



In the Footsteps of Gautami & the First Buddhist Women

Pilgrimage from Lumbini, Nepal to Vaishali, India

9 -17 NOV 2023

Our Journey

This historic pilgrimage marks the first time Buddhist pilgrims will retrace the steps of Mahaprajapati Gautami and the 500 women who undertook an arduous journey of hundreds of miles to seek freedom and recognition as equal disciples of the Buddha over 2500 years ago. Daily activities will include visiting sacred sites in Nepal and India, storytelling with group discussion, and group & personal contemplative practice.

We will begin in Buddhism's Motherland in southern Nepal, the territory of the ancient Sakya people that holds the birthplace of the Buddha and the homeland of his forebears. We'll learn about the Buddha's youth, renunciation, and later return to Nepal to teach Dharma to his people, together with stories of his family and the women of that time who overcame the burdens of patriarchy to pursue the highest fruits of awakening under the wise leadership of his adoptive mother, Mahaprajapati Gautami.

From Nepal we will travel to Vaishali, India where the Sakya women achieved their goal of acceptance into the Buddha's 4-fold community by ordaining as monastic women. It was here, years later, where they are said to have passed into nirvana as fully realized beings.

We will restore the stories and voices of Buddhism's courageous foremothers while honoring them as seminal participants in the founding of Buddhism and spiritual guides as we look to the future.

Our Guides



Wendy Garling is an independent scholar with a BA from Wellesley College and MA specializing in Sanskrit language and literature from the University of California, Berkeley. She is author of the award-winning [The Woman Who Raised the Buddha: The Extraordinary Life of Mahaprajapati](#), with Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and [Stars at Dawn: Forgotten Stories of Women in the Buddha's Life](#). Both are available on [Shambhala.com](#) and [Amazon](#).



Katherine Demsky is an anthropologist living in Nepal for over a decade and working to strengthen women's empowerment through educational and economic opportunities. She had led tours in SE Asia for socially and spiritually conscious groups since 2015.

Lay & Monastic Sangha

The cost of our pilgrimage includes scholarships for ten monastic Buddhist women living in India. We are thrilled that nuns from Dongyu Gatsal Ling nunnery (dglunnery.com) will join us in Lumbini where we will continue our journey together.

In addition, proceeds from our pilgrimage will support educational and economic programs for women throughout Nepal.





Our Itinerary

9 NOV Kathmandu

Pilgrims check in to our hotel near the Boudha stupa. Transfers from the airport will be arranged as requested. Afternoon rest with 5 pm registration and 6 pm welcome dinner. 8 pm, evening circumambulation and meditation at the khora.

10 NOV Lumbini

Early breakfast at the hotel followed by morning flight to Lumbini. Check-in, rest, and lunch at the hotel. Afternoon walk to the Mayadevi Temple (site of the Buddha's birth), Sacred Garden Area, and surrounding temples. Sunset practice and meditation in the Sacred Garden. Dinner at the hotel. Evening circle and meditation.

11 NOV Lumbini

Breakfast at the hotel and departure by bus to the Devadaha region, homeland of the Buddha's maternal family and his mothers Maya and Gautami. Sacred sites include the family compound, the Rohini River, and the Ramagrama stupa, an undisturbed reliquary site holding the Buddha's physical remains (and proposed World Heritage site). Lunch and walk through ancient village of Devadaha. Return to Lumbini. Dinner at the hotel with evening circle or walking meditation in the Sacred Garden Area.

12 NOV Kapilavastu

Breakfast at the hotel followed by visit to the Lumbini Crane Sanctuary. Depart for one-hour drive to Kapilavastu, hotel check-in and rest. Short drive to Tilaurakot, village and archaeological site marking the palace grounds where Prince Siddhartha lived until age 29. Picnic lunch at the Eastern Gate. Walk to nearby stupa/tombs of Kanthaka, Queen Maya, and King Suddhodana (Siddhartha's horse and parents, respectively). Short drive to Sagarhawa, "The Pool of Severed Hands," massacre site of the Sakya women, silent meditation. Return to hotel. Dinner and evening circle.



13 NOV Kapilavastu

Breakfast at the hotel and return to Tilaurakot. Walk to Elephant Shrine compound (Samai Mai Temple), where village women continue practices of the sacred feminine. Walk and drive from the Eastern Gate to the Nigrodha Grove (6 kilometers), following in the footsteps of Gautami and the 500 women who made the journey to request the Buddha's permission to attend his teachings (denied by the Sakya patriarchy) and again five years later to request monastic ordination. Lunch in nearby village. Return to Tilaurakot with time for personal practice. Dinner at the hotel and pack for early morning departure.

