

Nepal & India Itinerary 2017

! The fact that I was blessed to join you and the other fellow pilgrims on this unforgettable journey is only due to your inexhaustible energy and kindness, for which I am forever grateful. Your teachings at the Deer Park and the magical energy of this place, as well as the overwhelming power, which I could feel pervading me in Shravasti, changed the way I perceive the study and practice of Dharma and motivated me to keep going forward. !

— Nina H. 2014 Pilgrim

Dharma Journeys Pilgrimage



Venerable Robina Courtin

was ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist nun at Kopan Monastery, Nepal in 1978. She has worked since then for Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition; as editorial director of Wisdom Publications, editor of the FPMT magazine Mandala and, until 2009, executive director of Liberation Prison Project. Since 1987 Ven. Robina has taught Buddhist courses and retreats at FPMT centers worldwide.

An award-winning film by her nephew Amiel Courtin-Wilson, 'Chasing Buddha' documents her life as well as her work with prisoners. She is one of the subjects of Vicki Mackenzie's book 'Why Buddhism?' and a film by Christine Lundberg, 'On the Road Home.'

Proceeds from the pilgrimage go to Liberation Prison Project, which offers spiritual support, including books and teachings, to people in prison in the United States, Australia, and other countries.

A MEDITATION RETREAT WITH VEN. ROBINA COURTIN FOLLOWED BY A TRADITIONAL PILGRIMAGE THROUGH NEPAL AND INDIA

Our 2017 pilgrimage dates are October 23 to November 13, 2017 from our meeting point in Kathmandu, Nepal. We start with a meditation retreat, led by Ven. Robina, at Kopan Monastery, the monastery of her lamas. We then visit the holy sites of Kathmandu Valley — Boudhanath, Swayambhunath and Parping — before continuing to India. Ven. Robina will give Dharma teachings and lead pujas and meditation sessions at each pilgrimage place, based on the advice of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.



ADVICE FROM LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE ABOUT BEING ON PILGRIMAGE

Rinpoche has told us that it is good to do different practices on pilgrimage, to make people's lives very meaningful and very productive.

'Normally when people go on pilgrimage, they are just like tourists; maybe they take some pictures, and that's it. They don't use the places to collect merit or to meditate or to get some benefit for their minds. If it's just like sightseeing, then it won't be that much benefit.'

Rinpoche says that by doing pilgrimage, we receive blessings from the holy places where enlightened beings, great yogis and bodhisattvas have practiced. With the blessing entering our hearts, we are able to soften; our mind becomes subdued; and we are able to decrease the delusions. We are then able to develop bodhicitta (strong compassion) towards other sentient beings. And our guru devotion, renunciation, right view and understanding of emptiness, become stronger. Our mental continuum becomes Dharma. This is what pilgrimage does. As we've done in past years, we can dedicate all our efforts during the pilgrimage to world peace.

Rinpoche has also advised that when we see the Great Stupa in Boudhanath for the very first time, even from the airplane, we should make special strong prayers. 'This stupa is so powerful that anybody who makes prayers to it has their wishes fulfilled. Whatever you pray for, it will succeed. So do your best prayer!'

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. 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. He is currently helping coordinate relief and recovery efforts following two major earthquakes in mid-2015. 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.



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 Monday, October 23, 2017. (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 (additional cost).

.... Start Of Pilgrimage Services



Day 1 (October 23, 2017): Everyone meets in Kathmandu.

Our local staff will pick you up at the airport and transfer you to Hotel Tibet International in Boudhanath (about 20–30 minutes). First, you will go through immigration (obtain visa), and then go upstairs 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.

