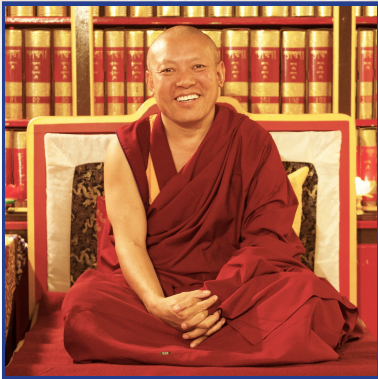


BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE

with Geshe Tenley



Geshe Tenley was ordained by the late Gyume Khensur Geshe Urgyen Tseten Rinpoche in 1990 and began the program of studies to become a geshe at Sera Je Monastery in Bylakuppe, India. During the course of his studies, Geshe Tenley has received many teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama as well as other highly qualified masters.

In November 2008, after eighteen years of rigorous studies, Geshe Tenley completed his final exams to be conferred the geshe degree at Sera Je Monastery. He began teaching at Kurukulla Center in 2009. In 2010 he was appointed Resident Teacher of Kurukulla Center, following Lama Zopa Rinpoche's advice. This was after the passing of Geshe Tsulga, the previous Resident Teacher at Kurukulla Center, who was also Geshe Tenley's uncle and long-time teacher.

Geshe Tenley's extensive activities in the United States and around the world bring great joy and benefit to everyone with whom he comes into contact.

Geshe Tenley will lead a small group of his students on a special pilgrimage January 5-20, 2019, to some of the most important Buddhist sites in the world. The pilgrimage will begin in Nepal with visits to holy sites of Kathmandu Valley including Boudhanath and the great Boudha Stupa, Swayambhunath and its stupa and other sacred architecture, and Pharping with its connection to great yogis and those gone to bliss. The pilgrimage will continue to Lumbini, where Shakyamuni Buddha was born, then into North India where the group will see the places of Buddha's enlightenment and passing into nirvana.

The purpose of doing pilgrimage is to affect your mind in a way that deepens your Dharma practice, both on pilgrimage and upon return to your daily life. The Buddha travelled to these specific places leaving His blessing, and by traveling to those very same places you can receive those blessings. It's possible to feel a sense of sadness at seeing many of these holy sites abandoned by devout practitioners and now primarily visited by tourists and pilgrims. Therefore, it's particularly beneficial to think how fortunate you are to have met with the Buddha's teachings, rather than thinking you are going to visit interesting tourist sights. At each site Geshe Tenley will lead prayers, pujas, meditations, and practices appropriate to the location.

Kurukulla Center's precious Resident Teacher, Geshe Tenley, has repeatedly impressed on his students the importance of making pilgrimage to the holy sites of Buddhism. At the request of several students, Geshe Tenley has kindly agreed to lead this pilgrimage to India and Nepal for a small group in January 2019. This trip will be physically and mentally demanding, a unique opportunity for students to further develop their practice outside of their usual comfort zone. It will be an intimate trip under the direct guidance of Geshe Tenley, and therefore, priority will be given to his regular students before others can be considered.

The Meaning of Pilgrimage *"It's not about being a tourist, taking pictures, or 'going on a tour'. The main purpose is to have some effect on our mind. First Shakyamuni Buddha was there and blessed the place with his presence. We, who can travel to those places, receive a very profound blessing from visiting the same sites. Seeing these places now also teaches us about impermanence, because 2,500 years ago these places were alive and flourishing. Now we can just see ruins. We should think 'I am very fortunate. I have a precious human rebirth. I have met the Buddha's teachings. I can study and meditate. I must make my life meaningful and put the teachings into practice.'" — Geshe Tenley*



A tip from your local guide Amber Tamang:

“According to airport rules, only one person per agency can receive a group (no matter if it’s a big group or one person). Many people are coming in on the same flights. There will be people at the airport asking for money to help you with your luggage. Either use a free luggage cart or have a small bill (USD 1, or 100 rupees per bag) handy in your pocket to give them. Keep your wallet well hidden as you exit the airport and be patient. I will find you and make sure you and your luggage are safely transported to the hotel.”

Amber Tamang, Three Jewels Adventures

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Your day by day itinerary in detail

Pre-Trip Arrival: Fly to our meeting point in Kathmandu, Nepal. You must arrive in Kathmandu no later than Saturday, January 5th, 2019 at 3 P.M. (Travelers from the Americas ‘lose’ one day crossing the international date line.) If you arrive early, we can arrange transfers and additional accommodations on request (extra cost).

