thin he was, ran quickly home and brought him a bowl of milk rice and sweet honey. Strengthened by this nutritious meal the ascetic began his meditation. All night he sat there as the leaves of the tree quivered in the gentle breeze and the moon shone bright in the velvety black sky. Eventually the clouds of ignorance dissolved and he saw the Truth in all its glory and splendour. He was no longer Prince Siddhartha or the ascetic

Gotama. He had become the Awakened One, the Compassionate One, the Light of the World, the Buddha Supreme. The Buddha spent the next seven weeks near Uruvela experiencing the bliss of enlightenment and moving to a different location every seven days. Then he set off for Sarnath near Varanasi to proclaim to the world the profound and liberating truths he had realised. Some months later, back in Uruvela again, he met three old ascetics with matted hair of the type that some Hindu swamis still wear, the brothers Nadi Kassapa, Gaya Kassapa and Uruvela Kassapa. Although revered teachers themselves they had never heard such wisdom as they did from the Buddha's lips nor had they ever experienced the serenity and joy that showed so clearly on his smiling face. The three brothers, followed by their thousand disciples, bowed at the Buddha's feet and asked him to ordain them as monks. This done, the whole party with the Buddha at its head set out for Rajgir. There is no evidence that the Buddha ever returned to Uruvela. But as his teachings spread and attracted more followers some of these people began to want to see the place where their teacher had attained enlightenment. Understanding that this could arouse faith or further nourish faith already aroused, the Buddha encouraged such visits. Thus the Buddhist tradition of pilgrimage began. By the 2nd century BCE the name Uruvela fallen into abeyance and the village came to be known as either Sambodhi, Vajrasana or Mahabodhi. The name Bodh Gaya only came into use in the 18th century.

There are records of pilgrims coming to Bodh Gaya from all over India and from almost every land and region where Buddhism spread. In the 11th century Acarya Dharmakirti from Sumatra made a pilgrimage to Lumbini, Kapilavasthu and Bodh Gaya. When I Tsing was in Bodh Gaya in the 7th century he met a monk who had come all the way from what is now Kazakhstan. Vietnamese began coming to India on pilgrimage soon after the introduction of Buddhism into their country in the 6th century. One of the earliest such records concerns two monks, Khuy Sung and Minh Vien, who took a ship to Sri Lanka, sailed up the west coast of India and then went from there by foot to the holy land. The two companions reached Bodh Gaya and then continued on to Rajgir where poor Khuy Sung died. He was only twenty five years old. In about 402 CE, after an epic journey through the mountains and deserts of Central Asia, the gentle and pious Fa Hien reached Bodh Gaya , the first Chinese monk ever to do so. On returning home he wrote an account of his pilgrimage which in later centuries inspired hundreds of others to follow in his footsteps. The most famous of these was Hiuen Tsiang who stayed in India from 630 to 644 visiting Bodh Gaya at least twice during that time. He too wrote an account of his pilgrimage in which he included much detailed and accurate information about Bodh Gaya. In fact, we today are able to identify many locations in and around the Mahabodhi Temple and know their histories and the legends associated with them, because of Hiuen Tsiang's book. Another pilgrim, this time a Tibetan, who also bequeathed to us much information about Bodh Gaya's past was the scholar monk Dharmasvamin. He arrived in the spring of 1234 only to find that "the place was deserted and only four monks were staying there. One of them said; 'It is not good! All have fled from the Turushka soldiers'. The monks blocked up the door in front of the Mahabodhi Image with bricks and plastered it. Near it they placed another image as a substitute. They also plastered up the outside door of the Temple. On its surface they drew an image of Mahesvara to protect the Image from the non-Buddhists. One of the monks said; 'We five dare not stay here and shall have to flee'. As the

days stage was long and the heat great, they felt tired and as it became dark, they remained there and fell asleep. Had the Turushkas come they would not have known it". The danger passed and Dharmasvamin and the other monks were able to come back. Dharmasvamin stayed for three months, went off to Rajgir and Nalanda and then returned to Tibet. His biography includes details of everything he saw and experienced in Bodh Gaya and is the last full account of the place until 1811.