A TIP FROM AMBER TAMANG, YOUR NEPAL GUIDE:

'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 some 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 or AUD \$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
Amrit Marg, Thamel (next to Bhagwan, Bahal Temple)
Kathmandu, Nepal
Office phone: +977 (1) 443-7785
Cell phone: +977 98510-84961
Email: amberkathmandu@gmail.com

Meet in the hotel lobby for dinner at 6 PM with the entire group, including Ven. Robina and our local guide Amber Tamang. Overnight at Hotel Tibet International. The hotel is less than a five-minute walk from Boudhanath Stupa, one of the most holy of Buddhist shrines. (Dinner)

Hotel Tibet International
Boudnath Road, Kathmandu
Phone: +977 (1) 448-8188
Email: info@hoteltibetintl.com.np



Day 2 (October 24, 2017): Kathmandu. Our first day is free to relax or to explore the city. Nepal's capital is a delight to the senses, the imagination and the heart. For centuries, Kathmandu was forbidden to outsiders. Since it opened to the world in the early 1950s, it has been one of the most eagerly sought travel destinations. Durbar Square is at the heart of this historic city. There are options to have lunch on your own in the city or at the hotel.



An optional half-day sight-seeing of Kathmandu will be offered. Cost per person is US\$25 (assuming a minimum group size of six), payable directly to Amber. This cost includes vehicle, driver and guide. but not entrance fees or lunch.

Overnight at Hotel Tibet International. (Breakfast)

Day 3–7 (October 25–28, 2017): Meditation retreat at Kopan Monastery with Ven. Robina. Meet in the hotel lobby at 8 AM for the short drive to Kopan. 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. The accommodation is

comfortable and the food very satisfactory. There has even been a cookbook published with favorite recipes from Kopan. Note that single rooms are not available and also that men and women room separately.



A typical day on retreat starts early with meditation, followed by breakfast. Then there will be teachings and discussion until lunch, with a tea break. After lunch, there will be a two-hour break during which you can take a short easy walk, rest, or study quietly in the excellent library or on your own. During the afternoon, there are more teachings and discussion; and after dinner, a final session of teachings and meditation. Often a group in retreat will opt to maintain silence for all or part of the time (for example, before breakfast and after dinner) as this adds to the contemplative quality of the experience. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Kopan Monastery
Budhanilkantha Municipality, Nepal
Phone: +977 (1) 482-1268
Email: info@kopenmonastery.org
www.kopanmonastery.com



Day 7 (October 29, 2017): 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. Overnight at Hotel Tibet International. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hotel Tibet International
Boudnath Road, Kathmandu
Phone: +977 (1) 448-8188
Email: info@hoteltibetintl.com.np



Day 8 (October 30, 2017): Visit the village of Pharping, 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 a cave of the eighth-century Indian yogi, Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, who built the first monastery in Tibet, at Samye. On our return to the city, we visit ancient statues of Chenrezig, Tara and Manjushri in the center of Kathmandu. Overnight at Hotel Tibet International. (Breakfast, Packed Lunch, Dinner)



Day 9 (October 31, 2017): Lumbini. Meet in the lobby at 7 AM (after tea) for transfer to the airport for our 30-minute flight to Bhairahawa airport on Buddha Air. An hour's drive to Lumbini to Hotel Lumbini Gardens. After lunch, visit the birth place of the Buddha, a 15-minute walk from the hotel. 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 Buddha's mother. (Tea, Lunch, Dinner)

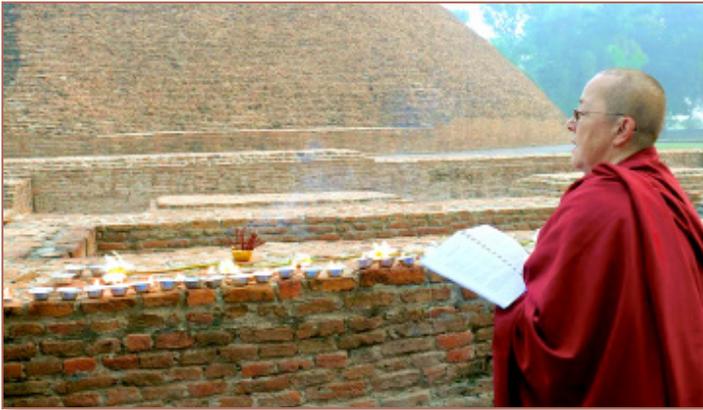
Hotel Lumbini Gardens
Lumbini, Nepal
Phone: +977 (71) 580-145 or 580-045



