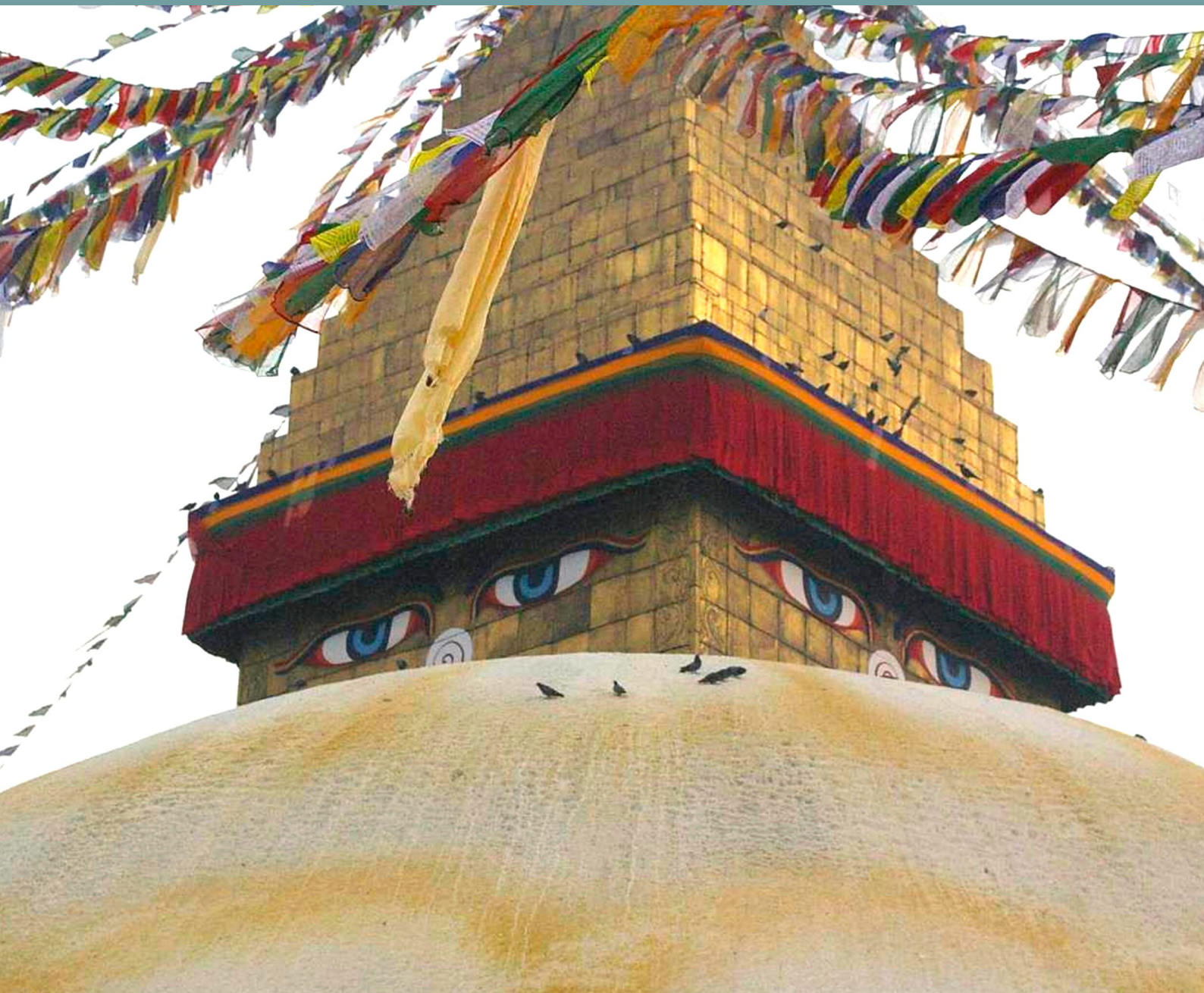


NEPAL AND BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINTS 2019/20



13 DECEMBER 2019 - 7 JANUARY 2020

26 days ex KTM/Varanasi - or 12 days KTM only
with Khandro Thrinlay Chodon

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NEPAL AND BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINTS 2019-2020



DAY 1

Friday, December 13

ARRIVE KATMANDHU



Our Druk Expeditions representative will welcome you at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu and transfer you to your hotel. Settle in, relax, and at your leisure, experience life around the stupa. There are many restaurants, coffee shops and curio shops to enjoy. Welcome and introduction to the group will be at your first evening meal.

