



GREATER LUMBINI BUDDHIST CIRCUIT (GLBC), NEPAL

Following the Birthplace and Foot-Steps of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha



FOREWORD



The birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha in Lumbini, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the abode of peace and the ultimate pilgrimage site carrying a profound spiritual significance to the Buddhist devotees and peace lovers from around the world.

Deeply influenced by the sanctity of Lumbini during his visit to this holy place in 1967, the then UN Secretary General U. Thant advised Government of Nepal to develop it as an international pilgrimage and tourist center. Accordingly, the Master Plan of Lumbini was designed by a renowned

Japanese architect, Prof. Kenzo Tange and approved by the Government of Nepal in 1978 for the systematic development of Lumbini. After the formation of Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) in 1985, preservation, development and promotion of Buddhist heritage monuments in Lumbini area including the implementation of the Master Plan are being carried out under the aegis of the Trust.

In recent years, Nepal has placed more emphasis on promotion of Lumbini. The Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC) Nepal is one important initiative that connects Lumbini, Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama, the holiest pilgrimage and spiritual Buddhist sites in Nepal, pertaining to the birth and life history of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. Greatly revered by the Buddhists, these four sites in the GLBC have been visited by many international Buddhist scholars, spiritual leaders and pilgrims including great Indian Emperor Asoka and famous Chinese travelers— Tseng Tsai, Fa-Hsien and Hiuen-Tsang.

Today, Lumbini is a potential destination for more than 500 million Buddhist followers and even larger number of visitors who are interested in spiritualism, peace, cultures, history and religions. By connecting the most sacrosanct Buddhist sites together as the Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC), we hope that the visitors and pilgrims find the journey to Lumbini more rewarding and illuminating. With GLBC, we also aim to connect the Greater Lumbini Area (GLA) to other Buddhist heritage sites within Nepal, to the Buddhist Circuit in India and sites in Tibet AR and People's Republic of China.



Government of Nepal

Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation

LUMBINI DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Sacred Garden, Rupandehi, Lumbini, Nepal

(Lumbini: The Holy Birthplace of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha, World Cultural Heritage)



Publication of this Visitor Guide Book is one out of several efforts made by the Government of Nepal/Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation/Lumbini Development Trust towards the promotion of Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC) as a world class destination for pilgrimage, spiritualism and knowledge. I sincerely hope that this book further illumintes the significance of Lumbini and the associated sites, helps in bringing more visitors to Lumbini and becomes instrumental in generating income and employment opportunities in those communities that have been faithful custodians of the Buddhist heritages with great reverence and perseverance for centuries.

I also take this opportunity to thank Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) for supporting Lumbini Development Trust in implementing the various promotional efforts for Lumbini including the publication of this book under the South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP). I acknowledge generous supports from members and staffs of Lumbini Development Trust (LDT), SATIDP-Project Management Implementation Unit, Lumbini and CEST Nepal for their unwavering and tireless efforts to produce such a comprehensive and informative book on Lumbini.

Finally and more importantly, I welcome all the visitors and pilgrims to the holy sites in the Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit of Nepal.

Siddhartha

Siddhartha Maharjan

(Ven. Bhikshu Nigrodha)

Vice-Chairperson, Lumbini Development Trust





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We are greatly honored to present the Visitors Guide Book on Buddhist sites of Greater Lumbini Area (GLA), to all the Buddhist pilgrims, peace lovers and visitors. It is probably the first comprehensive guidebook on Buddhist sites of Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC), Nepal with authentic and updated information.

This book contains details of the major Buddhist heritage sites in the region along with descriptions of the historical, archaeological, cultural and natural attractions that are worth visiting. It also presents a number of recommended itineraries and activities to the GLBC along with useful information on facilities and services available in the region. We hope that this book is a valuable resource material for tour operators, pilgrims, visitors, spiritual organizations, researchers, explorers, students and general visitors.

We are grateful to the Government of Nepal, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP/ADB)- Project Coordination Unit (PCU) at MoCTCA for making publication of this book a reality.

We are deeply grateful to all venerable monks and nuns, monasteries and erudite Buddhist scholars who have provided scholarly ideas and views in preparing this book. We would also like to thank local government bodies and Chief District Officers of Greater Lumbini Area; Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Siddhartha Association of Tour and Travel Agents (SATTa), Siddhartha Hotel Association of Nepal (SHAN), Green Youth of Lumbini, tourism entrepreneurs, tour guides for contributing to the publication of this book through sharing practical and relevant information on GLA.

We also acknowledge that publishing this book would not be possible without the support of the executive committee members and all the staff of Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) and members of SATIDP/ADB/LDT- Project Management and Implementation Unit (PMIU), Lumbini. We would like to extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to Mr. Imansingh Muktan (Project-Chief), Er. Saroj Bhattarai (Senior Officer at Engineering Section); Mr. Gyanin Rai (Senior Administrative Officer); Mr. Sabbir Ahamad Khan (Senior Officer at Horticulture



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We are equally indebted to the communities of Greater Lumbini Area, especially to the ancient Kapilavastu (Buddha's hometown), Rupandehi (Sacred Garden Lumbini), ancient Koliyagrama (Devadaha, Panditapur and Ramagrama) for providing us the most valuable information on Buddhist heritage sites of GLA.

Finally, on behalf of Lumbini Development Trust and SATIDP/ADB/LDT PMIU, we would like to invite the visitors and Buddhist followers from around the world for pilgrimage to the Land of Buddhas; Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, Kanakamuni Buddha and Krakuchanda Buddha, and all the holy Buddhist sites, cultural and natural beauties of Greater Lumbini Area in Nepal.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Lumbini: The birthplace of Buddha and fountain of Buddhism and World Peace

The birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in Lumbini, one of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, is the abode of peace and an ultimate pilgrimage to the Buddhist devotees and peace lovers from around the world. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha was born here in 623 BC and preached the universal message of peace and compassion; therefore, it is regarded one of the most sacred places for people who believe in Buddhism. Buddhist pilgrims, peace lovers and general visitors from around the world visit Lumbini to pay homage to Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and observe the sanctity and shrines that are related to Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, Buddhism and Peace.

Birth of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha



Prince Siddhartha was born in Lumbini Garden while his mother Mayadevi was on her way from Kapilavastu to her maternal home in Devadaha. He was born on the full moon under a sal tree in the month of Baishakh of Nepali calendar or in 623 BC of Gregorian calendar. Immediately after the birth, The future Lord Sakyamuni Buddha took seven steps to the north, looked around and announced'...*this is my last birth; henceforth, there will be no rebirth for me*' in the Lumbini garden. He was given the purification bath in the Pushkarini pond. Queen Mayadevi passed away after seven days of the birth of Prince Siddhartha and his stepmother Prajapati Gautami raised the prince.



Today, the Mayadevi Temple, dedicated to the mother of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha is the most revered holy shrine for the Buddhist pilgrims. Visitors can see the Asoka Pillar bearing the testimony of the birth of Prince Siddharth just next to the temple in the Sacred Garden of Lumbini. Puskanrini pond where the newly born prince was given the first purification bath lies nearby the Mayadevi Temple. (Please kindly refer to Box-1 in Chapter 1 for more information on the birth of Prince Siddhartha).

Pilgrimage of Emperor Asoka to Lumbini

Almost after 300 years of Mahaparinirvana of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, famous Emperor Asoka made a pilgrimage to Lumbini and other sacred shrines including Ancient Kapilvastu and Ramagarama. The Emperor erected a sandstone pillar with inscription in Brahmi script and *Pali* language as a testimony of his visit to Lumbini in 249 BC. The English translation of the inscription reads: *...Prince Siddhartha was born in Lumbini.... the Emperor Asoka personally visited Lumbini, worshiped the birth spot and erected the stone pillar to commemorate his visit.* This is the most reliable evidence to attest Lumbini as the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. (Please refer to Box-2 in chapter 2 for more details).

Early life of Prince Sidhartha

Prajapati Gautami brought up Prince Sidharth with much love and care in the Ancient Kapilvastu, the capital city of Sakya kingdom. She was also the mother of two children but she raised Prince Siddhartha as her own child.

King Suddhodhan invited ascetics and asked them to read the signs of the newly born prince. One of such great ascetics *Asita* proclaimed that Prince Siddhartha would become a holy man and universal teacher if he ever came across human

sufferings. The anxious king lavished all possible privileges and luxurious life upon the prince. At the age of 16, Prince Siddhartha was married to Princess Yashodhara. The couple did not have any child for a long time until the birth of Rahul, their only child. The visitors can observe the preserved ruins of Tilaurakot palace where Prince Siddhartha spent 29 years of his worldly life and other shrines of spiritual and archaeological values in Ancient Kapilvastu (*Please refer to Box 6 in chapter 3 for more details*).

The Four Passing Sights and the Great Renunciation or Mahabhiniskramana

As Prince Siddharth grew older he became more and more curious about the world outside the palace. His curiosity took him on journeys outside the palatial life and during one such journey; he came across the sights of an old man, a diseased man and a dead body being carried away for a funeral. He also saw a wandering saint during the journey. Deeply shocked from these four causative sights, Prince Siddharth contemplated to find a way to end these human sufferings. Eventually, the destiny took its own course and Prince Siddhartha renounced all the worldly comforts and quietly left Tilaurakot palace with his favorite charioteer and a horse from the eastern gate at the age of 29 (*Please refer to Box 7 in chapter 3 for more details*).

In Search of Wisdom and the Enlightenment of prince Siddhartha as Buddha

Prince Siddharth reached river Anoma the next morning and asked his favorite charioteer and the horse to return to the palace. Barefooted and dressed like a mendicant, he wandered from place to place in search of salvation or release from the eternal cycle of birth and death. He spent six years learning from the religious teachers and practicing self-mortification. However, he got nothing from such austere measures, the salvation he sought after remained elusive.

The prince realized that the path to wisdom and enlightenment was possible through the discipline of mind rather than starvation. So he followed the middle way and decided to resume eating food and continue the quest for enlightenment through deep meditation.

After spending almost 7 years in search of wisdom and salvation, Prince Siddharth finally pierced the shell of ignorance and became Lord Sakyamuni Buddha at the age of 35. The prince attained the enlightenment while in deep meditation under a banyan tree in Bodhgaya. It was full moon (Purnima) of Baishakh of 588 BC.

It is believed that he attained enlightenment once he transcended the experiences of ordinary human being and after comprehending three basic components of *Dharma*; the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path and the Middle Way (*Please refer to Box 8 in chapter 3 for more details*).

The First Teaching and the Followers

Following the enlightenment, Lord Sakyamuni Buddha spent 49 days in lonely retreat. In the morning of fiftieth day, two Burmese merchants *Tapussa* and *Bhallika* offered rice cakes and honey to break the long fasting of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and then became his first lay followers. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha pulled out some hairs from his head and gave them, which are believed to be enshrined in the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar.

The Enlightened One walked almost 205km to see his companions *Kondanna*, *Bhaddiya*, *Vappa*, *Mahanama* and *Assaji* in Saranath, who had deserted him earlier. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha met them in a deer park at the outskirts of the city and delivered his first sermon to these five monks during the full moon or purnima. These sermons have been preserved as the *Dharmachakrapravartana Sutta*. His first sermons were about following the Middle Way, avoiding two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. For the first time he unfolded the Four Noble Truths and how to practice the Eightfold Path. These five companions become his disciples and the order of the monks or *Sangha* or religious community was established. According to the Buddhist scriptures the simple way to enter the *Sangha* is to follow the Tri-ratna or the Triple Gems of Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*:

<i>Buddham Sharanam Gachchami</i>	or	<i>I take refuge in the Buddha</i>
<i>Dhammam Sharanam Gachchami</i>	or	<i>I take refuge in the Dharma</i>
<i>Sangham Sharanam Gachchami</i>	or	<i>I take refuge in the Sangha</i>



Lord Sakyamuni Buddha attracted a large number of followers and he traveled with his retinue from one place to the other. He devoted himself preaching on the practices through which people could realize enlightenment for themselves.

The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path

The Four Noble Truths Lord Sakyamuni Buddha taught to his five companions in Saranath are:

- ***The Truth of Suffering*** or the world is full of misery and suffering
- ***The Truth of the Cause of Suffering*** or the desire and ignorance are the root causes of all misery and suffering
- ***The Truth of the End of Suffering*** or cessation of suffering can be achieved after nirvana, and
- ***The Truth of the Path leading to the End of Suffering*** is the Noble Eightfold Path



The Eightfold Path is the fourth of the Noble Truths, and also the essence of the first sermon Lord Sakyamuni Buddha delivered in Saranath. All the subsequent teachings flow from the sermons of the first preaching, therefore, are the foundation of Buddhism.



- **Right Understanding** means to know and understand the Four Noble Truths
- **Right Thought or Attitude** means thoughts of renunciation and thoughts of love and compassion,
- **Right Speech** means perfected and whole speech or truthful, clear and non-harmful communication,
- **Right Action** means actions with ethical foundation or life based on the principle of non-exploitation of oneself and others,
- **Right Livelihood** means proper livelihood based on correct actions based on the ethical principal of non-exploitation,
- **Right Effort** means complete and full effort, energy or vitality. Also called right effort or diligence,
- **Right Mindfulness** means right mindfulness of body, feelings or sensations, right mindfulness of the thoughts passing through the mind and mindfulness of Dharma, and
- **Right Concentration** means concentration, meditation, absorption or one-pointedness of the mind.