Day 10 (November 1, 2017): Lumbini to Sravasti. After breakfast, we will drive to Sanauli, the Nepal-India border, an hour away. We stop for passport control and to change money into Indian rupees. An all-day drive to Sravasti, light lunch en route. Overnight at Hotel Lotus Nikko. (Breakfast, Light Lunch, Dinner)

Hotel Lotus Nikko
Baharaich Highway, Sravasti
Phone: +91 (5252) 265-2 91





Day 11 (November 2, 2017): After breakfast, we visit Jetavana Grove, in Sravasti, capital of the ancient Kosala kingdom, where Buddha and his disciples retreated every rainy season for twenty-five years and where he gave many of his teachings. According to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, it is easy to meditate here, so blessed is it.

Relax in the afternoon, or visit the cave of the former bandit, Angulimala. After meeting Lord Buddha, he calmed down and embraced Buddhism. Overnight Hotel Lotus Nikko, Sravasti. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 13 (November 4, 2017): In Kushinagar. After breakfast, 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.' Overnight Hotel Lotus Nikko. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



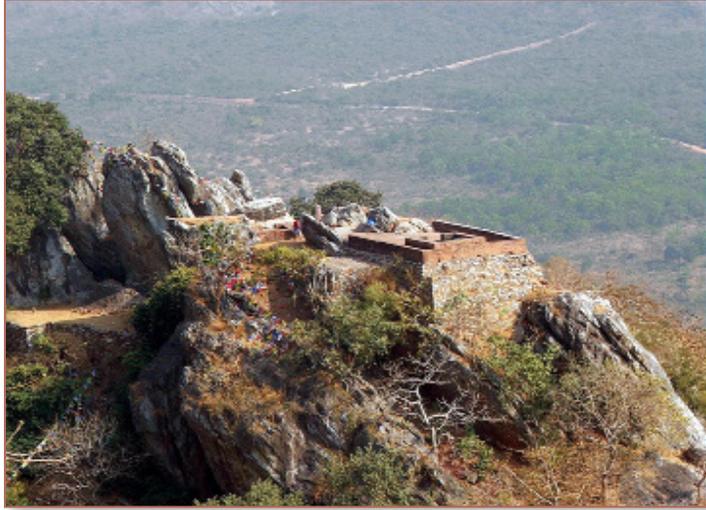
Day 14 (November 5, 2017): All-day drive from Kushinagar to Rajgir, in the state of Bihar. Light lunch en route. Relax in the afternoon. Overnight Hotel Rajgir Residency. (Breakfast, Light Lunch, Dinner.)

Day 12 (November 3, 2017): In the morning, we will return to Jetavana for prayers and meditation. All-day drive from Balarampur to Kushinagar, stopping for a light lunch en route. Kushinagar is the place where Buddha passed away. His last words were said to be, 'Decay is inherent in all component things. Be diligent in your practice.' (Breakfast, Light Lunch, Dinner)

Hotel Lotus Nikko
Buddha Marg, Kushinagar
Phone: +91 (5564) 273-026
Email: lotusniko_kushinagar@yahoo.com



Hotel Rajgir Residency
Rajgir, Dist - Nalanda - 803116,
Phone: +91 (6112) 255-404
Email: therajgirresidency@gmail.com



Day 15 (November 6, 2017): Enjoy an early morning visit to Vulture Peak, where Buddha gave many teachings, including The Heart Sutra. We will take a leisurely walk up to the top for meditation and teachings. After lunch at the hotel, we will visit the ruins of Nalanda Monastery. From the 5th to the 12th centuries, Nalanda was a major Buddhist university with 10,000 monks and students in residence. In the afternoon,