14 NOV Vaishali

Early breakfast at the hotel and departure for approx. 10-hour drive to Vaishali. Border crossing into India (have your visas!). Lunch stop, and evening arrival in Vaishali. Dinner at the hotel.



The Great HIMALAYAS



- LEGEND**
- Ancient Buddhist Sites
 - ⬠ Ashokan Pillars
 - ⬠ Ancient Stupas
- The Great Renunciation Trail

Deepak Anand

15 NOV Vaishali

Breakfast at hotel and short drive to sacred site of Gautami and the 500 women's ordination and parinirvana. Drive to the nearby birthplace of the courtesan Amrapali, a great patron and disciple of the Buddha. Lunch and rest at the hotel. Afternoon drive to Vaishali's iconic Ashokan pillar and stupa, and the Buddha's relic stupa. Dinner at the hotel. Evening circle.

16 NOV Patna

Morning drive to local mango grove for picnic breakfast and storytelling. Return to the sacred ordination and parinirvana site for closing meditation, offerings and circle. Lunch and check-out at hotel. Afternoon departure by bus for 4-hour drive to Patna. Check in to airport hotel in Patna. Dinner at hotel. Closing evening circle.

17 NOV Departure from Patna

Breakfast at hotel. Airport transfers and departures.

The published trip itinerary may change for many reasons. We will make every attempt to offer activities and accommodations as described, however we are not liable for changes to any segment of the trip due to unavoidable circumstances such as government restrictions or changes in government regulations (including Covid), natural disasters, political instability, strikes, closures, flight pattern or transportation changes or cancellations, or delays, or any other events not within our control.

Pricing & Registration

9 days/8 nights

\$3,250 USD shared rooms

+\$225 USD private rooms *where possible

How to Register

1. Request a registration form from G500pilgrimage@gmail.com
2. Return your registration form to G500pilgrimage@gmail.com
3. We will request a \$500 USD non-refundable deposit at the time of registration to reserve your place.
4. Payment information will be provided on the registration form.
5. Space is limited so register early.

Questions? Please contact Katherine Demsky at

G500pilgrimage@gmail.com

www.upayaconsulting.org/gautami-pilgrimage

Inclusions

- Domestic flight from Kathmandu to Lumbini
- Airport transfers
- Land transportation
- Shared accommodations
- Three meals per day + snacks
- Bottled water, tea & coffee
- Guide services
- Entrance fees
- Offerings at temples



Accommodations

Our hotels and guesthouses will vary depending upon our location. All will offer a private, attached bathroom, western style toilets, towels, and hot water. They will also have a central kitchen and dining hall where we will take our breakfasts and most dinners. Public toilets are most often squat style and may charge a small fee.

Meals

Meals are included starting dinner of the first day. In the interest of time, some set meals will be ordered in advance and will always be vegetarian. When possible, we may have picnic lunches at sites.

Please communicate all dietary needs in advance of your arrival to Nepal.





Travel Visa Information

Guests need to carry a valid passport good for at least 6 months.

Your Nepal tourist visa is available on-arrival at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu , 15 days for \$30 USD (cash only).

Your India visa must be secured while you are in your home country before arriving in Nepal. Contact your nearest India Consulate or Embassy to apply for a tourist visa. Please note: e-visas may not be accepted at land crossings. Inquire how long processing will take and allow yourself extra time for unseen delays.

Visa costs are the responsibility of the traveler.

Translation

Teachings and guided meditations will be conducted in English only. Guide services and medical care will be available in English, Nepali & Hindi.

Health & Fitness

This trip requires a moderate level of fitness and quite a bit of walking. Most areas and buildings will have no wheelchair access. We recommend that you check with your doctor or a travel clinic concerning your health and fitness and ask about any recommended vaccinations or medications before booking your journey.

Medical Travel Insurance & Vaccination Information

We require that you carry a comprehensive medical travel insurance package while on the pilgrimage. Insurance must include medical expense coverage and emergency evacuation. Squaremouth.com is a travel insurance search engine that we use that offers hundreds of policies through many different companies. Proof of insurance must be submitted to us on or before the final pilgrimage payment.

Nepal requires proof of COVID vaccination or a negative PCR test taken less than 48 hours before your travel to Nepal.



C o n t a c t s

Katherine Demsky

G500pilgrimage@gmail.com

Wendy Garling

wendy.garling@yahoo.com

www.upayaconsulting.org/gautami-pilgrimage