Day 1 (January 5) Kathmandu – Arrival

Everyone meets in Kathmandu. First, you will go through immigration (obtain a visa), and then go to claim your luggage (take a cart for this), and finally, go through customs and proceed to exit the airport. As you go outside, look for a sign with your name on it. Our local staff will pick you up and transfer you to Hotel Mudita near Boudhanath Stupa (about a 20–30-minute drive).

Meet in the hotel lobby for dinner at 6 PM. The entire group in one of the restaurants near Boudhanath Stupa, one of the holiest of Buddhist shrines.

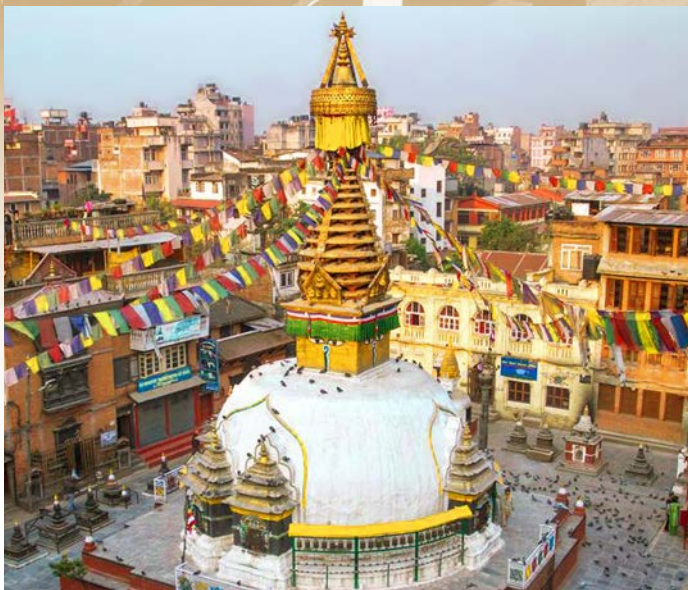
[Hotel Mudita, Kathmandu \(Welcome Dinner\)](#)



Amber Tamang is from a small village in the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal — a hamlet not on most maps! Amber became a porter in 1992, to put himself through high school and college. He is an advocate of better working conditions for trekking staff. For his undergraduate law degree, his thesis was on legal protection for workers in tourism. He achieved a Master’s Degree in Nepali Culture, Religion and Philosophy.



Amber has worked as the local guide for many pilgrimages since 2001. An independent researcher in the culture and religion of the Himalayas, Amber has published several articles in Nepali and English, including one for Mandala magazine. Amber became a guide with Himalayan High Treks in 1995 and has introduced many travelers to the wonders of Nepal, Tibet, and India. He now is a group leader as well as our Regional Manager for Nepal. Those who’ve traveled with him praise his patience and kindness. His English is articulate as he enthusiastically describes the local customs of the Himalaya and its people. Amber and his family live in Kathmandu, Nepal.



Day 2 (January 6)

In the morning, visit Kopan Monastery. Established in 1970 as a place of retreat for Westerners and eventually a monastery for the monks of Solu Khumbu (where Lama Zopa Rinpoche is from), Kopan is beautifully situated on a hill above the Kathmandu Valley. One of the best Gelug monasteries in Nepal, it is home to 400 monks and, at Kachoe Ghakyil down the road, 400 nuns. People come from all over the world to attend retreats and courses at Kopan, especially the famous November course.

Free time in the afternoon to rest or to explore on your own.

[Kathmandu Hotel Mudita \(Breakfast\)](#)



Day 3 (January 7)

In the morning, visit Boudhanath stupa and temples, monasteries and the village. Boudhanath is the religious center for Tibetans living in Nepal and is especially beloved by them. Lama Zopa Rinpoche says that upon first sight of the stupa, all one's prayers will be fulfilled. In the afternoon, we visit Swayambhunath stupa. According to legend, Kathmandu Valley was filled with a great lake, at the center of which a lotus flower grew. With the slash of the sword of the Buddha of Wisdom, Manjushri, the lake was drained and the lotus settled on top of the hill and transformed into the stupa. There is evidence that the great Indian Buddhist Emperor Ashoka visited the site 2,000 years ago.

Free time in the afternoon to rest or to explore on your own.

[Hotel Mudita, Kathmandu \(Breakfast\)](#)

Day 4 (January 8)

Full day trip to Namobuddha. Drive 26 miles in two hours to Thangu Tashi Yangtse Monastery which is one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Nepal and one of the holiest in the world. It is known as the place where the Buddha, in a previous life as a prince, gave his body to a starving tigress and her cubs. The surrounding countryside is beautiful and depending on time and the weather we may stop for views at Dhulikhel.