The first evidence of a Sri Lankan coming to Bodh Gaya is an inscription by a monk named Bodhiraksita written in the 1st century BCE. This inscription is incidentally, also the earliest evidence of any pilgrim from outside India coming to Bodh Gaya. According to the Rasavahini a monk named Culla Tissa and a group of lay pilgrims made their way Bodh Gaya in about 100 BCE. King Silakala of Sri Lanka (518 -531) spent his youth as a novice in one of Bodh Gaya's monasteries. The last Sri Lankan we know of to have visited Bodh Gaya until modern times came in the second half of the 15th century. This monk, named Dharmadivakara, went to Bodh Gaya and then decided to go on from there to Wu Tai Shan in China. While at the sacred mountain he met some Tibetans who invited him to their country where he travelled and taught widely. However, the strain of several long years of travel, the strange food and the cold climate all proved too much for poor Dharmadivakara for we read that on his way back to Sri Lanka he disrobed in Nepal and later died in India. But Sri Lankans were not just enthusiastic about going to Bodh Gaya on pilgrimage, they also did much to make it a vibrant and thriving centre of Buddhism. When, during the first half of the 4th century CE, the younger brother of King Meghavana (304-332) went on pilgrimage to India he found it difficult to get proper accommodation. On his return to Sri Lanka he mentioned this to his brother the king who decided to ask the Indian ruler for permission to build pilgrims' rests at all the holy places. Permission was given to build one such establishment and thus the great Mahabodhi Monastery came to be built at Bodh Gaya on the north side of the Temple compound. An inscribed copper plaque above the door of this monastery announced that hospitality was to be given to everyone who came. It read, "To help all without distinction is the highest teaching of all the Buddhas". In later centuries the Mahabodhi Monastery grew into a great monastic university on a par with Nalanda and Vikramasila and became the premier centre for the study of Theravada Buddhism in India. Buddhaghosa wrote both the Atthasalani and the now lost Nanodaya at this monastery before going to Sri Lanka. Other famous names associated with it include the Chinese monks Chin-hung and Hsuan-chao, the south Indian monk Dharmapala, author of the Madyamakacatuhsatika, and the Kashmiri Tantric siddha Ratnavajra. Tsami Lotsawa Sangye Trak is described in one ancient book as "the only Tibetan ever to hold the chair at Vajrasana" suggesting that he was a professor at the university. The last Theravadin monk whose name is mentioned in connection with the Mahabodhi Monastery is the Sri Lankan pundit Anandasri who subsequently lived and taught in Tibet. He is eulogised in one Tibetan book as "...foremost amongst the many thousands in the sangha of the island of Simhala, a disciple of Dipankara, residing at Vajrasana, a great scholar... skilled in two languages, one who seeks the benefit of the sangha, the excellent one". As Anandasri was translating Pali text in the Land of Snows at the very beginning of the 14th century, it is likely that he was teaching at Bodh Gaya at least up to the end of the 13th century, proof that the university still functioned at that time.

Sri Lankans were also ready to help when the Temple needed repairs. A Tibetan work, the Mkhas-pa'i dga-ston, mentions a Tibetan yogi named Ugyen Sangge who, during one of his frequent trips to India, made contact with the king of Sri Lanka and repaired the Mahabodhi Temple with his help. This is said to have happened around the year 1286. The Mkhas-pa'i dga-ston also says that while the work was being done Ugyen Sangge stayed to the north of the Temple with 500 other yogis. This must be a reference to the Mahabodhi Monastery and its inmates and we cannot doubt that it was they who put Ugyen Sangge into contact with the Sri Lankan king in the first place and that they had a major role in the repairs. Given the Sri Lankan Buddhists' deep regard for Bodh Gaya it is not surprising that it was yet again a Sri Lankan, Anagarika Dharmapala, who began the struggle to restore the Temple in 1893 and who built the first modern pilgrims' rest at Bodh Gaya. Like the Sri Lankans the Burmese have long been coming to Bodh Gaya and on at least four occasions have renovated or repaired the Temple. In 1100 King Kyanzittha "got together jewels of diverse kind and sent them in a ship with intent to build up the holy temple of Vajrasana, the great temple built by Asoka, which had fallen utter ruin. His Majesty proceeded to build it anew, making it finer than ever before" Three centuries later in 1471 King Dhammacetiya got "monks endowed with study and practice to embark at Bassein together with skilled masons, painters and builders, much treasure, royal letters written on gold under the authority of his seal and ambassadors of greater and lesser rank" and sent them to repair the Temple once again and to make offerings under the Bodhi Tree.