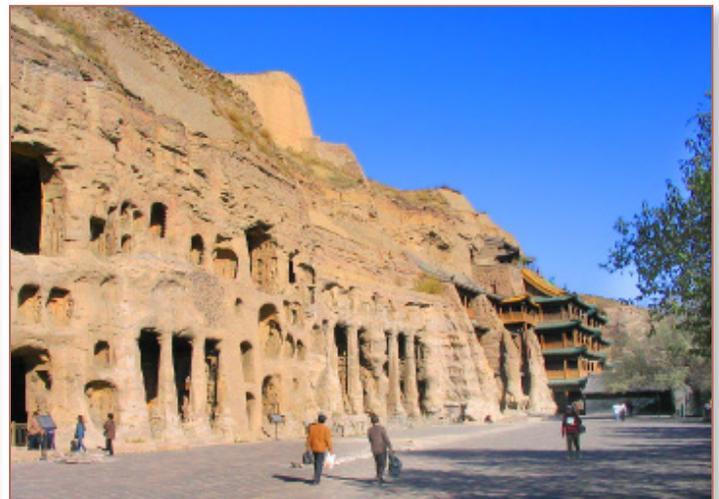
we drive to Bodhgaya and overnight at FPMT's Root Institute. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Root Institute for Wisdom Culture
Bodhgaya, Gaya District
Bihar, 824 231 INDIA
Phone: +91 (631) 220-0714
www.rootinstitute.com



Day 16 (November 7, 2017): From Root Institute, a meditation center set in tranquil gardens, it's a short walk into town; rickshaws are also available. We will visit Mahabodi Stupa, the site of Buddha's enlightenment, for teachings and meditation. Bodhgaya also has shops and restaurants to explore. In the afternoon, visit several FPMT centers to learn about

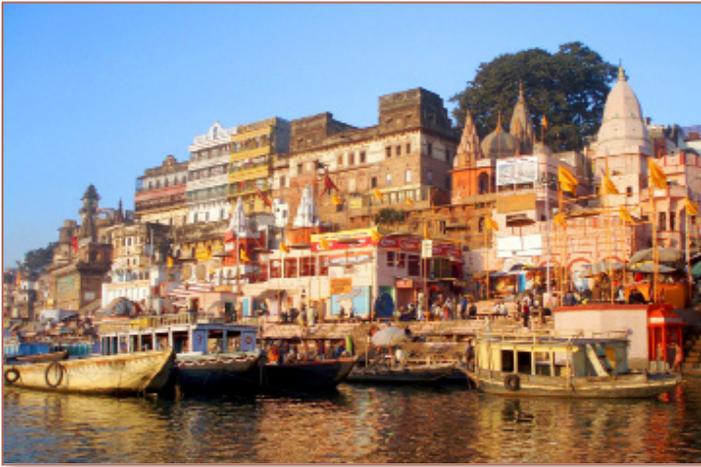
charitable activities such as the Maitreya School and Tara's Children Project. This evening, we can enjoy another visit to Mahabodhi Stupa. Overnight at Root Institute. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)





Day 17 (November 8, 2017): This morning, we could visit Mahakala (Dungeshwari) Caves, a short drive from Bodhgaya. Your afternoon is at your leisure. After dinner, we'll have a final puja and teachings at Mahabodhi Stupa. Overnight at Root Institute. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

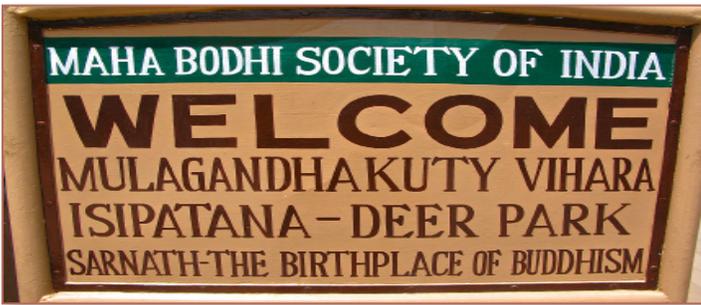
Day 19 (November 10, 2017): Deer Park, Sarnath. A few miles north of Varanasi is Deer Park, where Lord Buddha turned the wheel of Dharma for the first time, teaching on the four noble truths and the eightfold path to the five ascetics who were his first disciples.