For the ease of understanding, the eight factors can be grouped into smaller groups as below:



Morality: Right speech, right action and right livelihood

Concentrated Mind or Meditation: Right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration

Wisdom: Right attitude and right understanding

These three virtues are the stages on the path to the purity and probity of mind leading to nirvana. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha spent the rest of his life preaching the Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. His disciples and followers formed *Sanghas* and Buddhism transcended the frontiers of Nepal and India to Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and to many other countries. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's teachings, *Sanghas*, the practices and rituals together make up the Buddhism, which evolved subsequent to the enlightenment of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

Returning Home after the Enlightenment

Accepting the several requests of his father king Suddhodhana, Lord Sakyamuni Buddha made his first visit to ancient Kapilavastu with 300 vikchus of the *Sangha*. He met the king Suddhadhana for the first time after the enlightenment at the ancient Nyigrodharama, also known as Kudan. Following the visit of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, the merchants in Sakya kingdom began building monasteries and shrines (*Please refer to Box 9 in chapter 3 for more details*).

Mahaparinirvana of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and Distribution of his Body Relic

At the age of 80, Lord Sakyamuni Buddha entered mahaparinirvana in full moon of Baishakh of 543 BC, in Kushinagar of present day India. His body was cremated and the remains or the sacred body relics were distributed among eight claimants. The body relic received by the Koliya kingdom was enshrined in Ramagrama and a stupa was constructed. Therefore, the stupa in Ramagrama is one of the most revered shrines for the Buddhists from around the world (*Please refer to Box 13 in chapter 5 for more details*).

Emperor Asoka's Visit to Ramagrama

On 20th of royal coronation, the Emperor Asoka set out for a pilgrimage to sacred Buddhist shrines including Lumbini, ancient Kapilavastu and Ramagrama in Nepal. He wanted to open the Ramagrama stupa and re-distribute the sacred body relics among many stupas. However, honouring the local tribes' request he worshipped the stupa and left it intact. Today, it is the only stupa in the entire world where the body relics of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha are still interred (*Please refer to Box 14 in chapter 5 for more details*).

Spread of Buddhism

Through the *Sanghas*, the message of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha spread rapidly, transcending the class and caste barriers in the society. He preached that salvation of human being was in one's own hand and is possible in this very world by comprehending the Four Noble Truths and following the Middle Way. By the time of his Mahaparinirvana, a large chunk of population in the Sakya and Koliya kingdoms in Nepal and in northern India had already become his followers.

After three months of Mahaparinirvana of the enlightened one, a gathering of Vikhshus, the First Buddhist Council was organized at Saptarni caves near Rajagriha (present day Rajgir, India). The congregation codified the teachings of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in *Vinaya Pitaka* and *Sutra Pitaka*. After a century, the Second Buddhist Council took place in Vaishali and differences in connection with the monastic discipline and philosophy between the orthodox *Sthaviravadins* (elders) and *Mahasanghikas* (the great community) emerged.

The Third Council was held in Pataliputra (present day Patna) in around 250 BC under the patronage of Mauryan Emperor Asoka. The council designated several emissaries to various countries with a view to spread Buddhism, the most prominent among them were Mahinda, and Sanghamitra, son and daughter of the Emperor, who went to Sri Lanka and founded Theravada Buddhism. Now Buddhism is the state religion of Cambodia and Bhutan and it has a special place in the constitutions of Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Acharya Padmasambhava, a renowned *Tantric* Master in India went to Tibet in 8th century and established Buddhism in Tibet. It is believed that he was in Nepal with his consort Mandarava and practiced tantric rituals here. He is revered as Guru Rinpoche by Tibetan Buddhists. It is said that Buddhism spread farther north in the passage of time from Tibet.

Buddhist Scriptures

The Buddhist scriptures are broadly divided into *Theravada* and *Mahayana* canons. The Buddhist canons of *Theravada* school have categorized these sacred scriptures into three groups and called *Tripitaka*. The Mahayana canon also consists of *Tripitaka* of disciplines, discourse and dharma analysis. Some of the sutras of *Mahayana* sect are linked to the sermons of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha but many scholars consider these to be later interpretations having profound wisdom and spiritual values.

Today, *Theravada* (Teachings of the Elders) Buddhism is predominantly practiced in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos P.D.R., Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. Whereas *Mahayana* (the Great Vehicle) Buddhism is the predominant form of Buddhism practiced in People's Republic of China, Mongolia, South Korea,



Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam. Apart from Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, other contemporary Buddhas like *Amitabha* and *Medicine Buddha* are popular in *Mahayana Buddhism*.

The *Vajrayana* sect of *Mahayana Buddhism*, which is mostly practiced in Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan, meticulously follows tantric formalities, mantras and mudras. It is estimated that around 54% of Buddhists follow Mahayana school and 4% the *Vajrayana* sect.

In order to develop Lumbini as an international pilgrimage center, a world-class tourist destination and a peace city, Government of Nepal, in close collaboration and consultation with various international agencies, has been undertaking various efforts for protection, systematic development and promotion of Buddhist heritage sites in accordance with the approved Lumbini Development Master Plan (1978) designed by the renowned Japanese architect Prof. Kenzo Tange.

In a bid to develop Lumbini a representative mini Buddhist world, Lumbini Development Trust is currently developing East Monastic Zone for Theravada school of Buddhism and West Monastic Zone for Mahayana school of Buddhism as per the approved master plan (*Please refer to Box 3 in chapter 2 for more details on East and West Monastic Zones in Lumbini*).

This guide book presents visitors the useful information on the holy Buddhist sites in Greater Lumbini Area (GLA), Nepal that are related to the birth, early life, great renunciation of Prince Siddhartha. Moreover, this book also gives a brief account of sites relevant to the enlightenment of Prince Siddhartha as Buddha, returning home after enlightenment; construction of sacred shrines including relic stupas after mahaparinirvana; creation of Buddhist scriptures and spread of Buddhism.

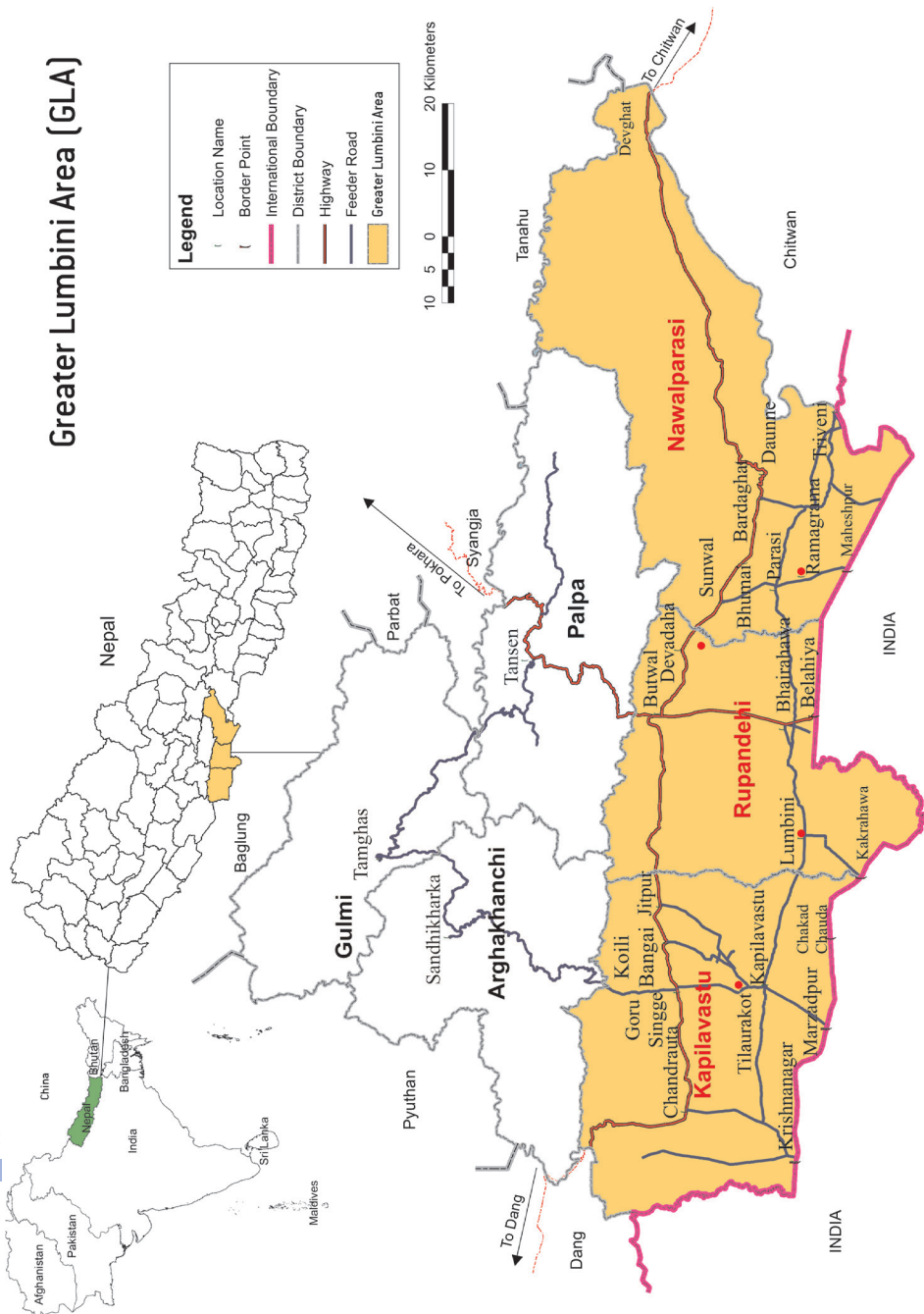
1.2. Greater Lumbini Area (GLA)

The Greater Lumbini Area (GLA) covers an area of 5260 sqkm and includes Rupandehi, Nawalparasi and Kapilvastu districts in the southern plains of western Nepal. The area is a home to many archaeological and religious sites relevant to Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's life, including his birthplace Lumbini. Besides Lumbini, which is in UNESCO World Heritage list, the Greater Lumbini Area (GLA) includes three other important Buddhist sites; Tilaurakot, Devadaha and Ramagrama. Considering the archaeological and spiritual values, Tilaurakot and Ramagrama are enlisted as Tentative World Heritage sites by UNESCO.

Rupandehi

Lumbini in Rupandehi district of Nepal is the epicenter of the Buddhism. In addition to Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, other Buddhist heritage sites worth to visit in Rupandehi district include Devadaha, the maternal

Greater Lumbini Area (GLA)



hometown of Buddha's mother Mayadevi and Sainamaina, an archaeological site considered to be of Buddha era. Similarly, major interesting cultural, historical and natural sites in Rupandehi district are the surrounding rural villages with rich Tharu cultures and Viraha song; historic site of Jitgadhi fort at Butwal; religious sites such as Paryowa Dham at Sainamaina and Siddhababa temple and beautiful wetlands and rivers such as Gaidahawa lake, Gajedi lake, Dano river, Telar river etc. There are other beautiful sites with mild climate in the Siwalik range including Nuwakot Durbar, and recreational and educational parks including Mani Mukunda Sen Botanical Garden.

The major gateways to Lumbini; the immigration check point at Belahiya, Sunauli and the only airport in the region, Gautam Buddha Airport (being upgraded as an international airport) are located in the Rupandehi district. Bhairahawa and Butwal are two bustling cities of the district with several business, tourism and entertainment activities. Butwal also serves as a gateway to popular mountain tourism destinations such as Tansen, Pokhara and Mustang.

Kapilvastu

Ancient Kapilavastu or the present day Kapilvastu district is the hometown of Prince Siddhartha. It is also the birthplace of two earlier Buddhas, who descended to the mortal world, attained enlightenment and entered to nirvana before Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. *Krakuchhanda* Buddha was born in Gotihawa whereas Kanakamuni Buddha was born in Niglihawa. Hence, the Greater Lumbini Area may be called as ***the Land of Buddhas or the Birthplaces of three Buddhas.***

Kapilvastu district is an open museum as it alone houses more than 130 important archaeological sites, directly or indirectly related to the life of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and Buddhism. Important Buddhist heritage sites worth to visit in Kapilavastu district include Tilaurakot, Kudan, Gotihawa, Niglihawa, Araurakot, Sagarhawa and Sisaniya, each sacred site bearing its own distinct religious and spiritual value. Other interesting sites for visitors in Kapilavastu include Bikuli Kot, Jagadishpur Reservoir (listed as a RAMSAR site), Touleshwor Nath temple, Ramghat, Laxman Ghat, Kapila Dham, Shring Rishi Ashram, Kailash Ashram, Shivagadhi etc. Gorusinghe of Kapilavastu district is the gateway to other popular sites; Supa Deurali Narapani hill station, Khanchi Kot, Argha Kot etc.

Nawalparasi

The present day Nawalparasi district is the part of the ancient Koliya Kingdom, the maternal hometown of queen Mayadevi, the beloved mother of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. Nawalparasi district consists Ramagrama Stupa, one of the most sacred relic stupas of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. Also listed as one of the Tentative World Heritage sites by UNESCO, the Stupa is believed to contain the only body relics of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in the entire world.