The main attraction for pilgrims at Bodh Gaya was the Vajrasana and the other six locations where the Buddha had stayed. Another attraction was the Mahabodhi Image, a statue in the Mahabodhi Temple that



was believed to be an exact likeness of the Buddha himself. The legend concerning the origins of this famous statue is thus. When the Temple was built it was decided to enshrine a statue in it but for a long time no sculpture good enough could be found. One day a man appeared saying that he could do the job. He asked that a pile of scented clay and a lighted lamp be put in the Temple sanctum and the door be locked for six months. This was done but being impatient the people opened the door

four days before the required time. Inside was found a statue of great beauty, perfect in every detail except for a small part on the breast that was unfinished. Sometime later a monk who slept in the sanctum had a dream in which Maitriya appeared and said that it was he who had made the statue. The Mahabodhi Image was the most revered statue in the Buddhist world and is mentioned in records for nearly a thousand years. The main temples at both Nalanda and Vikramasila had copies of this statue in them. When the Chinese envoy Wang Hiuen Ts'e returned home in the 7th century with a model of the Mahabodhi Image he was swamped with requests by people wanting to make copies of it. When the great Bengali pundit Atisa was in Tibet in the 11th century he sent a message back to Vikramasila in India asking that a painting of the Mahabodhi Image be made and sent to him. A Buddha statue the same dimensions as the Image is enshrined in the great stupa at Gyantse. The measurements for this copy were obtained from Sariputra, the last monk from Bodh Gaya when he was passing through Tibet in 1413. The Tibetan Tantric siddha Man-luns-po mentions seeing the Mahabodhi Image when he was in Bodh Gaya in 1300 and another pilgrim, Jinadasa of Parvata, came and worshipped it some time during the 15th century. But after that we hear no more of it. The statue now on the Vajrasana inside the Mahabodhi Temple was found in the ruins and placed there by Cunningham in 1880. It dates from about the 10th century.

There were also colourful festivals to attract pilgrims. The most important of these was at Vesakha in May when people would worship the Bodhi Tree. Hiuen Tsiang wrote, " On this day princes, monks and lay people come of their own accord in myriads to the Bodhi Tree and bathe it with scented water and milk to the accompaniment of music, flowers are offered and lights are kept continually burning". The Kathina festival at the end of the rainy season in October went for seven days and attracted large numbers of monks and nuns, while the third festival was an exhibition of relics. When pilgrims returned home they wanted of course to take souvenirs and mementos with them. Several small models of the Mahabodhi Temple made of stone have been found which are thought to have been made for the pilgrim trade. Another popular souvenir were seeds and leaves from the Bodhi Tree. A 13th century inscription from Pagan in Burma mentions pilgrims returning from Bodh Gaya with such seeds. The Chinese monk Kwang Yuen returned from India in 982 with several leaves and in 1009 an Indian monk arrived at the Chinese court and presented the emperor with several leaves from the Bodhi Tree and an impression of the Vajrasana.

The popularity of pilgrimage gave rise to a whole body of literature, mainly sutras praising the holy places and exhorting the faithful to visit them. There were also mahatya or guide books to help pilgrims find their way and to inform of the times of particular festivals. The 14th century Tibetan scholar Jamdun Riggel Rilti is said to have written a guide book to Bodh Gaya but unfortunately this work is now lost. Ancient Buddhist maps always showed either Mount Meru or Bodh Gaya in their centre. The most famous of these is the Gotenjiku Zu, Map of the Five Indias, drawn by the Japanese monk Juaki in 1364. This map is based carefully on Hiuan Tsiang's account of his pilgrimage to India and indeed even marks his route with a red line. Mount Meru and Lake Anotatta with the traditional four rivers flowing out of it is shown in the centre while Bodh Gaya is located towards the southeast. The purpose of maps like the Gotenjiku Zu was didactic and scholarly rather than practical but route maps meant to be used by those going to India existed too. One of the few such maps that survives, from northern Thailand, was drawn in the 19th century although based on a much earlier prototype, probably by someone who had actually been to India. The map shows important pilgrimage sites like Rajgir, Kusinara, Campa and Dona's stupa, and gives their direction and the number of days needed to reach them from the Mahabodhi Temple, which is depicted in the centre of the map.