DAY 2

Saturday, December 14

BOUDHA AND SURROUNDS



After breakfast, we will pay our respects and hear the story of the huge stupa, the largest in Nepal. It is deeply connected to our Shakya Shri lineage. We will also visit monasteries and lamas in residence around Boudhanath, This area has been home of so many important Vajrayana Buddhist Masters for many years. Hear their stories, meditate and join the throngs of lay and monastics whom practice around this great stupa each day.

DAY 3

Sunday, December 15

SWAYAMBHUNATH AND SURROUNDS



Sightseeing includes another great stupa of Nepal - Swayambhunath. It sits on a scenic hill, and is the best place to view the amazing Kathmandu Valley. The stupa is surrounded by a complex of shrines and temples. The stupa has many practitioners of Hindu and Buddhist religions performing their rites. Many circumambulate around the entire hill, which again is surrounded by monasteries, including Druk Amithaba mountain, home of Drukpa nuns.

DAY 4

Monday, December 16

MARATIKA - CAVE OF LONG LIFE



Today after breakfast drive to Maratika Cave. This is said to be the place where Guru Rinpoche and his consort, Princess Mandarava realized long life through the practice of Amitayus. In the main cave, there is a long-life vase (Tib. tse bum) made of stone, which Amitayus is said to have placed on the heads of Guru Rinpoche and Mandarava to bestow immortal life. The cave also contains many self-created (Tib. rang jung) images and syllables and many spiritual treasures are hidden there. Texts say that here Buddha Amitabha taught the eighteen tantras of long life and dakinis wrote these down in symbolic script using melted lapis lazuli on golden paper and concealed them at Maratika.

DAY 5

Tuesday, December 17

DHULIKHEL



In the morning travel back 193 km/approx. 6 hrs toward Katmandhu and end the day in the old magical town of Dhulikhel. We will pass through quiet farming villages and lush forests, experience local customs, discover ancient temples and historic villages, and enjoy the snow-capped Himalaya. Dhulikel has for centuries been a trading centre on the route between Nepal and Tibet. It holds beautiful Newari architecture and magnificent views of the Himalayas.

DAY 6

Wednesday, December 18

NAMO BUDDHA AND BHAKTAPUR TO PARPHING



After breakfast we journey a short 45 mins to Namu Buddha, - a most important Buddhist stupa - where the Buddha was overcome with compassion when he saw a tigress tormented by starvation and offered his body to her without a moment's hesitation. The landscape below the stupa resembles an eight-petaled lotus, and the sky above has the form of a wheel with nine spokes.

We journey on another 45 mins to the historic town of Bhaktapur. Here we visit the main square and ancient statue of Tara which is believed to have spoken. Another short journey and we will arrive, south of Kathmandu, in the small town of Pharping. Some say it is the birthplace of Phamtingpa, the heart-son of Naropa. Chatral Rinpoche explains that the 'Indian Phamting' derives its name from the presence of the great hood of the Naga king Lhakmachen or Shesha, which marks it as a site of his power. Pharping is most famous for its plethora of special Buddhist sites, which are now surrounded by Vajrayana Buddhist monasteries. Tashi Choling is one of them and has been constructed by H.E. Namkha Rinpoche, uncle of Khandro Rinpoche

DAY 7-9

Thursday - Saturday December 19-21

SITES OF PHARPING AREA AKA YANGLESHÖ.



The two caves in which Guru Rinpoche is said to have meditated are Asura and Yangleshö. Although there are many places Guru Rinpoche travelled to, what makes Yangleshö area special, is, that Guru Rinpoche is said to have attained enlightenment here. Thus Yangleshö is considered to be as important as Bodhgaya for practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. Asura Cave links to Yangleshö, ½ a mile away, via a small tunnel which Guru Rinpoche is said to have used. Inside Asura cave one can view a self arising AH syllable. Inside Yangshelo cave is a headprint of Guru Rinpoche. Pharping is also the place to see the self-arising Tara Vajrayogini Temple - Dedicated to Vajrayogini, this ancient Buddhist and Newari holy site is said to have been constructed in the 17th Century by two brothers who were disciples of the great Mahasiddas Naropa and Maitrepa .