Another important site related to the life of Lord Sakymuni Buddha is Panditpur, which has been claimed, by some archaeologists, to be the palace site of ancient Koliya Kingdom. Daunne hill, which is a very popular highway retreat for lunch and snacks among travelers on the East-West Highway, also houses some monasteries and temples. A recent book published by a Japanese author mentions Daunne as the meditation center of queen Mayadevi.

Triveni Dham, located 23km to the east from Parasi Bazaar of Nawalparasi district, is another important site from religious, archaeological and tourism point of views. It is the confluence of three holi rivers; *Sapta Gandaki*, *Sona* and *Tamasa*. There are several Hindu temples, *Gajendramokchha* Dham, and the Balmiki Ashram. Located inside the Chitwan National Park, the *Balmiki* Ashram bears several archaeological ruins related to *Balmiki* Rishi (the author of holy book *Ramayana*), Sita (the consort of Lord Rama), and her two sons; *Lava* and *Kush*.

The adjoining districts Palpa, Gulmi and Arghakhanchi, which are located in the northern hilly region, are also equally potential for tourism. Popular sites in these districts include the typical Newari settlements (including of Sakyas) in Tansen, Shreenagar hill, Ranimahal, Ridi-Ruru Kshetra, Resunga, Supa Deurali, Arghakot-Khanchikot, Narapani hill station and several temples.

Likewise, Chitwan National Park, Banke National Park, Bardia National Park, Sworgadwari and Pokhara are the popular tourist hubs that can be combined in a tour while visiting with the sites in the Greater Lumbini Area.

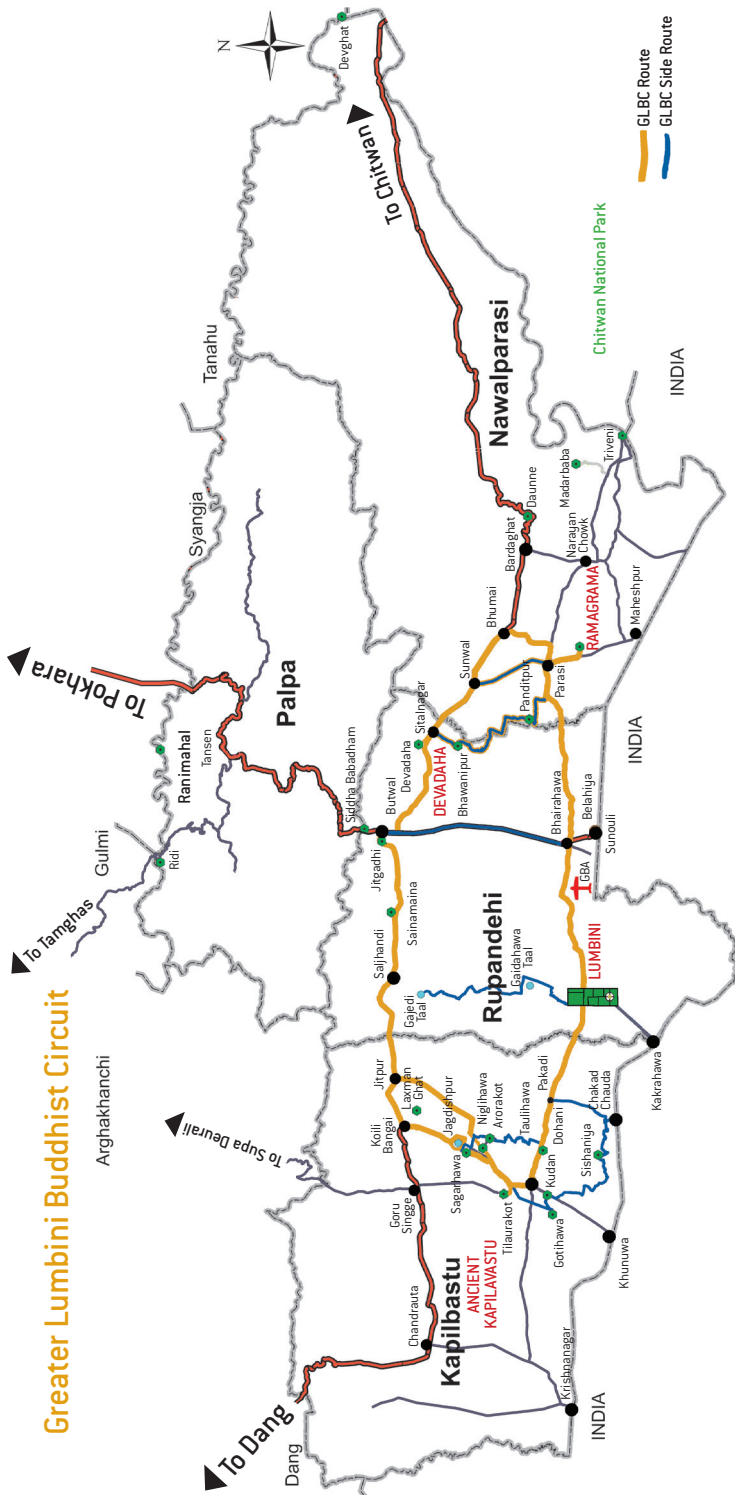
1.3. Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC) in Nepal

At the age of 80, before his Mahaparinirvana, Lord Sakymuni Buddha told Ananda, his most faithful disciple that there are four places a pious person should visit: *Lumbini*, where he was born, *Bodhgaya* where he attained enlightenment, *Sarnath* where he preached the first sermon and *Kushinagar* where he entered the nirvana.

Accordingly, efforts have been made at both the national and international level to turn Lumbini into a major site for tourism and pilgrimage. In recent years, Nepal has placed more emphasis on promotion of Lumbini. The Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC) is one important initiative that connects Lumbini, Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha and Ramagrama, the holiest pilgrimage and spiritual Buddhist sites in Nepal, pertaining to the birth and life history of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. Greatly revered by the Buddhists, these four sites in the GLBC have been visited by many international Buddhist scholars, spiritual leaders and pilgrims including great Indian Emperor Asoka (3rd century BC) and famous Chinese travelers– Tseng Tsai (4th century AD), Fa-Hsien (5th century AD) and Hiuen-Tsang (7th century AD).

Of late, Government of Nepal has started several work to develop and promote

Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit



Distances between sites in Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit

Airport → Mayadevi temple	17.4km
Bhairahawa → Mayadevi temple ..	21.1km
Mayadevi temple → Kutan	29.42km
Kutan → Gotihawa	4.33km
Gotihawa → Tilaurakot	7.32km

Tilaurakot → Niglhawa	8.85km
Niglhawa → Aurarakot	1.25km
Aurarakot → Sagarahwa	5.21km
Sagarahwa → Devdaha	65.3km
Devdaha → Ramagrama	25.19km

Ramagrama → Bhairahawa	28.56km
Bhawanipur → Butwal	17.0km
Ramagrama → Triveni	23.0km

Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC) as a world-class destination for pilgrimage, spiritualism and knowledge by connecting the four major sites in Lumbini region of Nepal. These holy sites relating to the birth and life history of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in Lumbini region are:



Lumbini: the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha;

Ancient Kapilavastu: the hometown of Prince Siddhartha, the birthplace of two earlier Buddhas: Krakuchhanda Buddha and Kanakamuni Buddha;

Devadaha: the maternal hometown of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's mother Queen Mayadevi, step mother Prajapati Gautami and wife Yashodhara;

Ramagrama: the only stupa in the world still containing the corporal relics of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

Greatly revered by the Buddhists, these four sites in the GLBC have been visited by many international Buddhist scholars, spiritual leaders and pilgrims including great Indian Emperor Asoka (3rd century BC) and famous Chinese travelers—Tseng Tsai (4th century AD), Fa-Hsien (5th century AD) and Hiuen-Tsang (7th century AD).

Every year, thousands of visitors travel to Lumbini and associated sites to pay homage to these holy sites of great pilgrimage and spiritual value.

By promoting GLBC, Nepal aims to connect the Greater Lumbini Area (GLA) to other Buddhist heritage sites within Nepal, to the Buddhist Circuit in India and sites in Tibet AR and People's Republic of China.

1.4. Suggested Activities for Pilgrims and Visitors in Greater Lumbini Area

Pilgrimage

- Pilgrimage to the holy Buddhist heritage sites: Lumbini, Kudan, Gotihawa, Niglihawa, Tilaurakot, Ramagrama, and Devadaha.
- Pilgrimage to the holy Hindu heritage sites: Triveni Dham, Daunne Devi, Siddhababa Temple, Parrowa Bolbum Dham, Tauleshwor Nath Temple, Supa Deurali, Bhairab Temple (Palpa), Ridi-Rudrabeni, Resunga etc.
- Pilgrimage to the holy Muslim sites includes Madar Baba and local mosques in and around Lumbini.

Spirituality and Meditation

- Visitors can participate in the short to long meditation, yoga and spiritual courses offered at several national and international monasteries located in the vicinity of the Sacred Garden, ancient Nyigrodharama (Kudan), Bhawanipur and at Ramagrama, the only stupa containing the sacred body relics of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.
- Meditation and yoga can be practiced in the serene and natural settings of the hill stations such as Srinagar Hill, Palpa and Narapani, Arghakhanchi.

General Leisure Activities

In addition to the pilgrimage and spirituality, visitors can enjoy cultural tours, village tours, sightseeing of museums, tours to wetlands, archaeological sites and other natural sites. Most interesting museums in the Greater Lumbini Area are:

- Lumbini Museum, Lumbini
- Tharu Museum at Khudabagar, Lumbini
- Kapilavastu Museum, Tilaurakot
- Ethnic and historic Museum at Palpa.

Special Interest Activities

In addition to pilgrimage and general leisure, Greater Lumbini Area (GLA) also offers tours of special-interest such as bird watching, home-stay experience, cycling etc.

- Bird watching to Jagadisapur reservoir and other locations of International Bird Area (IBA),
- Cultural home-stay experience at Jagadisapur Tharu home-stay, and
- Cycling tour at the surrounding villages in Lumbini.

Shopping and Entertainment

- The visitors can buy locally made handicrafts, puja paraphernalia, Buddha images and other souvenir items from the stalls of Lumbini Cultural Zone, Mahilawar Chowk and in hotels.
- Visiting parks (Mani Mukundasen Botanical Park and Hill Park at Butwal, Mayadevi Park at Devadaha), boating in Lumbini Central Canal, sightseeing at Jagadisapur Lake etc.
- Shopping and entertainment facilities are available in the Sunauli-Bhairahawa-Butwal Corridor.

Volunteer Activities

- Helping local school teachers to raise awareness on cultural and natural heritage preservation, environment conservation, waste management, hygiene and sanitation etc. among the school students offering volunteer services at Lumbini Vipassana Meditation Center, involvement in cleaning and gardening of Lumbini and other pilgrimage sites, supporting during special occasions and celebration etc. are some of the areas to offer volunteer service (*visitors are advised to seek prior approval from relevant authorities to provide volunteer services*).

1.5. Major Festival and Events in GLA



Festivals and Events	Date/Duration	Location
Nepali New Year	1st day of Baishakh (Nepali calendar) / mid April	Lumbini and major park in the cities across the GLA
Buddha Purnima (Jayanti)	Full moon of Baishakh; falls in 1st or 3rd week of May	Lumbini, Ancient Kapilavastu, Devadaha, Ramagrama; Buddhist monastic sites in Tansen, Shankarnagar etc.
Ramadan/ Ramazan	Ninth month of the Islamic calendar; starting from last week of May and continues for 30 days	Muslim communities and mosques in the GLA
Ropain Festival (Festival of paddy plantation)	Ashad 15, last week of June	Paddy fields near Bhairahawa, Chhapiya, Lumbini, Kapilavastu etc.
Bolbum Parva	Every Monday in the month of Shravan/ mid July to mid August	Tauleshwor Nath, Laxmanghat (Kapilavastu), Paryowa Dham (Sainamaina), Prakateshwor Mahadev (near Bethari), Triveni Dham
Rakshya Bandhan (Rakhi)	Last week of Shrawan or 1st week of Bhadra/ 2nd or 3rd week of August	Every household throughout the Hindu communities in GLA
Gaijatra (Festival of Cow)	Last week of Shrawan or 1st week of Bhadra/ 2nd or 3rd week of August	Tansen, Palpa, Butwal, Bhairahawa especially among Newari communities
Krishna Janmashthami (celebration of Lord Krishna's birth day)	1st or 2nd week of Bhadra/ 3rd or 4th week of August	Krishna temples throughout the Hindu communities in GLA