It is widely believed that Bodh Gaya's temples and monasteries were destroyed soon after the Muslim invasion of India in 1199. There is no evidence to support this belief. On the contrary, records show that Bodh Gaya continued to function as a centre of Buddhist scholarship and pilgrimage up to at least the

beginning of the 15th century. When Dharmasvamin came in 1234 there were still 300 Sri Lankan monks in the Mahabodhi Monastery. Shortly before his visit some Muslim soldiers had tried to steal the gems from the eyes of the Mahabodhi Image but this seems to have been just a part of a brief smash and grab raid that did little other damage. Twenty eight years later King Jayasena donated some land in trust to Mangalasvamin, the abbot of the Sri Lankan monastery. In 1298 a party of Burmese came to make offerings at the Bodhi Tree and to repair the Temple. They were helped in what they did by the resident monks. If you look at the paving stones on the floor inside the Mahabodhi Temple you will notice some have inscriptions and drawings on them. These were made between 1302 and 1331 by groups of pilgrims from Sindh. At the beginning of the 15th century Cingalaraja repaired some of Bodh Gaya's shrines with the help of a monk named Sariputra and shortly after this an embassy from the emperor of China arrived with a letter for Sariputra, inviting him to visit that country. Records mention Sariputra passing through Katmandu in 1412 and Gyantse in Tibet the following year. This is the last mention until the 19th century of monks actually residing at Bodh Gaya although a trickle of pilgrims kept coming. In 1427 the Indian Tantric siddha Vanaratana planned to go to Bodh Gaya to erect a statue of his teacher but fear of being attacked by bandits made him cancel his trip. There is no doubt that Bodh Gaya endured at least two attacks by Muslims but the monks survived these and continued with their meditation and study. However with the stream of pilgrims gradually drying up and royal patronage no longer forthcoming, staying at Bodh Gaya became increasingly difficult and one by one the monks and nuns drifted away and Bodh Gaya was deserted.

Sometime in perhaps the 16th or 17th centuries a Hindu swami settled down near the crumbling Mahabodhi Temple and being ignorant of the true identities of the Buddha statues scattered around, began worshipping them as Hindu gods. This swami's successors, the Mahants, eventually became powerful and wealthy and began to look upon the Mahabodhi Temple as their private property. In 1877 the king of Burma received permission from the British Government to repair the Mahabodhi Temple and soon after sent a large delegation of officials and craftsmen to do the work. Knowing nothing of archaeology these Burmese did enormous damage and destroyed much important evidence about the Temple's history. Finally, at the insistence of Alexander Cunningham, the then Director General of the Archaeological Survey, the government intervened and did the job at a total cost of 100,000 rupees. In 1891 a young man named Anagarika Dharmapala came to Bodh Gaya to worship the place where the Buddha had attained enlightenment. He expected to be inspired and uplifted by such a holy place but all he saw were greedy brahmins nagging him for money and local people using the Temple compound as a toilet. He was deeply shocked and being of strong faith and abundant energy he then and there conceived the audacious idea of restoring Bodh Gaya to its former glory. This immediately put Dharmapala on a collision course with the Mahant and his minions. Until his death in 1932 he struggled on, often alone, through physical attacks and court cases, despite reversals and disappointments, but never lost sight of his noble goal. Finally in 1949, mainly due to the efforts of Mahabodhi Society, the organisation Dharmapala had founded to continue his work, the Bodh Gaya Act was passed, making provision for the setting up of a committee of four Hindus and four Buddhists to manage the affairs of the Temple. Even today this arrangement is far from satisfactory and is still the cause of problems which can only be resolved when Buddhists alone administer the Temple built on the spiritual and geographical heart of their religion.

History of Ayodhya



History of Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India is a fascinating one. According to the ancient history, Ayodhya was one of the holiest cities where the religious faiths of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Jainism united together to build a place of enormous sacred importance.

Ayodhya History is a chequered one. In the Atharvaveda, this place was described as a city that was made by gods and was as prosperous as heaven itself. The powerful kingdom of ancient Kosala had Ayodhya as its capital. This city was also a significant trade centre in 600 BC. Historians have identified this place to be Saketa, a key Buddhist centre during the 5th century BC (it is a widely held belief that Buddha visited Ayodhya on several occasions) which it remained till the 5th century AD. In fact, Fa-hien, the Chinese monk, kept record of several Buddhist monasteries that he saw here.