[Hotel Mudita, Kathmandu \(Breakfast\)](#)



Day 5 (January 9)

Full day trip to visit the village of Pharping which is 11 miles south of Kathmandu. Once an independent kingdom, Pharping with its many shrines, monasteries, and temples, is perched on a hillside. It is a powerful place of the female Buddha, Vajra Yogini, and many yogis meditate here. We will see “the self-emanating” Tara and Padmasambhava’s cave. Guru Padmasambhava is one of the great teachers of Tibetan Buddhism. An Indian, he went to Tibet in 817 AD and is famous for his great devotion and magical powers. On the route to Pharping, we will stop for a short visit to Manjushri’s Gorge. On our return to the city, we will stop to view the ancient statues of Chenrezig, Tara, and Manjushri which are found near the center of Kathmandu.

[Hotel Mudita, Kathmandu](#) (Breakfast)

Day 6 (January 10)

Lumbini. Meet in the lobby at 7:30 AM (after tea or a small breakfast) for transfer to the airport. Our airport reporting time is 8:00 AM and flight time is 9:00 AM. Fly (30 minutes) to Bhairahawa airport on Buddha Air and drive to Lumbini in one hour for our hotel check-in (tentative schedule). After lunch, visit the birthplace of Prince Siddhartha who became the Buddha. Here there is an Ashokan Pillar with an inscription of King Ashoka from 250 BC, a sacred pond, ruins of the ancient monasteries, stupas and the temple of Mayadevi, the prince’s mother. The site is a 15-minute walk from the hotel.

[Lumbini Garden Hotel, Lumbini](#) (Tea, Dinner)

Day 7 (January 11)

Lumbini to Sravasti. After breakfast, we will leave Lumbini and drive to Sanauli (the Nepal/India border) in about an hour. We stop for passport control and to change money into Indian rupees if you have not already done this. We continue driving five and a half hours to Sravasti (129 miles, six to seven hours driving total). Overnight at Hotel Lotus Nikko.

[Lotus Nikko Hotel, Sravasti](#) (Breakfast, Dinner)





Day 8 (January 12)

After breakfast, we visit Jetavana (in Sravasti), capital of the ancient Kosala kingdom, where Buddha and his disciples retreated each rainy season for twenty-five years, and where he gave many of his teachings. According to Rinpoche, it is easy to meditate here, so blessed is it. Relax in the afternoon with lunch on your own or visit Angulimala Cave. This is where a dreaded bandit used to live but after meeting Lord Buddha, he calmed down and embraced Buddhism.

[Lotus Nikko hotel, Sravasti](#) (Breakfast, Dinner)



Day 9 (January 13)

After breakfast, we begin our 150-mile drive (about six to seven hours) from Balrampur to Kushinagar. Kushinagar is the place of Buddha's death. His last words were said to be, "Decay is inherent in all component things. Be diligent in your practice." Then we visit Mahaparinirvana Temple where there is the statue of Buddha passing away in meditation. In the afternoon we visit the unadorned but very holy Rambhar Stupa where Buddha was cremated. "Do not be sad," he told his disciples. "Let the Dharma I have taught you be your teacher after my passing."

[Hotel Lotus Nikko, Kushinagar](#) (Breakfast, Dinner)



Day 10 (January 14)

All day drive (10 hours maximum) from Kushinagar to Rajgir. On the way visit Vaishali an ancient site which Buddha visited many times and where the nuns order began.

[Raj Residency, Rajgir](#) (Breakfast, Dinner)

Day 11 (January 15)

Enjoy an early morning visit to Vulture Peak with a leisurely walk to the top for meditation and teachings in the spot where Buddha gave many teachings, including The Heart Sutra. We then visit Nalanda. From the 5th to the 12th centuries, Nalanda was an important Buddhist university with 10,000 monks and students in residence.

Free time to rest and relax in the afternoon.

[Hotel Raj Residency, Rajgir](#) (Breakfast, Dinner)





Day 12 (January 16)

A short two-to-three hour drive (60 miles) brings us to Bodhgaya. Our hotel is near the Mahabodhi Temple which marks the location where the Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. Bodhgaya also has shops and restaurants to explore.

[Sujata Hotel, Bodhgaya \(Breakfast, Dinner\)](#)

Day 13 (January 17)

Explore Bodhgaya together on foot or by rickshaw. Included will be a visit to FPMT's Root Institute: a meditation center set in a tranquil garden. Learn about FPMT's charitable activities such as the Maitreya School and Tara's Children Project.