Festivals and Events	Date/Duration	Location
Teej Vrata	2nd or 3rd week of Bhadra/ last week of August or 1st week of September	Observed by Hindu women in households and Shiva temples in Bhairahawa, Butwal, Tansen, Triveni etc.
Atawari Parba (celebrated by Tharu)	First Sunday of the first Sukla Paksha after Krishna Janmastami; Asoj/ August or September	Tharu houses, community spaces
Jitiya Parba	1st week of Aswin/ in between 3rd or 4th week of September	Hindu and Tharu households community spaces; observed by Nepali married women
Durga Puja (Dashain)	Main celebrations are for about 5 days in between last week of Aswin to 3rd week of Kartik/ in between 1st to 4th week of October	Hindu households, Durga temples, public spaces
Depawali (Tihar/ Festival of light)	Between 3rd week of Kartik to 1st week of Mangshir/ in between 4th week of October to 1st week of November	Hindu households, temples, public spaces
Chhata Parwa	Kartik Shukala Chaturthi to Kartik Shukala Saptami/ October or November	Holy rivers and lakes including Puskarini pond at Lumbini, Bhagirathi river (Kapilavastu), Laxmanghat, Tinau, Danda, Triveni Dham
Kartik Purnima (Nahana Puja)	Purnima (full moon) of Kartik (November–December)	Holy rivers, Shiva temples; Ramghat at Bhagirathi river, Triveni at Sapta Gandaki river
Sakya Monlam	Being observed in Lumbini in every winter (Nov./Dec.) since 1993	Celebrated in Lumbini by Tashi Raptan Monastery
Ubhauli and Udhauli Parva	Last week of Mangshir/ 2nd week of December	Among the Kirat communities living in and around Lumbini
Tamu Lhosar	2nd week of Poush/ last week of December	Among the Gurung communities living in Jagadishpur, Butwal, Bhairahawa, Khairahani
English New Year and Eve	3rd week of Poush; 31 December and January 1	Lumbini, Bhairahawa, Butwal

Festivals and Events	Date/Duration	Location
Maghi Parba/ Maghe Sankranti	Magh 1/ 2nd or 3rd week of January	Tharu villages, Magar villages (Jagadishpur, Sainamaina, Khudabagar, Sispur, Ramagrama)
Magh Purnima	Full moon of Magh month/ January– February	Triveni Dham, Lumbini
Sonam Lhosar	Magh Sukla Pratipada (on new moon) of Magh month/ last week of Jan. or 1st week of Feb.	Monasteries, Buddhist shrines, households of Tamang community etc.
Gyalpo Lhosar	Tibetan New Year; Falgun 16/ last week of Feb. or 1st week of March	Monasteries, Buddhist shrines, public spaces, households of Sherpa community
Phagu Purnima or Holi (Festival of colours)	On full moon in Falgun/ February or March	Public spaces, tourist centres, households
Chaitra Navami/ Chaite Dashain	Last week of Chaitra/ 1st week of April	Bhawanipur (Devadaha), Triveni Dham, Ramghat
Chaite Purnima	Last week of Chaitra or 1st week of Baishakh/ 3rd or 4th week of April	Mayadevi temple, Lumbini

Weekly Hat Bazaar in the Greater Lumbini Area



Day	Location of Local Hat Bazaar
Sunday	Jhulanipul, Gobarouli, Marjatpur, Jagadishpur
Monday	Padariya, Pipara
Tuesday	Parsa Chowk, Ahirauli, Jogada, Taulihawa, Sukrauli
Wednesday	Mahilwar Bazaar, Suryapura, Kophawa, Odari, Ramghat, Parasi Bazaar
Thursday	Mahajidiya, Aligadhawa, Bhumahi
Friday	Hatibazaar (Bishnupura), Motipur, Baryohiya, Barmelitole (Taulihawa), Patkheuli (Ramagrama)
Saturday	Mahilwar, Karmahawa, Ahirauli, Muglaha, Taulihawa, Parasi Bazaar

Monthly average temperatures in °C and rainfall amount in milliliter in GLA

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp. (Max)	26	32	36	42	41	41	36	38	36	35	31	27
Temp. (Min.)	16	19	24	29	30	32	29	31	29	27	22	18
Rainfall	0.61	2.11	7.51	0.1	52.2	84.7	233.3	43.06	66.26	11.12	0	0.1

CHAPTER TWO

LUMBINI

The Birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha
A World Heritage Site, Rupandehi, Nepal



2. 1. Significance of Lumbini

“After I am no more, O Ananda!
Men of belief will visit the place with faith,
Curiosity and devotion...
Lumbini, the place where I was born.
The path to ultimate peace is spiritual discipline.”

- Lord Sakyamuni Buddha



Lumbini: The Birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha

Situated in the plains of Rupandehi district in Nepal, Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, is one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world. Legend has it that Mayadevi, the queen of Sakya king Siddhodhana of Kapilavastu, was passing through the Lumbini Garden on her way to the maternal hometown of Devadaha (ancient Koliya kingdom). The queen took bath in the Puskarini (Sacred Pond) and after taking 25 paces to the north she felt labor pain, supported herself grasping a branch of a tree and gave birth to the holy prince on Baisakha Purnima (full moon of the first month according to Nepali calendar) of 623 BC. Buddhist scriptures and early literature state that the newly born Prince Siddhartha took seven divine steps to the north and announced an epoch making message to the suffering humanity in the Lumbini Garden:

“I am the foremost of all creatures to cross the riddle of the ocean of human existence, this is my last birth and here after, I will not be born again”.

Box-1: Birth of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha

Buddhist scriptures mention that the Bodhi-tva descends from Tushita Heaven and enters queen Mayadevi's womb and dwells calmly there for ten months. The queen had a dream in which a great white elephant entered her side with a lotus in its trunk. The Brahmins and hermits, who were invited to interpret the dream, prophesied that the prince would either be a world conqueror or a world renouncer. As was the tradition then, her father invited her to his palace in Devadaha to deliver the child.

Mayadevi, the queen of Sakya king Suddhodhan of Ancient Kapilvastu was on her way to see her father, King Suprabuddha Grihapati of Koliya kingdom. Accompanied by her royal courtiers, she was passing the verdant Lumbini grove that was adorned with sal trees, laden with fruits and flowers and hummed with bees and birdsongs. Delighted with the emblematic ambience of the garden, she stretched out her hand to hold branch of a sal tree from her palanquin. And, standing, still holding the branch, she delivered the Prince Siddhartha! It was Baishakha Purnima (full moon) of 623 BC.

The prince issued himself from his mother's side standing and stretching out his hands and feet, like a young and refulgent sun descending from the sky. The child was like a gem in a fine cloth piece; stainless and unspoiled, free from all the impurities the ordinary mortal beings are smeared with during the birth. Nonetheless, showers of pure water poured down from heaven, honoring the advent of the Awakened One and refreshing the queen and her prince. The future Lord Sakyamuni Buddha took seven steps to the north, looked around all ten directions of the Lumbini garden and announced 'This is my last birth; henceforth, there will be no rebirth for me'.

The early scriptures were not written until more than three centuries after the Buddha's death but passed down the generation as oral narratives. Today, authentic information on historical Lumbini (also called Lumbini upavana or Lumbini vatika) and the nativity events have been derived from the textual narratives of Buddhist scriptures, accounts of celebrity travellers and archaeological evidences in the form of religious structures and anthropological vestiges. All these evidences allude to the fact that Lord Sakyamuni Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal in the 6th century BC.



(There are several nativity stories related to the birth of Prince Siddhartha, which have been passed down the generations as narratives, therefore, may be embellished and elaborated).

Archaeological evidences, historical references, travel accounts of the well-known pilgrims and travelers including the eminent Chinese pilgrims and the holy Buddhist scriptures testify Lumbini as the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

The **Asoka Pillar**, erected by Emperor Asoka in 249 BC with inscriptions on it, is the most reliable attestation that Lord Sakyamuni Buddha was born here in Lumbini.

In 1896 AD, General Khadga Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana, the governor of Palpa and Dr. Alois Fuhrer, an eminent archaeological surveyor in British India, discovered the Asoka pillar, re-establishing Lumbini as the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. After rediscovery of the pillar and interpretation of inscriptions on it, the site drew huge attention of many archaeologists and historians from around the world. Another surveyor PC Mukherji conducted an excavation in 1899 AD and identified the Nativity Sculpture as well as some structural remains in and around the Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's birthplace.

Subsequent excavations carried out by Lumbini Development Trust (LDT), Department of Archaeology (DoA) and Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF) between 1992-1995 in the Mayadevi complex have recovered the Marker Stone, important archaeological remains, shrines and ruins of ancient Mayadevi Temple. These archaeological findings have further reinforced Lumbini as the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha as already testified by the inscription on the Asoka pillar.

Lumbini: One of the Most Important Pilgrimage Sites in the World



Today, Buddhist devotees, peace lovers and general visitors from all over the world visit Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. It bears the records of historical visits by famous pilgrims and dignitaries. The pilgrims and visitors deeply immerse themselves in the serene and spiritual atmosphere of Lumbini.

Lumbini is one of the four sacred sites that Lord Sakyamuni Buddha had later advised his disciples and followers to visit. According to the Buddhist scriptures, Lord Sakyamuni Buddha highlighted the importance of Lumbini from his deathbed as follows:

“Ananda, This (Lumbini) place is where the Tathagata was born; this is a place, which should be visited and seen by a person of devotion and which would cause awareness and apprehension of the nature of impermanence. At this place, Ananda, who are on a pilgrimage to (this) shrine, if they should die with devotion in their heart during the course of the pilgrimage, will after (their) death and dissolution of the body be reborn in a good destination, a fortunate celestial realm” (Mahaparinirvana Sutta).

The visit of famous Mauryan Emperor Asoka in 249 BC was the milestone in the history of Lumbini. Guided by his spiritual teacher Upagupta, Asoka made a pilgrimage to this holy shrine and erected a stone pillar bearing an inscription '**Hida Buddhhe Jate Sakyamuni**' (here Sakyamuni Buddha was born). He worshiped the nativity tree and the Marker Stone. He also visited other historical sites associated with Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and the earlier Buddhas in Kapilavastu, Ramagrama and Devadaha. Subsequent to his famous visit, construction of stupas, monasteries and other religious structures began in and around Lumbini.

Eminent Chinese pilgrims- Tseng Tsai (4th century AD), Fa-Hsien (5th century AD) and Hiuen Tsang (7th century AD) visited Lumbini and describe the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in their travel accounts. Among them, Hiuen Tsang's travel account is the most prominent one and gives detailed descriptions of Lumbini. He describes the stump of the nativity tree, a chaitya, the Asoka pillar, the holy Puskarani pond, the Telar (oily) river and the source of warm and cool water springs.



King Ripu Malla (1312 AD) of Karnali, mid-west Nepal, visited Lumbini and left the mark of his visit engraving '**Om mani padme hum Ripu Malla chiranjayatu**' on the top of the pillar. After his visit Lumbini was forgotten, neglected and shrouded in a thick bushes and forest. The association of Lumbini with Lord Sakymuni Buddha faded slowly into oblivion (for almost 600 years) and the name Lumbini gradually changed to Rummindei and then to Rupendehi, the present name of the district where Lumbini is located.

Lumbini: A UNESCO World Heritage Site

Appreciating its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for the greater benefit of entire humanity and its archaeological, religious and spiritual significance, UNESCO enlisted Lumbini as a **World Heritage Property** in 1997.



The Outstanding Universal Value of Lumbini was appreciated by UNESCO on the basis of OUV criterion (iii) and (vi) as follows:



“As the birthplace of the Lord Buddha, testified by the inscription on the Asoka Pillar, the sacred area in Lumbini is one of the most holy and significant places for one of the world's great religions” [Criterion iii].

“The archaeological remains of the Buddhist viharas (monasteries) and stupas (memorial shrines) from the 3rd century BC to the 15th century AD, provide important evidence about the nature of Buddhist pilgrimage centres from a very early period” [Criterion vi].



Lumbini: The Fountain of Buddhism and World Peace

- ❁ In 1986 **World Peace Flame** was brought to and installed at the southern point of the Lumbini Central Canal. Likewise, the **World Peace Bell** was installed 50m east of the flame in 2005.
- ❁ In 1998, the first World Buddhist Summit was held in Lumbini which declared Lumbini as the **“Fountain of World Peace”**.
- ❁ In 2002, Nepal Government established the **Gautam Buddha International Peace Award**. Tadatoshi Akiba, the Mayor of Hiroshima, and Tomihisa Taue, the Mayor of Nagasaki were the first to receive this Award in recognition of their contribution towards advocacy of dis-armament and nuclear non-proliferation.
- ❁ In 2004, the second World Buddhist Summit was held in Lumbini and declared it as a **“World Peace Village”**. Accordingly, with support from KOICA, Dr, Kwaak prepared a



Master Plan for Lumbini World Peace City (Lumbini Vishwa Shanti Nagrama) and submitted to the Government of Nepal for approval.

- ✿ In 2016, on the occasion of 2560th Buddha Jayanti, Nepal Government convened the International Buddhist Conference 2016 which declared Lumbini in Nepal as the ***“Birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and the Fountain of Buddhism and World Peace”***.



Lumbini: The Embodiment of Buddhism and Buddhist World

Many Buddhist and non-Buddhist countries have been building Buddhist monasteries in the Monastic Zone of Lumbini for more than last 30 years. So far, 32 Buddhist establishments (monasteries and meditation centers), belonging to Theravada and Mahayana schools of Buddhism, have been built in the monastic enclaves of Lumbini.

Every monastery in Lumbini has its own unique cultural traditions and ascetical as well as asthetical features that enhance the sacred ambience of Lumbini and entice a wide range of visitors towards this site of holy pilgrimage. These Buddhist establishments organise daily,



occasional and annual religious and spiritual events and programs throughout the year.

These monasteries offer visitors an extraordinary opportunity to acquire knowledge on different schools and sects of Buddhism being practiced in the various part of the world. For this very reason, Lumbini is being developed into a global centre for Buddhism encompassing and respecting multiple religious sects and systems of belief.