Ayodhya has a historical significance for the Jain community too. This is the birth place of two important Jain tirthankaras who were born in the early centuries AD. Jain texts also stand testimony to the visit of Mahavira, Jainism's founder to this city.

In the 7th century AD, Xuan Zhang (Hiuen Tsang), the Chinese monk, recorded spotting many Hindu temples in Ayodhya. In the epic Ramayana, the city of Ayodhya is cited as the birthplace of Lord Sri Rama, a Hindu deity who was worshipped as Lord Vishnu's seventh incarnation. Ayodhya became a famous pilgrimage destination in the 1400's when Ramananda, the Hindu mystic, established a devotional sect of Rama.

Rishikesh

Rishikesh, also spelled **Hrishikesh**, **Rushikesh**, or **Hrushikesh**, is a city and a [municipal board](#) in [Dehradun district](#) of [Uttarakhand](#). It is surrounded by two other districts namely [Tehri Garhwal](#) and [Pauri Garhwal](#). It is located in the foothills of the [Himalaya](#) and attracts thousands of [pilgrims](#) and [tourists](#) each year, from within India, as well as from other countries. Rishikesh is a [vegetarian](#) city by law as well as an alcohol-free city. Rishikesh is also known as "Teerth Nagri" or "Yog Nagri" or "[Yoga City](#)", that is City of Temples, Yoga and Meditation. It is also known as the gateway to the [Himalayas](#) and is located around 25 [kilometres](#) north of another holy city, [Haridwar](#).

Rishikesh has been a part of the legendary 'Kedarkhand' (the present day [Garhwal](#)). Legends state that Lord Rama did penance here for killing [Ravana](#), the demon king of [Lanka](#); and Lakshmana, his younger brother, crossed the river [Ganges](#), at a point, where the present '[Lakshman Jhula](#)' bridge stands today, using a jute rope bridge. The 'Kedar Khand' of [Skanda Purana](#), also mentions the existence of Indrakund at this very point. The jute-rope bridge was replaced by iron-rope [suspension bridge](#) in 1889, and after it was washed away in the 1924 floods, it was replaced by a stronger present bridge.

The sacred river [Ganges](#) flows through Rishikesh. It is here that the river leaves

the [Shivalik](#) mountains in the [Himalayas](#) and flows out into the plains of northern India. Several [temples](#), ancient as well as new, can be found along the banks of the Ganges in Rishikesh. Rishikesh, sometimes nicknamed "the world capital of Yoga", has numerous [yoga](#) centres that also attract tourists. It is believed that [meditation](#) in Rishikesh brings one closer to attainment of [moksha](#), as does a dip in the [holy](#) river that flows through it. Rishikesh is world famous for Rafting and Adventure. Rafting season starts from the month of March and ends in July.

Rishikesh is also home to the 120-year old Kailas Ashram Brahmavidyapeetham, an institution dedicated to preserve and promote the traditional Vedantic Studies. Prominent personalities such as [Swami Vivekananda](#), [Swami Rama Tirtha](#) and [Swami Shivananda](#) have studied in this institution.

Rishikesh is becoming a popular spot for [white water rafting](#) enthusiasts, both from India and abroad, as it offers medium to rough rapids in the course of river Ganges, with rapids rated class 3 and class 4. khushi. It is also a center for hiking and backpacking..

Haridwar

Haridwar is an important pilgrimage Centre in the [Haridwar district](#) of [Uttarakhand](#).. The [River Ganges](#), after flowing for 253 kilometres from its source at [Gaumukh](#) at the edge of the [Gangotri Glacier](#), enters the [Indo-Gangetic Plains](#) of [North India](#) for the first time at Haridwar, which gave the city its ancient name, Gangadwára.

Haridwar is regarded as one of the seven holiest places to [Hindus](#). According to the [Samudra manthan](#), Haridwar along with [Ujjain](#), [Nasik](#) and [Allahabad](#) is one of four sites where drops of [Amrit](#), the elixir of immortality, accidentally spilled over from [the pitcher](#) while being carried by the celestial bird [Garuda](#). This is manifested in the [Kumbha Mela](#) being celebrated every 3 years in one of the 4 places, and thus every 12 years in Haridwar. Amidst the Kumbha Mela, millions of pilgrims, devotees, and tourists congregate in Haridwar to perform ritualistic bathing on the banks of the river Ganges to wash away their sins to attain [Moksha](#). *Brahma Kund*, the spot where the Amrit fell, is located at [Har ki Pauri](#) (literally, "footsteps of the Lord").