Day 18 (November 9, 2017): Today, we'll travel to Varanasi. Light lunch en route. In the early evening, we can pay a visit to the banks of the famous River Ganges, one of the holiest Hindu sites, for the evening worship. Overnight Radisson Varanasi. (Breakfast, Light Lunch)

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. Overnight Radisson Varanasi. (Breakfast, Lunch)

Radisson Varanasi
The Mall, Cantonment
Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh 221 002
Phone: +91 (542) 250-1515
radisson.com/varanasi-hotel-up-221002/indvaran



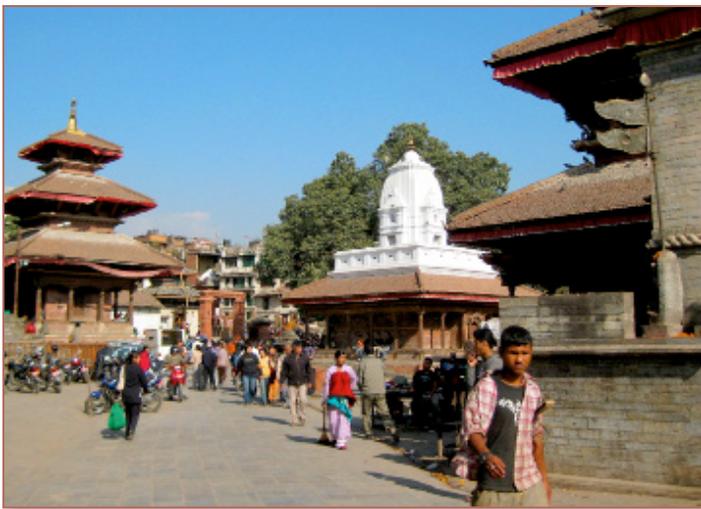


Day 22 (November 13, 2017): After breakfast, our final group activity is morning puja at Boudhanath stupa. Later, transfer to the airport to depart Kathmandu or continue exploring the region. (Breakfast)

Day 20 (November 11, 2017): We'll fly from Varanasi to Kathmandu, via Delhi, in the late afternoon. We could return to Sarnath in the morning. Transfer from the airport in Kathmandu to the Hotel Tibet International. (Breakfast, Lunch)

Hotel Tibet International
Boudnath Road, Kathmandu
Phone: +977 (1) 448-8188
Email: info@hoteltibetintl.com.np

.... End Of Pilgrimage Services





- Late sign-ups may be accepted if there is space available, with a service charge of US\$100.
- Should this trip be undersubscribed, a surcharge of US\$200 per person will apply (added upon registration and removed once/if the threshold of 20 participants is reached).
- A minimum of 10 participants are necessary to operate this pilgrimage.
- If you prefer a private room, you'll be charged a single supplement of US\$900.
- A deposit of US\$500 holds your place.

Other Cost & Need Considerations: Passport; Visa(s); Physicians Visit; Emergency Medical & Evacuation Insurance; Travel to Nepal; Meals Beyond Above Itinerary; Beverages; Spending/ Personal Money.

Trip Activity-Level: Mild: Accommodations are most often in comfortable guest houses and four-star hotels. Activities are usually mild and can include day hikes of less than four hours in length. Vehicle time can include fatigue with long travel along rough roads.



Notes: This is meant only as a guide to what our days will be like.

- Changes may be made as we go along and will be announced as well as posted when possible in the hotel reception areas. These changes will be based on local conditions, health and hotel availability.
- Times mentioned are all approximate and rounded off.
- Sturdy vehicles with air-conditioning will be provided.
- Airport transfers included on October 23 and November 13. We can arrange optional transfers and services at a modest cost should you arrive early or depart late from the program.
- Included meals for each day have been shown as bold at the end of each daily description.
- Contact information is current and subject to change.
- The format for the phone numbers is country code, city code, then the local number in parentheses. Nepal's country code is 977 and India's country code is 91. For mobile phones in Nepal you don't need to put the city code 1 after the country code as you do for other local numbers. You will find more information about international calling in our trip notes, provided after registration.

— Effie Fletcher, July 2017
CST 2085690-40

Pilgrimage Costing:

- Total program cost of US\$4980 includes land cost and in-trip air cost.
- Land cost (as itinerary has described): US\$4600.
- In-trip airfare estimate (air during itinerary program): US\$380.
- Pilgrimage costs are based on a typical group size of at least 20 participants.
- The pilgrimage is limited to 30 participants.
- The deadline for sign-up is July 23, 2017.