2. 2. Re-Discovery, Restoration, Preservation and Promotion of Lumbini

The archaeological excavation carried out by General Khadga Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana, the governor of Palpa and Dr. Alois Fuhrer, an eminent archaeological surveyor in British India, in 1896 AD, discovered the Asoka pillar re-establishing Lumbini as the birthplace of Lord Sakymuni Buddha. After rediscovery of the pillar and interpretation of inscriptions on it, the site drew huge attention of many archaeologists and historians from around the world. Another surveyor PC Mukherji conducted an excavation in 1899 AD and identified the Nativity Sculpture as well as some structural remains in and around Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's birthplace. In 1930s, General Keshar Shumsher carried out large-scale excavation at the holy complex of Lumbini. He exposed ruins of some ancient stupas and monasteries, restored the Sacred Pond and reconstructed Mayadevi Temple (the previous one).



Several excavations carried out by Lumbini Development Trust (LDT), Department of Archaeology (DoA) and Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF) between 1992-1995 in the Mayadevi complex have recovered the Marker Stone, important archaeological remains, shrines and ruins of ancient Mayadevi Temple. These archaeological findings have further reinforced Lumbini as the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha as already testified by the inscription on the Asoka pillar.

THE LUMBINI MASTER PLAN

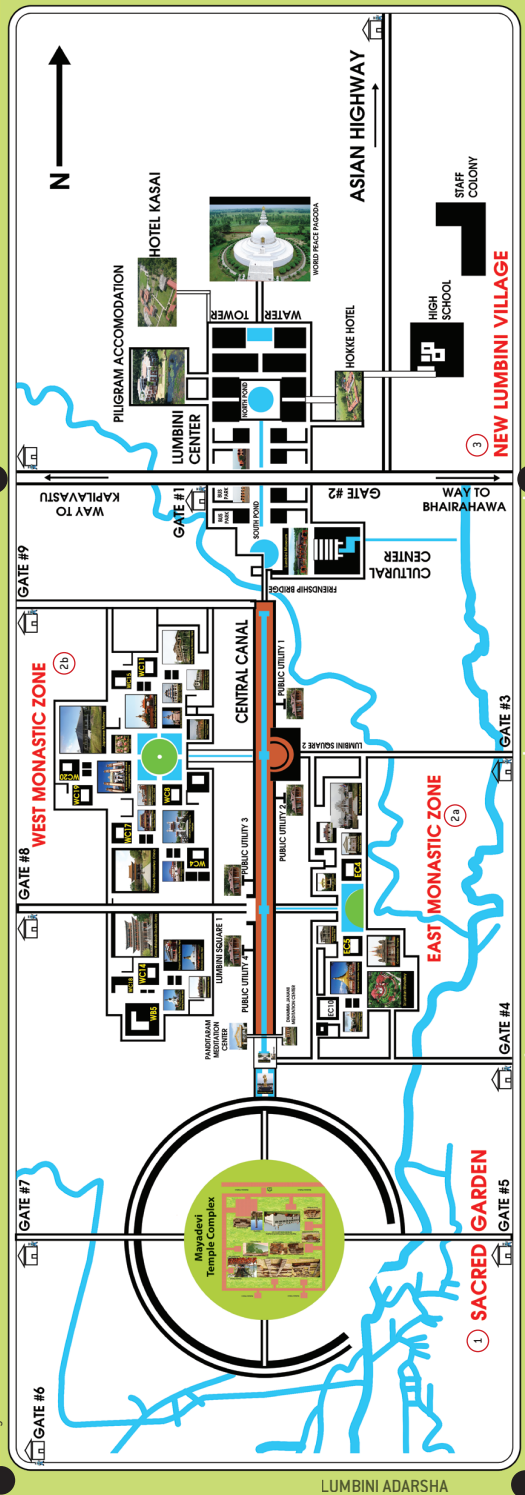
लुम्बिनी गुरु योजना

TENUHAWA

◀ To Kakrahawa
Padariya Chowk

▶ To Kapilavastu
Lokhadiga

HARNAMPUR



Mahilwar Bazar

Parisa Chowk

▶ To East West Highway

▶ To Bhairahawa

TENHAWA VILLAGE

MADHUBANI VILLAGE

MAHILWAR VILLAGE

SHIVGADHIYA
EKALA VILLAGE

LUMBINI ADARSHA

The Lumbini Master Plan

The then United Nations Secretary General, U. Thant's pilgrimage to Lumbini in 1967 was another milestone in the recent history of Lumbini. Deeply influenced by the sanctity of Lumbini, the Secretary General discussed the matter with the then King Mahendra and advised Government of Nepal to develop Lumbini as an international pilgrimage and a tourist center. Renowned Japanese architect Prof. Kenzo Tange was assigned the task of designing a master plan for the systematic development of Lumbini. The Lumbini Development Master Plan was approved by Nepal Government in 1978.

The Lumbini Master Plan, spread in an area of 1×3 square mile, oriented along the north-south axis, encompasses three zones (1) the Sacred Garden, (2) the Monastic Zone, and (3) the New Lumbini Village, based on the notion of the path to enlightenment. Each of the zones covers an area of a square mile.

1) The Sacred Garden is the epicenter of the Master Plan and comprises the sacred birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. Historical monuments and objects of high archaeological, religious and spiritual value located in this zone include the Mayadevi Temple, the Asoka Pillar, the Marker Stone, the Nativity Sculpture, Sacred Pond (Puskarini), and many structural ruins including Buddhist Viharas & Stupas. The Sacred Garden landscape is encircled by a Circular Pond and a Circular Levee, which symbolise the purity and simplicity of the mandala, a mystic symbol of the universe.



2) The Monastic Zone, an area of 1 sq. mile in the middle of the Master Plan has been divided into two zones by a 1.6 km long pedestrian walkways and a canal in the middle.

2a) The East Monastic Zone represents the Theravada (Hinayana) school of Buddhism where 13 plots are allotted for construction of Viharas.

2b) The West Monastic Zone comprises 29 plots of land, each allotted for construction of Mahayana monasteries. Currently there are three meditation centers in operation in this zone. The statue of standing Baby Buddha, Central



Canal and its boating facility, the Eternal Peace Flame, the Peace Bell etc. in the monastic zone are of great interest for the visitors.

3) The Cultural Center and New Lumbini Village represents “worldly” activities and provide information, accommodation and utility facilities for pilgrims and the visitors. Hotels, visitor information center, Lumbini Museum, Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI), administration complex etc. are located here. Other important sites of visitors’ interest in New Lumbini Village include the World Peace Pagoda of Japan and the Lumbini Crane Sanctuary.

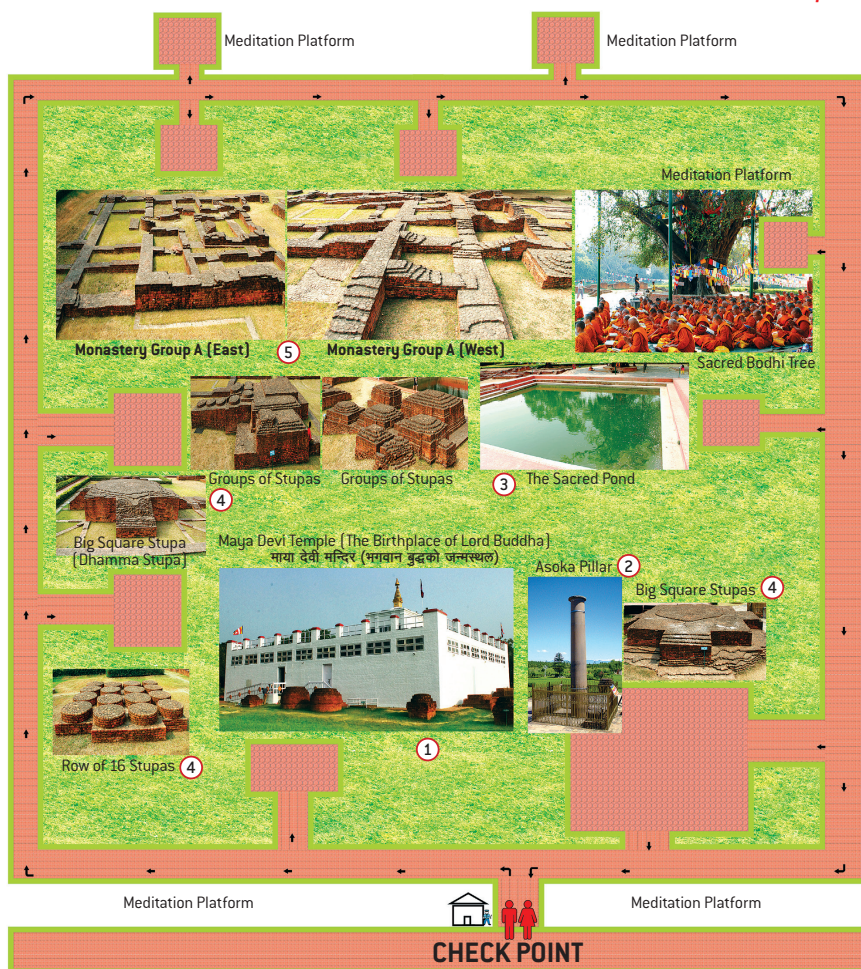
After formation of Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) in 1985 AD, development activities in Lumbini including excavations and conservations of the holy complex are being carried out under the aegis of the Trust. Development of Lumbini in line with the approved Lumbini Development Master Plan is still going on.



2.3. Major Monuments, Sites and Attractions in Lumbini

Also known as *Pradimoksha-vana* or Lumbini Game (village) in Buddhist scriptures and other sources, the Sacred Garden is one of the holiest sites that contains archaeological remains and shrines of high religious and spiritual value. Major monuments in Lumbini include age-old religious and spiritual structures, construction of which commenced immediately after the *Mahaparinirvana* of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and continued over the centuries. Short descriptions of major monuments in Lumbini sacred garden are given below for the benefit of visitors.

Sacred Garden Complex



1) The Mayadevi Temple

The Mayadevi Temple is a heart of Lumbini and GLBC. It houses the Marker Stone, the Nativity Sculpture and the structural ruins, all related to the birth

of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. The Marker Stone pinpoints the exact birth spot and the Nativity Sculpture depicts the birth scene of the Prince Siddhartha.



Structural ruins inside the Mayadevi temple

i) The Marker Stone

ii) The Nativity Sculpture

Archaeological excavations have revealed that

the structural ruins belong to the different phases of Mayadevi Temple's constructions and restorations over the centuries. Emperor Asoka during his visit to Lumbini in 249 century BC, built a platform using the burnt bricks to safeguard the Marker Stone and the Nativity Tree under which Mayadevi had given birth to Prince Siddhartha. The Mayadevi Temple was re-discovered in 1896 by General Khadga Shamsher and Dr. Anton Fuhrer, and identified Lumbini as the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha with reference of the Asoka Pillar. Later, Keshar Shumsher excavated the mound of early Mayadevi Temple and reconstructed it in 1939. The present day Mayadevi Temple was rebuilt in 2003 by Lumbini Development Trust.

The structural ruins inside Mayadevi Temple belong to 6th century BC to 5th century AD. It consists of 15 box chambers arranged in 5 rows in east-west and 3 rows in north-south direction as well as a circumambulatory path surrounded by an outer wall. The archaeological excavation undertaken by Department of Archaeology, Lumbini Development Trust and Durham University (UK) during 2010-2013 AD uncovered a timber shrine dating back to the 6th century BC. During the excavation a pre-Mauryan brick structure, each brick measuring 49×36×7 cm in size and 20kg in weight from underneath the present visible layers of ruins was also uncovered. These evidences suggest that the first Mayadevi Temple was built immediately after the Mahaparinirvana of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in Lumbini that witnessed various restorations and reconstructions over the major historical periods.

i) The Marker Stone

The Marker Stone marks the exact location of the birth spot of Prince Siddhartha in Lumbini. The meticulous excavation of the Mayadevi Temple



(1992-1996) discovered the Marker Stone on the top of a platform consisting of seven layers of bricks from the 3rd century BC. Chinese traveler Hsuan Tsang (636 AD) describes the existence of the Marker Stone 25 steps to the north of the sacred pond. It is a sandstone based conglomerate measuring 70 cm x 40 cm x 10 cm in size.

ii) The Nativity Sculpture

The Nativity Sculpture depicts the birth scene of Prince Siddhartha. Mayadevi is depicted holding a branch of a tree (possibly the sal tree) as Prajapati Gautami supports her during the delivery. The newly born baby is shown below standing on a lotus pedestal. Two celestial figures (Brahma and Indra), are receiving the newly born Prince Siddhartha. The red sandstone sculpture is said to be carved by Mathura School of Art in the 4th century. The scientific excavation by P. C. Mukherji in 1899 AD discovered the main part of the Nativity Sculpture.