Haridwar is a paradise for nature lovers. In the scriptures it has been variously mentioned as Kapilsthan, Gangadwar and Mayapuri. It is also an entry point to the [Char Dham](#) (the four main centers of pilgrimage in Uttarakhand *viz*, [Badrinath](#), [Kedarnath](#), [Gangotri](#), and [Yamunotri](#)), hence, [Shaivaites](#) (followers of [Lord Shiva](#)) and [Vaishnavites](#) (followers of [Lord Vishnu](#)) call this place Hardwar and Haridwar respectively, corresponding to Har being Shiv and [Hari](#) being Vishnu

Sage [Kapila](#) is said to have an ashram here giving it, its ancient name, Kapila or Kapilastan. The legendary King, Bhagirath, the great-grandson of the [Suryavanshi](#) King [Sagar](#) (an ancestor of [Rama](#)) is said to have brought the river Ganges down from heaven, through years of penance in [Satya Yuga](#), for the

salvation of 60,000 of his ancestors from the curse of the saint [Kapila](#). Lord ishnu is said to have left his footprint on the stone that is set in the upper wall of Har-Ki-Pauri, where the Holy Ganges touches it at all times.

Places of interest :Chandi Devi Temple:This temple is dedicated to Goddess [Chandi](#), who sits atop the 'Neel Parvat' on the eastern bank of the river Ganges. It was constructed in 1929 A.D. by the king of [Kashmir](#), Suchat Singh. [Skanda Purana](#) mentions a legend, in which *Chanda-Munda*, the Army Chief of a local Demon Kings *Shumbh* and *Nishumbha* were killed by goddess [Chandi](#) here, after which the place got the name Chandi Devi.^[44] It is believed that the main statue was established by the Adi Shankracharya in 8th century A.D. The temple is a 3 km trek from Chandighat and can also be reached through a ropeway.

Mansa Devi Temple : Located at the top of Bilwa Parwat, the temple of Goddess [Mansa Devi](#), literally meaning the Goddess who fulfills desires (Mansa), is a popular tourist destination, especially because of the cable cars, which offer a picturesque view of the entire city. The main temple houses two idols of

Ram Mandir :This mandir is under construction near Saptarishi marge, at Bhupatwala. Mandir is being constructed by Swami Ramanandacharya Smarak Seva Nyays headed by Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Swami Ramnareshacharya of Sri math, Panchganga Ghat, [Varanasi](#). This Ram temple would be biggest in India.

Sureshwari Devi Temple: Temple of Goddess Sureshwari, situated in midst of beautiful Rajaji National Park. Serene and religious makes this temple abode of worshipers, saints etc. Located at outskirts of Haridwar in Ranipur and permission from forest rangers is necessary.

Bharat Mata Mandir : A multi-storey temple, dedicated to Bharat Mata, Mother India, with each floor depicting an era in the Indian History, from the days of Ramayan till India's independence. The temple was built under the auspicious blessings of the honorable former Shankaracharya His Holiness Maha-Mandleshwar Swami Satyamitranand Giriji Maharaj. Swami Satyamitranand Foundation was registered in 1998. Since the inception of the Foundation, several other branches have been opened, namely in Renukut, Jabalpur, Jodhpur, Indore and Ahmedabad. The Bharat Mata Mandir was inaugurated on 15 May 1983 by Rt.Hon.Smt. Indira Gandhi and stands along the River Ganges in Haridwar. It is situated adjacent to the 'Smanvaya Ashram', and stands eight stories tall to the height of 180 feet (55 m). Each floor is devoted to a particular theme.

On the first floor is the statue of Bharat Mata. The second floor 'Shoor Mandir' is dedicated to the well renowned heroes of India. The third floor 'Matru Mandir' is dedicated to the achievements of India's revered women; such as Meera Bai, Savitri, Maitri etc. The great saints from various religions, including Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism are featured on the fourth floor 'Sant Mandir' The Assembly Hall with walls depicting symbolic coexistence of all religions practiced in India and paintings portraying history and beauty in various

provinces of India, is situated on the fifth floor. The various forms of the Goddess of Shakti can be seen on the sixth floor, whilst the seventh floor is devoted to all incarnations of Lord Vishnu.