[Sujata Hotel, Bodhgaya \(Breakfast, Dinner\)](#)

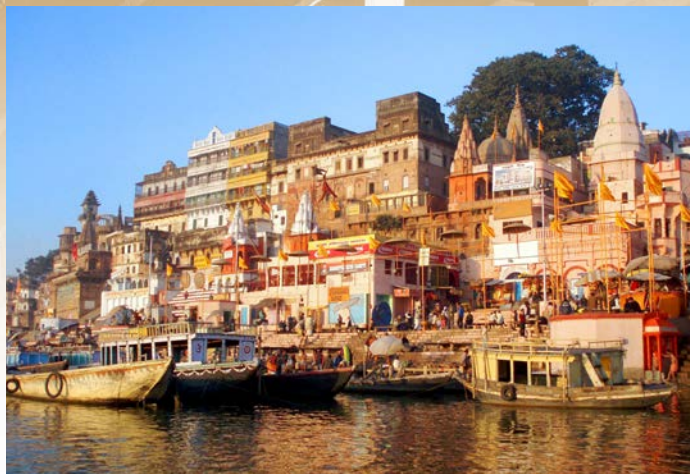


Day 14 (January 18)

Today we'll travel to Varanasi (about 156 miles) in about seven hours. There will be a lunch/snack stop en route with free time to relax in the afternoon. In the evening, we can pay an optional visit to the banks of the famous River Ganges, one of the holiest Hindu sites, for the evening worship.

[Varanasi - Hotel Meraden Grand \(Breakfast\)](#)





Late sign-ups may be accepted if there is space available, with a service charge of \$100. The trip includes airfare from Kathmandu to Lumbini, ground transportation by the best available vehicle and comfortable accommodation throughout. The approximate airfare is \$1200 from Boston to Kathmandu with a return from Varanasi to Boston via Delhi. Emirates Air, Cathay, Qatar, and Turkish air all operate from Boston.

A deposit of \$500 holds your place. Sign up here:

hightreks.com/apply.html

Other Cost & Need Considerations:

Passport; Visa(s); Physicians Visit; Emergency Medical & Evacuation Insurance (required); Meals Beyond Above Itinerary; Beverages; Spending/Personal Money.

Day 15 (January 19)

Sarnath. Eight miles from Varanasi is Sarnath, where, at Deer Park, Lord Buddha turned the wheel of Dharma for the first time, teaching on the four noble truths and the eightfold path to the five ascetics who were his first disciples. Enjoy a visit to the excellent archaeological museum with many Buddhist images dating back to the 5th and 6th centuries. After lunch, your afternoon and evening are free to enjoy as you wish.