2) The Asoka Pillar



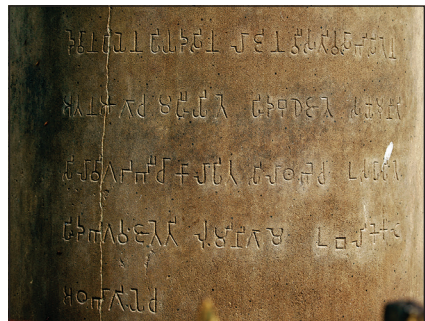
The Asoka Pillar was erected here in Lumbini by the Emperor Asoka in 249 BC to mark the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and to commemorate his visit to Lumbini. The Asoka inscription engraved in Brahmi script and Pali language attests Lumbini to be the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

The Asoka Pillar bears the first epigraphic evidence with reference to the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. The text written in Brahmi script and Pali language is translated as follows:

“King Piyadasi (Asoka) the beloved of the Gods, in the twentieth year of his reign, himself made a royal visit. Sakyamuni Buddha was born here, therefore the (birth spot) marker

stone was worshipped and a stone pillar was erected. The lord having been born here, the tax of the Lumbini village reduced to the eight part (only) ”.

Erection of this Pillar in Lumbini by Emperor Asoka was also described by early Chinese travelers including Hiuen Tsang (636 AD) and Fa-hsien (399-413 AD). In 1312 AD, Ripu Malla, the king



of western Nepal paid homage to Lumbini and engraved the following words: ***Om Mani Padme Hum Ripu Malla Chiran Jayatu*** on the eastern side of the upper part of the pillar.

The pillar, which was lost in the bush after the visit of Ripu Malla was rediscovered by Dr. A. A. Fuhrer and General Khadga Shumsher JBR during the excavation carried out on December 1, 1896. The pillar is a conglomerate made up of sandstone and sedimentary rock. The excavation work by Indian archaeologist Mrs. Debala Mitra confirmed that the pillar has a Mauryan polish typical of finished stone from a quarry in the neighborhood of Chunar (near Varanasi, U. P. India). The pillar when first erected was about 40 feet long, and originally had three parts: (i) the monolithic pillar, (ii) a lotus bracket, and (iii) a crowning figure, which was possibly a horse. The present monolithic pillar is 30 feet 10.5 inches (9.41m) long. The middle part of the pillar 'lotus bracket' is recently placed on a raised brick platform near the pillar. As mentioned by Hiuen Tsang, the crowning part of the pillar was a horse image, which unfortunately is still missing.

Box-2: Pilgrimage of Emperor Asoka to Lumbini

Before Lord Sakyamuni Buddha entered into the ultimate nirvana, he said to Ananada that Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Saranath and Kushinagar are the four places that a person of faith should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. These pilgrimage sites witnessed a continuous flow of Buddhist devotees and followers after his Mahaparinirvana. Among them, there were Emperors, scholars and famous travelers, who contributed for further spread, development and promotion of Buddhism and the associated sacred sites. One of the most prominent contributors was the Mauryan Emperor Asoka who ruled over a large part of India between 268 and 239 BC. He converted himself to Buddhism in 260 BC after the massacre of tens of thousands of innocent victims and bloody victory at the Kalinga war.

Upon his arrival in Lumbini with his spiritual teacher Upagupta, the Emperor erected a sandstone pillar with inscription in Brahmi script and Pali language as a testimony of his visit in 249 BC. The scripts have been deciphered disparately by different scholars, but the essence of the phrase is clear: **Prince Siddhartha was born in Lumbini**. The Emperor Asoka personally visited Lumbini, worshiped the birth spot and erected the stone pillar to commemorate his visit. The translation of the inscription also read that the tax on the produces of the village of Lumbini was reduced.

He also visited other historical sites associated with Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and the earlier Buddhas in Kapilavastu, Ramagrama and Devadaha. Subsequent to his famous visit, construction of stupas, monasteries and other structures begun in and around the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

3) The Sacred Pond (Puskarini)

Located 25 paces south-west from the Marker Stone is the Sacred Pond, popularly known as Puskarini, where Mayadevi is believed to have a bath before giving birth to Prince Siddhartha. The infant prince was also given the first purification bath here.



Early Chinese travelers Fa-hsien (399-413 AD) and Hiuen Tsang (636 AD) on their travel accounts also describe the Sacred Pond and holy bath of the newly born Prince Siddhartha at this pond.

The pond existed before the birth of Prince Siddhartha, probably in an oval shape. It was remodeled in shape and size, with an embankment of bricks, during 1933-1939 AD excavations

by Keshar Shumsher JBR. The present day pond measures 24.90m × 24.85m × 4.83m in size. While cleaning the pond in 1996, two wells were found in the northeast and southwest corners of the pond. The Sacred Pond was also mentioned and described by the archaeologists Mrs. D. Mitra in 1972 and Mr. B. K. Rijal in 1983 in their excavation report.

4) The Stupas



The Mayadevi Shrine is surrounded by several groups of stupas. So far, 31 stupas representing 3 different categories have been excavated at the Sacred Garden of Lumbini. Of them, 29 are Votive Stupas, 1 Relic Stupa and 1 Dhamma Stupa. The large number of ancient stupas in the vicinity signifies the importance of Lumbini as one of the holiest sites of pilgrimage after the

Mahaparinirvana of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

The stupas were constructed here from 3rd century BC until 8th or 9th century AD through the Mauryan, Sunga, Kushana and Gupta periods. Stupas erected at Lumbini Sacred Garden are of different types, designs and styles, primarily having square, rectangular and circular bases. Followings are the stupas uncovered in the Sacred Garden.



Big Square Stupa: This stupa was constructed during Sunga period (2nd century BC). But archaeologist T. N. Mishra estimates it to be of Asoka time (3rd century BC).

Big Square Stupa (Dhamma Stupa) : This Stupa is identified as only one Dhamma Stupa out of 31 stupas excavated so far in the Sacred Garden of Lumbini. This stupa, as

described by archaeologist Mishra, is believed to be of Mauryan period (3rd century BC) which is plain in design and has the four stepping basement. Other stupas, both having circular and square bases, are believed to have been constructed during Sunga period (2nd Century BC) and Kusana period (1st to 2nd century AD). 19 Terra-cotta seals contained in the stupa ascertain it to be a Dhamma Stupa where pilgrims and followers worship to pay homage to the teachings of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.



Relic Stupa (Saririka Stupa) : This is the only Relic Stupa out of 31 stupas excavated so far in the Sacred Garden of Lumbini. This stupa was first traced in 1975 and reconstructed above ground with Mauryan brickbats available at the site. The floor of this stupa at the time of excavation contained only the lid of a Gold Casket of cylindrical type in association with some charred human bones and other ritual offerings. The brickbats available at the site indicate the construction of stupa during Mauryan period (3rd century BC).

Group of Sixteen Stupas: This group of 16 Stupas belongs to Votive Stupa which were constructed during Gupta period (7th or 8th century). These stupas were found by archaeologists D. Mitra in 1957 and reconstructed to their original shape during 1976-77 excavations.



Row of Six Stupas: Located in the north and north-east of the Mayadevi Temple, the row of Six Stupas was constructed during Mauryan and Sunga periods (3rd to 2nd century BC). These were also found by archaeologists D. Mitra in 1957 and reconstructed to their original shape in 1976- 77 AD.

Group of Stupas: This Group of Stupas was constructed during the 1st century BC to 5th century AD through Kushan to Gupta periods. This Group of Stupas as noticed by T. N. Mishra, include the Stupa No. 12 to Stupa No. 29.

5) The Monastery Complex (Viharas)

Two groups of monasteries have been excavated so far at the southern and south-eastern part of the Mayadevi Temple in the Sacred Garden. Construction of these monasteries started in the 3rd century BC and continued until 9th century AD through the Mauryan, Kushana and Gupta periods. Overlapped and crowded, these structures are evidences of people's eagerness to be laid near the sacred birth spot of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

Monastery Group A (East) :

This group of Monasteries was a residential block containing living rooms for monks, a meeting hall, two brick stupas (one square and the other circular), and a well in the courtyard of the Vihara. This group of monasteries was constructed during 2nd century BC to 2nd century AD through Sunga and Kusana periods.



Monastery Group B (West) :

This group of monasteries consists of two-sub groups located at the southeast of the Mayadevi Temple, altogether containing 31 rooms. This group of monasteries was initially constructed during the Mauryan period (3rd century BC) and reconstructed during the Kusana (1st to 2nd century AD) and Gupta (4th century AD) periods.



Monasteries belonging to sub-group 1 (east) consists of living rooms in four directions, a meditation block in the centre and a verandah at the western side whereas the sub-group 2 (west) consists of two water storage tanks and a small room (possibly a kitchen).

Temple Basement

Archaeologists have described it as the basement of a temple, though to whom the temple is dedicated is still unknown. It has been renovated with bricks and brickbats. The correct date of construction of this basement is still unknown.

Meeting Hall

This Meeting Hall was constructed in two different periods, started in Sunga period (2nd century BC). Construction of secular nature amid the religious complex might have been used for educational and hospitality purposes in those days, i. e. teaching, discussion, guest reception etc.



Circular Levee

The Circular Levee is an elevated circular path that encircles the Mayadevi Temple complex, gardens and a circular pond, protecting the Sacred Garden from being inundated. It has a radius of 400m with the Asoka Pillar at the center. The levee is a brick paved walk trail which can be used as a circumambulatory path while paying homage to Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

Lumbini International Monasteries

Presently, there are 32 Buddhist monasteries in Lumbini Master Plan Area; one is situated at New Lumbini Village, 29 at the Monastic Zone and two at the Sacred Garden. World Peace Pagoda of Japan is situated in the New Lumbini Village while Rajkiya Buddha Vihara, Nepal and Dharmaswami Maharaja Buddha Vihara, Nepal are in the Sacred Garden of Master Plan area. These Buddhist establishments in Lumbini organise religious and spiritual programs throughout the year where events are arranged on daily, occasional or annual basis. Every monastery in Lumbini has its own unique cultural traditions and architectural features that attract visitors to Lumbini from around the world.

Box-3: Buddhist Scriptures

Buddhist scriptures have their origin in the oral teachings and instructions of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, therefore, they breath his spirit in essence. It is believed that he used Magadhi language in his preaching which were recorded in the palm leaf in Pali language later. Many inscriptions on the Buddhist shrines are also written in Pali language. It is believed that during the first Buddhist Council in Rajgri, two disciples of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha recited these teachings out of their memory; *Upali* recalled the entire *Vinaya-pitaka* and *Ananda* the *Sutta-pitaka*.

The Buddhist scriptures are broadly divided into Theravada and Mahayana canons. The Buddhist scriptures of Theravada school has categorized these sacred scriptures into three groups and called *Tripitaka*:

- There are five books of *Vinaya-pitaka* or the basket of disciplines which contains the rules of monastic order for the monks and nuns.
- There are seven books of *Abhidhamma-pitaka* or the basket of higher teachings with the texts of philosophical discourses that provide theoretical framework to the Buddhist path to enlightenment, and
- There are five collections of *Sutta-pitaka* or the basket of discourse on the sermons of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha or one of his main disciples.

The most thorough and common version of *Tripitaka* is in Pali language, which is thought to be the words of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and his major disciples, preserved in the oral tradition before they were written down in the first century BC.

The Mahayana Canon also consists of *Tripitaka* of disciplines, discourses and dharma analysis. It is believed that the Mahayana sutras have been recorded by unknown authors between the first century BC and the fifth century AD, and some even later than that. Some of these sutras are linked to the sermons of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha but many scholars consider these to be later interpretations having profound wisdom and spiritual values.

Today, Theravada (Teachings of the Elders) Buddhism is predominantly practiced in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos P. D. R., Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. Theravada school believes in the past Buddhas, Lord Sakaymuni Buddha and future Buddha or Maitreya. For Theravadins, the objective is attainment of self-enlightenment and becoming ideal *Arhat* or *Arahant* seeking personal nirvana for personal salvation. There are few rituals in using

mantras (verses) and mudras (postures) and they use simple layout with image of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha for worship. Theravada is believed to have some influences from pre-Buddhism religions as it draws some references from Hindu scriptures. The Hindus also worship Lord Sakyamuni Buddha as the 9th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. There is only one major school of Theravada now, but it is said that there were as many as 18 different sects in the past. The Theravadin scriptures are strictly in Pali and local languages supplement Pali in Dharma teachings. It is estimated that around 35% of the Buddhists around the world practice Theravada school of Buddhism.

Mahayana (the Great Vehicle) Buddhism is the predominant form of Buddhism practiced in People's Republic of China, Mongolia, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam. Apart from Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, other contemporary Buddhas like Amitabha and Medicine Buddha are popular in Mahayana Buddhism. The Mahayana followers believe that the Buddha was the one who postponed his personal salvation until he could lead all sentient beings to nirvana, therefore, the Buddha was a teacher and a savior. It has been much influenced by local cultures and it puts more emphasis on the use of rituals and ceremonies. The Vajrayana sect of Mahayana Buddhism, which is mostly practiced in Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan, meticulously follows tantric formalities, mantras and mudras. The worship can be quite elaborate with a hall for Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and two of his disciples and another hall for Lord Sakyamuni, Amitabha and Medicine Buddhas. In the course of transmission and adoption of Buddhism by the people of other civilizations, there were many mutual influences, for instance, between Buddhism and Confucianism and between Buddhism and Taoism in China. The original language of the Mahayana Canon was Sanskrit, which has been translated into the local languages such as Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese in the process of transmission. It is estimated that around 54% of Buddhists follow Mahayana school and 4% the Vajrayana sect.