DAY 10-11

Sunday - Monday December 22 and 23

THAMIL AND HISTORIC KATHMANDU



We will have arrived back to Kathmandu and stay in our Thamil guesthouse on the Saturday and so we will be ready now for a full day of sightseeing in around the ancient historical Durbar Square area. This includes the many other famous monuments such as the Krishna Temple and the Golden Temple. Afterwards feel free to shop and explore the vibrant curio shops of Thamil and its restaurants and coffee shops.

DAY 12

Tuesday December 24

TO LUMBINI - BUDDHA'S BIRTHPLACE



Early morning we are driven to the domestic airport for the short flight to Lumbini. Buddha Air 851 Dep: 9:00 am Arrives: 10: 35am. On arrival we settle into our hotel where we will explore this historic and spiritual place and spend a joyful and meaningful Christmas together.

DAY 13-14

Christmas - December 25/26

LUMBINI



We enjoy a relaxed and profound Christmas in this place of the Buddha's birth. Amongst stories of the Buddha and opportunities for our own practice and reflection, our visit includes the Peace Pagoda, Lumbini Garden, Maya Devi Temple, Tara Foundation, World China Temple, Thai Monastery, Myanmar Temple, Nepal Buddha Temple and Dharmaswami Buddhist monastery. We enjoy a sumptuous Christmas dinner together to celebrate meaningful lives of wisdom and compassion.

DAY 15

Friday, December 27

KUSHINIGAR - BUDDHA'S PARINIRVANA



Early morning we travel by car, approx 210km/6 hours, to Kushinagar- where the Buddha spent his last days.

After checking into our guesthouse we enjoy an afternoon of visiting the sites. Ramabha stupa stands on the spot where Buddha's body was cremated and Natha Kumarka Kot enshrines a large figure of Buddha in the state of nirvana.

DAY 16

Saturday, December 28

VAISHALI - BUDDHA'S LAST TEACHING



A 350km/8 hr drive today to where Buddha taught many times and gave his last teaching. To mark this spot King Ashoka erected one of his amazing pillars. Whist Vaisahli is a small town these days, in the past it was an important major centre.

NALANDA AND VULTURES PEAK

it will take all day to travel the 150 KM to Bodhgaya via important Buddhist sites. First is Nalanda university ruins. This university is widely recognised as one of the greatest Buddhist centres of academic excellence in ancient times. At its peak in the 7th century AD, about 10,000 monks and students lived here, studying theology, astronomy, metaphysics, medicine and philosophy. Next we stop nearby at Vultures Peak, Rajgir. This is the famous site of Buddha's teaching on emptiness – the Prajnaparamita, the second turning of the wheel of dharma. Travel on till Bodhgaya.

BODHGAYA - BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT

New Year is filled with Buddha's enlightenment infusing our own journeys. Bodhgaya was the site of the Buddha Shakyamuni's enlightenment, and is the most revered of all Buddhist sacred sites.

The main temple complex houses the famous Mahabodhi temple/stupa and a descendant of the original Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha gained enlightenment. There are also temples or monasteries from many other nations with a Buddhist tradition such as Thailand, Tibet, Japan. New Years Eve is marked with a worthy dinner and celebration.

VARANASI - BUDDHA'S FIRST TEACHING

Friday 3rd we take the Air India 2.15pm flight to Varanasi, arriving at 2.50pm. Here we stay 4 nights on the banks of the famous Ganges. We have boat rides on the river, see night Hindu fire pujas, cremations and with all experiences we immerse ourselves into the continued magic of India. On Sunday 5th we visit Sarnath, nearby Varanasi – the site of Buddha's first teaching (530 BC) after attaining enlightenment – four noble truths to five disciples. It is also the site of today's famous Varanasi Buddhist University. Tuesday 7th marks the day for homeward bound flights – you will take with you many rewarding and happy memories.