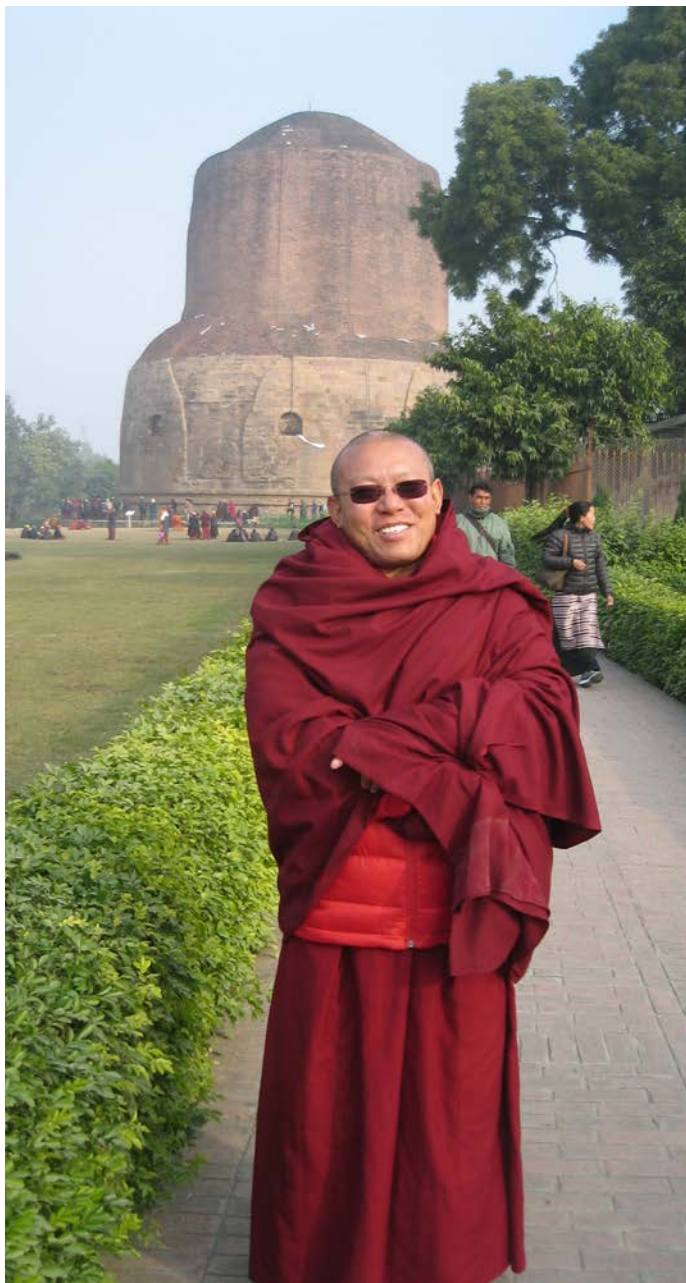
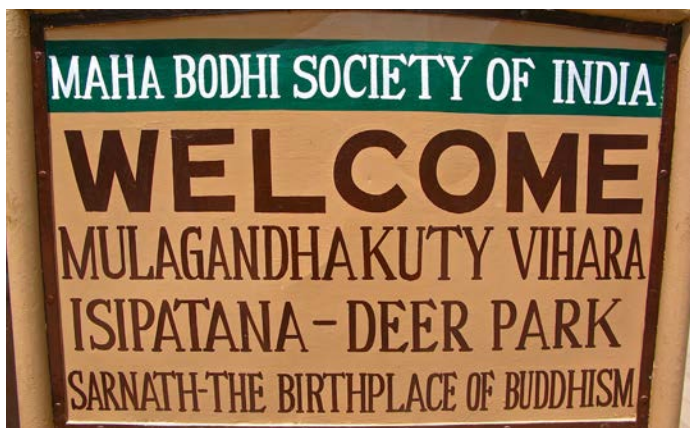
Varanasi - Hotel Meraden Grand (Breakfast)

Day 16 (January 20)

Depending on your departure schedule, you may have free time after breakfast then an on-time transfer to the airport for your flight departing Varanasi. (Breakfast)

Pilgrimage Cost:

Land cost is \$2690 for a group size of 15-20. The small group surcharge for a group of 10-14 is \$200 per person. We need a minimum of ten participants to run the pilgrimage. The single supplement for those preferring not to share a room is \$560. The deadline for sign-up is October 5th, 2018. This is also the final payment deadline.





- Some of the areas to be visited are remote and facilities, such as toilets, water, or food provisions, will be limited, quite different from those in the U.S., and in some cases, completely unavailable.
- Long periods of time in transit along rough roads, usually in comfortable chartered busses, can cause fatigue. Roads for driving are rough, with many made of dirt and/or stones, and local infrastructure does not adequately support their maintenance. Be prepared for as many as eight to ten hours on the road some days. Students who experience car-sickness may decide this trip is not suitable for them.
- Accommodations will most often be in comfortable, family-run guest houses and three-star hotels.
- Daily pilgrimage activities will range from easy to moderate and can include walks of less than two hours in length.
- Note this itinerary is meant only as a guide, a desired plan for what each day will entail. Changes may be made along the way based on factors like local conditions, group health, and hotel availability, and will be announced, as well as posted when possible, in the lodging reception areas.
- Please refer to the booking information section of our application form for more information.

— Effie Fletcher, Himalayan High Treks CST #2085690-40

Trip Considerations:

- This is not a tour, rather, it is a pilgrimage. The proper motivation for doing pilgrimage is to receive Buddha's blessing and learn about Buddhism.
- Geshe-la strongly advises pilgrims to keep a mind open to whatever experiences that may come — positive and negative — and to avoid disturbing thoughts, stressing, or complaining before, during, or after the pilgrimage.
- It is essential that pilgrims be in good health, in a reasonable level of fitness, and motivated by a positive attitude (e.g. enthusiastic perseverance or joyful effort).
- Ideally pilgrims will already have a connection with Geshe Tenley, and preference will be given to his current students.
- While we will do our best to accommodate dietary requirements, pilgrims should maintain a flexible, open perspective. Food will not be the same as we are used to in the West. People with such restrictions will need to plan accordingly and bring or acquire their own supplemental foods.
- Logistical changes are inevitable on this type of trip, depending on local conditions (e.g. climate, politics, resources, etc.) and other factors beyond anybody's control. Students should prepare their minds for the eventuality of change.