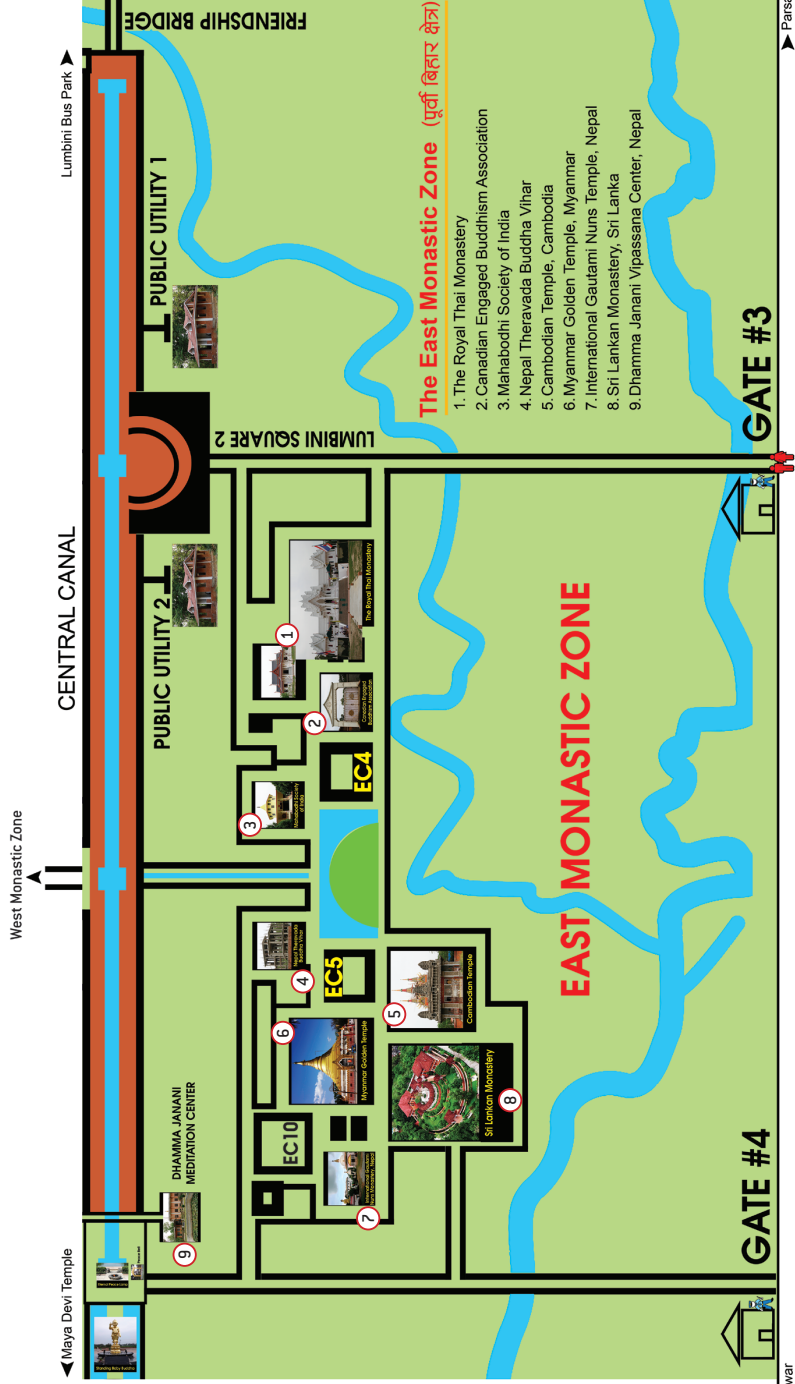
The East Monastic Zone

There are five Theravada Buddhist monasteries and one Vipassana meditation centre in operation in the East Monastic Zone while, three monasteries are under construction. They are: **1)** The Royal Thai Monastery, Thailand; **2)** Canadian Engaged Buddhism Association (Bodhi Institute Monastery and



EAST MONASTIC ZONE

पूर्वी बिहार क्षेत्र





Dharma Center) (under construction); **3)** Mahabodhi Society Temple of India; **4)** Nepal Theravada Buddha Vihar (under construction); **5)** Cambodian Temple, Cambodia (under construction); **6)** Myanmar Golden Temple, Myanmar; **7)** International Gautami Nuns Temple, Nepal; **8)** Sri Lankan Monastery, Sri Lanka and **9)** Dhamma Janani Vipassana Center, Nepal.

The West Monastic Zone

14 Mahayana Buddhist monasteries and two meditation centres are in operation, while four monasteries are under construction in the West Monastic Zone. They are: **1)** Ka-Nying Shedrup Monastery (Seto Gumba), Nepal (under construction); **2)** Zarong Tgupten Mendol Dogna Chholing, Nepal (under construction); **3)** Urgen Dorjee Chholing Buddhist Center, Singapore; **4)** Nepal Vajrayana Maha Vihara, Nepal (under construction); **5)** French Buddhist Association, France; **6)** The Great Lotus Stupa (Tara Foundation), Germany; **7)** Drigung Kagyud Meditation Center, Laddakh; **8)** The World Linh Son Buddhist Congregation, France; **9)** Japanese Monastery, Japan (under construction); **10)** United Tungaram Buddhist Foundation, Nepal; **11)** Thrangu Vajra Vidhya Buddhist Association, Canada; **12)** Vietnam Phat Quoc Tu, Vietnam; **13)** Geden International Monastery, Austria; **14)** Chinese Monastery, China; **15)** Dae Sung Shakya Temple, South Korea; **16)** Drubgyud Chhoeling Monastery (Nepal Mahayana Temple); **17)** Dharmodhaya Sabha Nepal (Swayambhu Mahavihara); **18)** Karma Samtenling Monastery, Nepal; **19)** Manang Samaj Stupa, Nepal; and **20)** Pandirarama Lumbini International Meditation Center, Myanmar.



WEST MONASTIC ZONE

पश्चिम बिहार क्षेत्र

← Padariya

Gate #8

Lokhadiya ▶

Gate #9





2.4. Interesting Cultural and Natural Attractions in and around Lumbini

In addition to promoting spirituality, peace and contemplative value, Lumbini offers a plethora of opportunities for those who are interested to explore the cultural treasure troves and natural splendors.

Cultural Sites and Attractions



Existence of the **Lumbini Village** was also mentioned by the early travelers including famous Emperor Asoka, who visited Lumbini in 249 BC and erected a stone pillar bearing inscription.

Today, Lumbini Cultural Municipality encompasses the areas of ancient Lumbini Game (village), surrounding villages of Lumbini and beautiful natural landscapes around it. One of the interesting features of these surrounding rural villages of Lumbini is that the majority of Hindu and Muslim communities are safeguarding and promoting the Buddhist heritage sites including the birthplace of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. They feel proud and honored to be the true custodian



of this sacred shrine.

Major cultural village worth visiting to the east of Lumbini Master Plan Area include Madhubani, Mahilawari Mahialwar, Laximpur etc. Likewise cultural villages located to the south of Mayadevi Temple include Lankapur, Punnihawa, Majahana, Kewataliya, Bhagawanpur, Khungai, Padaria, Khambe, Amari, Shivalaya etc. Villages located to the west include Manauri, Sujandih, Jayanagara, Muhasad, Tenuhawa, Lokhadiya, Muglaha, Mahadeva etc. Cultural village worth to visit to the north of the Master Plan includes Shivagadiya, Harnampur, Tarkullaha, Mashina, Bhaisaiya, Ekla, Bharwaliya, Chainpurwa, Khudabagar etc.

While the villages to the south and east are dominated by the Hindu communities, the villages located to the west and north of the Master Plan are densely populated by the Muslims. Mahilawar village is particularly famous for age old Biraha Culture. Other attractions in the Hindu villages are Shiva and Hanuman temple, traditional rituals, farming practices, festivals and fairs. Mosques, beautiful arts on mosque and house walls, various rituals and festivals are the major attractions in the Muslim villages. The Hindu and Muslim

communities cherish the social harmony and uphold the Buddhist heritage sites. Therefore, Lumbini is also the perfect embodiment of inter-faith tolerance.

Box-4 Experiencing Biraha Cultural Dance in Lumbini

Biraha is one of the popular folk songs in Lumbini area for more than three centuries.

This folk song is mood based and basic theme revolves around the sorrow caused by



separation of family members, especially the lover and his beloved. The locals in Lumbini have connected Biraha culture with the history and life of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. The artists also sing the tragedy songs on the separation of Princess Yasodhara with her husband Prince Siddhartha and King Siddhodhana with his beloved son upon Siddhartha's renunciation for search of salvation.

Where and how to experience this culture?

- Traditionally, locals in Lumbini region sing and dance Biraha during the major rituals and events organized at the villages.
- For few decades, Buddha Biraha Cultural Group, Lumbini has been singing Biraha on the life and history of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and Mayadevi. The group performs Biraha song and dance during the major celebrations, festivals and fairs in the region.
- Recently, hotels in Lumbini have initiated Biraha Cultural shows for the interested tourists at community center of Mahilwar village.
- Interested visitors may contact their hotel, travel agency or a guide or directly contact to cultural group to arrange the Biraha Cultural Show at the community center.

Visiting the **Weekly Hat Bazaar** is another opportunity in Lumbini for the visitors to observe the real trade and life styles of the rural people. They can also buy some locally produced organic products including fruits, fresh vegetables and spices.



Natural Sites and Attractions



In addition to embracing peace, contemplative values and spirituality, Lumbini also attracts naturalists, botanists and zoologists with its rich natural biodiversity. A visit to the surrounding villages and natural sites also gives visitor an opportunity to come across the most preferred birds of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, the *Sarus Crane*, the most preferred plants (Asoka tree, sal tree, mango tree, pipal tree etc.) and crops such as rice, peas, golden gram, sesame etc.

Lumbini Crane Sanctuary (LCS) along with the associated farmlands have been identified as an International Bird Area (IBA) due to its rich biodiversity and unique ecosystems with hundreds of cranes and other birds. There are 27 species of mammals, 44 types of fishes and herds of blue bulls in the area. Important natural landscapes and bio-diversity in and around Lumbini include the serene natural environment within the Sacred Garden and Monastic Zones, Lumbini Crane Sanctuary located in the New Lumbini Village, several natural wetlands including Karbala lake (near Karmahawa village), Monkey tree and Punnihawa lake in Chainpurwa

(Khudabagar), Tharunika lake in Mahilwari village, bat habitat and Hatihawa lake in Lakhimpur, Balrampur lake in Majahana village etc. Likewise important rivers for bird watching includes Telar, Dano and Kothi rivers. Gaidahawa lake (Bishnupura) is famous for vulture and blue bull whereas Gajedi is popular for the beautiful lakes with blooming lotus flower.

There are more than 250 bird species in the area including the world's tallest flying bird sarus crane, endangered birds such as lesser adjutant, painted stork, slender-billed vulture, red-headed vulture, white-rumped vulture etc. Similarly threatened animals like python, blue bull (*boselaphus tragocamelus*), Bengal fox, wildcat, wild boars etc. are also found in and around Lumbini. The Telar and Dano floodplains are recognized as important habitats for birds.

2.5. Recommended Tour Itineraries and Activities in Lumbini



Tour Highlights

- Pilgrimage and spiritual visit to Mayadevi Temple, one of the most sacred Buddhist sites that enshrines the Marker Stone, a testimony of the birth of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in Lumbini.
- Visit the spiritually awakening and intellectually enlightening International Monastic Zone and getting involved in meditation and yoga sessions of short or long duration.
- Sightseeing tour to experience the exceptional cultural beauties, local architectures and traditions in the surrounding rural villages of Lumbini.
- Cycling tour to rural villages, green paddy fields and wetland sites.
- Sightseeing tour to Lumbini Crane Sanctuary and nearby wetland sites to observe the natural landscapes of exceptional beauty and rich biodiversity including the sacred plant lotus and Lord Sakyamuni Budha's most preferred bird, sarus crane.

Tour Itineraries and Activities

i. Day Tour to Lumbini (suitable for locals only)

- Arrival in Lumbini by local public bus or private vehicle.
- Visit Mayadevi Temple.
- Refreshment at tourist hotels and restaurants.



- Short visit to International Monastic Zone by rickshaw
- Boating at the Central Canal.
- Visit the Lumbini Museum.
- Departure from Lumbini.

ii. 1 Night and 2 Days Tour to Lumbini

☀ DAY 01:

- Arrival in Lumbini and visit Mayadevi Temple, one of the most sacred Buddhist sites in the world and observe the eternal purification.
- Briefing by the experienced Lumbini tour guide about the birth history, life and the teachings of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.
- Observe the birth testimonies of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha by visiting the monuments in and outside the Mayadevi Temple.
- Explore other significant archaeological monuments in the sacred garden including sacred stupas and monasteries.
- Offer lights to Lord Sakyamuni Buddha at the birthplace in the evening. Or, attend evening lighting and chanting ceremonies organized by the monks/nuns and other pilgrims particularly during the full moon.
- Participate at one of the meditation sessions in the spiritual ambience of the birth place of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.



☀ DAY 02: HALF-DAY GUIDED TOUR BY RICKSHAW AND EXPLORE THE LUMBINI MASTER PLAN AREA.