The eighth floor holds the shrine of Lord Shiva from which devotees can gain a panoramic view of Himalayas, Haridwar, and the splendour of the entire campus of Sapta Sarovar.

DELHI

Delhi is the largest metropolis by area and second largest city in India by population. It is also the capital of the Indian Union. The greater Capital Region also includes Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon and Faridabad. Located on the bank of River Yamuna, Delhi has been known to be continuously inhabited since at least the 6th century B.C. Delhi is also widely believed to have been site of INDRAPARASTHA, the legendary capital of Pandavas. Delhi had many ancient and medieval monuments, archaeological sites and remains. Under the British Raj, a new City called New Delhi was built to the south of old City during the 1920s and that became the capital for British rulers. After independence New Delhi was declared as Free India's capital and the seat of the government.

Owing to the migration of people from across the country, Delhi has grown to be a multicultural, cosmopolitan metropolis and the city became a major cultural, political and commercial centre of India.

The following sites are worth visiting in Delhi.

Qutub Minar

Towering over southern Delhi, the Qutub Minar—a triumphal minaret that marks both the coming of Islam to India and the arrival of Delhi sultans—is one of the world's tallest brick minarets, standing at a height of 73 meters. Construction of the five-tiered tower (adorned with intricate carvings and verses from the Qur'an) is said to have begun in 1193.

Humayun's Tomb

This tranquil World UNESCO Heritage Site is not only the first of the great Mughal garden tombs but it is also the final resting place of the ill-fated emperor Humayun. This Persian influenced monument, built in the 1560s, more than 80 years before the Taj, is often colloquially referred to as the miniature 'Mahal' of Delhi city.

Red Fort

Lal Qila, also known as the Red Fort, was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the

mid-17th century in the heart of Old Delhi (Shahjahanabad) to commemorate his shift in the capital from Agra to Delhi. Today, the Red Fort is UNESCO Heritage site, a symbol of India's sovereignty and the world's largest non-functional fort.

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Jama Masjid

Yet another magnificent structure built by emperor Shan Jahan, the Masjid-i-Jahan Numa, also known as the Jama Masjid is India's largest and best known mosque. With three main domes, a couple of minarets (over 40 meters in height) and a courtyard that can hold 25,000 worshippers; is it any wonder that it holds mass appeal?

Rashtrapati Bhavan

Once the viceroy's residence and now home to the Indian President, the marvellous Rashtrapati Bhavan is Sir Edwin Lutyen's masterpiece, simply because it uniquely fuses both Indian and European design aesthetics.

Parliament House

The mammoth Sansad Bhavan, as it is more commonly known, is a distinctively regal, circular building that was meant to serve as the Legislative Assembly but is now the seat of the Indian Parliament (for both the Lok Sabha; House on the People, and the Rajya Sabha; Council of States).

Rajpath

Rajpath runs east to west, right through the heart of Delhi, from Rashtrapati Bhavan to the National Stadium, this is truly one of India's grandest boulevards. Must-see: India Gate, a 42 meter high memorial arch bearing the names of 80,000 (plus) Indian soldiers who died in World War I and the Afghan Wars.

National Museum

Founded in 1949, the National Museum holds India's pride collection of over 2,00,000 exhibits that spans five millennia. With artefacts dating back to prehistoric archaeological finds, Buddhist statues, Chola bronzes, Mughal miniatures, ruins from the Indus Valley civilization, manuscripts besides Pre-Columbian and Western art, this one is a must-visit.

National Gallery of Modern Art

A 15,000-strong reservoir of Indian and international paintings, sculpture and works of modern art; from mid-19th century to the present, makes up Delhi's National Gallery of Modern Art. The museum also sells prints, posters and monographs.

The 16th century witnessed a shift in power with Ayodhya coming under the rule of the Mughal Empire. Ayodhya was annexed in 1856 by the British rulers. Between 1857 and 1859, this place was one of the main centers where the sparks of the first war of Indian Independence originated. These sparks later led to a nationwide revolt of the Indian soldiers in opposition to the British East India Company that began in Calcutta.

So, rush to embark on your Ayodhya Tour to feel the genuine essence of this place.