- Visit Lumbini Visitor Information

Center, Lumbini Museum, Lumbini Information Resource Institute (LIRI) and World Peace Stupa in the New Lumbini Village.

- Explore the Monastic Zone: World Peace Flame, World Peace Bell, Central Canal, the East Monastic Zone consisting of the monasteries of Theravada sect of Buddhism practiced in Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka etc.
- Visit the West Monastic Zone consisting of the monasteries of Mahayana and Vajrayana sects of Buddhism including Chinese, Korean, German etc.
- Explore the monasteries located in the Sacred Garden that include Rajkiya Buddha Vihara and Dharmaswami Maharaja Buddha Vihara (the oldest monasteries built after the re-discovery of Lumbini).
- Depart to the desired destination (Ancient Kapilavastu/Devadaha/Ramagram etc.)



iii. 2 Nights and 3 Days Tour to Lumbini

☀ **DAY 01: PROGRAMS AS SUGGESTED ABOVE.**

☀ **DAY 02: Full-day visit; explore the Lumbini Master Plan Area.**

☀ **DAY 03:**



- Again visit the sacred Mayadevi Temple early in the morning.
- Village tour and sightseeing to the nearby villages.
- Depart to the desired destination (Ancient Kapilavastu/Devadaha/Ramagram etc.) after having lunch in Lumbini

iv. 3 Nights and 4 Days Tour to Lumbini

☀ **DAY 01: PROGRAMS AS SUGGESTED ABOVE.**

☀ **DAY 02: PROGRAMS AS SUGGESTED ABOVE.**

☀ **DAY 03: Full-day village tour, sightseeing and/or bird-watching around Lumbini:** Walking, cycling or jeep driving to all possible rural villages and some of the most beautiful natural landscapes and bird sanctuaries in the vicinity of Lumbini Master Plan area.

- **Madhuwani village tour:**
Experience the typical rural lifestyle in Madhuwani village, age-old Biraha dance in Mahilwar village and bat habitat in Lakhimpur. Visit Hathiawa Lake, Tharunia Lake, Balrampur Lake and Telar river areas, some of the best sites to observe flocks of sarus crane.
- **Ekala village tour** (Bhaishaiya, Ekala, Bhagatpurwa, Shivgadhiya etc.) : Experience the social harmony and cultures of Hindu and Muslim communities including Yadav, Harijan, Chamar, Gupta and Muslim etc. Visit the agriculture farms, Shiva temple, Kalimaisthan, Masjid (mosque), Karbola lake etc.
- **Tenuhawa village tour** (Harnampur, Mashina, Tenuhawa etc.) : Observe unique Muslim cultures and people living to safeguard the Buddhist heritage sites and visit mosques and madarsas.
- **Khudabagar village tour** (Chainpurwa, Sonvarsha, Belvariya etc.) : Visit Tharu museum, Tharu cultures and observe Tharu women weaving



traditional Dhakiya. Other important sites of the tour include Monkey tree, Punnihawa lake etc.

- **Lumbini Adarsha village tour:** Visit the ancient villages of Padaria, Manauri, Khungai, with communities of Yadav, Mallah, Shreevastav, Kohar, Marau, Goshami and Muslims.
- Visit historic and archaeological sites at Paushiya, Manauri and Ajma villages and Sainamaina.
- Sightseeing tour to Gaidahawa lake and Vulture Restaurant in Bishnupura to observe the vultures and Gajedi lake to observe one of the most beautiful systems of lakes with the blooming lotus.



☀ DAY 04:

- Again pay a visit to the sacred Mayadevi Temple early in the morning.
- Depart to Ancient Kapilavastu/Devadaha/ Ramahgrama etc.

v. 4 Days or Longer Tours to Lumbini (up to several days, weeks and months focusing on meditation)

☀ DAY 01 TO 03: PROGRAMS AS SUGGESTED ABOVE.

☀ DAY 04: Participation at one of the meditation courses offered by the international monasteries or in the following meditation centers in Lumbini :



- **Dhamma Janani Vipassana Center, Nepal**

Established by S.N. Goenka from India.

10 days meditation course: 1st - 15th of every month

20 days meditation course: Once a year

Satipatthana course: Twice a year

3- day meditation course: Twice a year

1-day meditation course: 26th of every month

1-day child meditation course: As per request of the visitors

Group sitting: Every Friday (4: 00-5: 00 pm)



- **Pandirarama Lumbini International Meditation Center, Myanmar**

Founded by Venerable Sayadaw U Pandita, Myanmar

Venerable Vivekananda, who learnt Vipassana Meditation from Ven. Sayadaw U Panditabhivamsa, has been teaching Vipassana and Brahma Vihara meditation in Lumbini since 1998.

Venerable Sayalay Bhadda Manika (a nun) has been a peacefully guiding meditation practitioner in Lumbini since long with much passion and patience.

The meditation center is open throughout the year. Sometimes the meditation retreats may last from several days to several months.



- **Drigung Kagyud Meditation Center, Laddakh**

Usually the full meditation course covers a period of three years and three months.

For the short mediation course, one can practice meditation here for 7 days and can extend it to 28 days or more. It may be completed at once or in different times as per convenience.

The basic meditation procedure is followed by a seven-day meditation course along with self-mortification by regular chanting and the Chakachalwa (Salutation to Lord Sakyamuni Buddha).

- **Osho Jetvan Village, Madhubani, Lumbini**

Daily meditation programs

3-day residential meditation camp every month

Saturday Satsang

Osho celebrations and Buddha Purnima celebrations

Spiritual tours are organised to the Buddhist pilgrims

2.6. Summary of Recommended Village Tours and Activities in Lumbini

Recommended village tours around the Lumbini Sacred Garden include the followings:

Madhuvani Village Tour: The tour leads to Mahilwar Bazaar to Mahilwar village, to the farmlands and wetland areas. This area is settled by the Hindus and Muslim (90: 10), with ethnicities of Tharu, Yadav, Harijan, Brahmin, Chetri and



Muslim living in perfect harmony. Religious sites and temples (Durga, Shiva, Kalikasthan & Samaimaisthan), agriculture-based villages (straw-huts, clay mortared brick-houses, decorated with wood crafts and special roof tiles), traditional costumes and handicrafts of authentic characteristics

and typical life style are interesting to observe in these villages. The traditional Biraha dance can be observed at the Mahilwar village. The bird-watchers may go to two lakes: Haththihawa and Tharunia lake. In a clear day one can see beautiful panorama of the Himalayas with the background of a pale blue sky and a green landscape in the foreground.

Lumbini Adarsha Village Tour:

It leads to the ancient villages of Padariya, Manauri and Khungai with ethnicity of Yadav, Mallah, Srivastav, Kohar, Murau, Muslim and Goshami. Scattered archeological sites (dating back to the 4th and 5th century AD), Shiva shrines and temples, traditional costumes, local argo-based village lifestyle and cultures, interaction with the locals are interesting attractions in these villages.



Tenuhawa Village Tour: It takes about one and half hour of leisurely walk to customary Muslim settlements with typical cultures and costumes. The way handicrafts are produced by the local women; Masjid (mosques) and Madarsa are interesting to observe here.

Karbolaha lake situated northwest of the village is the additional attraction.

Ekala Village Tour: About 3 km northeast of Lumbini lay Bhaishiya, Ekala and Bhagatpurwa villages. The settlements are of Hindus and Muslims (80: 20) ; with ethnic peoples of Yadav, Harijan, Chamar, Gupta etc. . Irrespective of different caste and creed, they live in a social harmony. Agriculture is their main source of livelihood. The religious sites here are Shiva Mandir, Kalimaisthan, Masjid (mosque) and Karbolha pond. The Hindus celebrate lively festivals of Ram-lila, Tajiya-mela, Holi etc. Local handicrafts produced by the local women are typical of this village. Karbolaha lake is the popular crane sanctuary near the village.



Khudabagar Village Tour:

Khudabagar, Chainpuruwa, Sonvarsha and Belvariya villages are typical settlements of the Hindus (Tharu, Yadav, Lodh, Harizan, Kurmi, Gupta) and Muslim ethnicity (70: 30), having their own typical costumes and culture of hospitality. Nagpanchami, Holi, Dashain and Tihar are the major festivals celebrated with reverence and enthusiasm. Punnihawa lake is the wetland area of the village. Visitor can also visit Tharu museum at Khudabagar and Monkey tree at Chainpuruwa.



Sightseeing tour to Gaidahawa Lake and Gajedi Lake: Cycling tour or jeep drive to Gaidahawa and Gajedi lakes offers visitors, particularly the bird watchers and nature lovers an opportunity to watch the different varieties of



birds including vulture, and mammals including blue bull within the sal forest near Gaidahawa lake. Here the visitors can see the beautiful blooming lotus, the sacred flower also associated with Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. Traversing through the rural villages and green fields could be interesting while making a sightseeing tour to these lakes.

Box-5: Things to do in Lumbini during the Village Tour

Guided walking, cycling, cart riding or jeep driving tours to the surrounding villages of Lumbini offer visitors the following activities:

- Observing the tradiional architecture and lifestyle of locals residing in the villages.
- Visiting green farmland, observing the traditional agricultural practices and enjoying organic fruits.
- Observing the weekly Hat Bazaar (rural market) in the key points such as Mahilwar, Padaria, Parsa, Mahajadiya villages etc.
- Visiting the rural families and relishing traditional meals (breakfast or lunch) with them (needs pre-arrangement).
- Meeting the local champions who make the fiber crafts and mud sculpture of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.
- Visiting Biraha Cultural Group (at Mahilawar) and observing the traditional Biraha dance.
- Visiting Tharu museum (at Khudabagar) including the mud-built food storage practices of Tharu (Dehari) and other communities.
- Catching on the legends and tales from the villagers on Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's birthplace and history.
- Observing the unique shamanism practices of healing the diseases in the evening would be an interesting activity (needs to be pre-arranged).
- Cycling through the paddy/wheat/mustards fields and along the village roads.
- Visiting temples and mosques. Observing the periodic festival and events.
- Visiting schools and children. Visiting Metta Gurukul School at Mahilawar village and interacting with the local kids/Vikchhus who are studying Buddhism.
- Observing the daily and periodic rituals of the locals including wedding and birth celebrations.
- Bird watching in the mango orchards, wetlands and rivers.
- Visiting Osho Jetavan Village and meditation center located nearby Madhubani village.



2.7. Available Facilities and Services

How to Get There

- Visitor can fly to Gautam Buddha Airport, Bhairahawa by a 30 minute domestic flight from Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), Kathmandu or drive to Lumbini via Chitwan. Currently the Government of Nepal is constructing Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA) near Lumbini, which might be completed by the end of 2018. Lumbini is located only 18km away from Gautam Buddha Airport, Bhairahawa. Taxi and car are available for hire at the airport.
- Visitors can also enter into Nepal overland from India through Kakadbhitta, Biratnagar, Birgunj, Sunauli, Nepalgunj, Dhangadhi and Banbasa entry points (with immigration office) located along Nepal-India border and travel by road to Lumbini. Lumbini is at 280km from Kathmandu, 170km from Sauraha, Chitwan, 85km from Tansen, 227km from Pokhara and 233km from Kohalpur, Nepalgunj.
- Similarly, visitors can enter into Nepal by road from China/Tibet Autonomous Region through Rasuwagadhi entry point located along Nepal-China border and travel to Lumbini via Trisuli, Galchhi, Muglin and Narayangadh.
- Belahiya at Sunauli, Bhairahawa is the nearest immigration point along Nepal-India border from Lumbini. Lumbini is at the distance of 122 km from Gorakhpur, 181km from Kushinagar, 312km from Varanasi, 525km from Bodhgaya, 337km from Sarnath, 473km from Nalanda, 492km from Rajgir, 308 km from Lucknow and 240km from Sravasti of India. Gorakhpur in India is the nearest train station from Lumbini.
- Currently there are regular day and night bus services from Kathmandu and day bus services from Pokhara and Chitwan/Hetauda to Lumbini. Visitors can comfortably travel by deluxe and super deluxe day bus services from Kathmandu to Lumbini.
- Taulihawa, Bhairaha and Butwal are well connected with the major cities including Pokhara, Bharatpur (Chitwan), Kathmandu, Birjung, Janakpur, Biratnagar, Kakadbhitta, Nepalgunj, Dhangadi, Mahendranagar etc.



Where to Stay and Eat

- Ranges of accommodation facilities are available in Lumbini area. Classified tourist standard hotels are available in the New Lumbini Village within the Master Plan area, Mahilwar and Parsachowk. Tourist standard hotels established at Sunauli, Bhairahawa, Butwal and along the Bhairahawa-Lumbini road corridor also serve visitors' varied accommodation needs.
- Besides the standard lodging facilities, these hotels/lodges also offer typical Nepali as well as Indian, Chinese and continental foods to the visitors.
- Several monasteries also offer informal pilgrimage accommodation facilities within the Lumbini Master Plan area.



Other Facilities and Services

- Landline and mobile telephone services are readily available in the region.
- Tourist class and big hotels avail free Wi-Fi facility to their clients.
- Banking facility is available at Bhairahawa and Lumbini, Mahilwar. Money exchange facility is available at Bhairahawa and hotels in Lumbini. ATMs are also available in Bhairahawa and Lumbini.
- Credit card is accepted by tourist standard hotels in Bhairahawa. Kasai, Hokke, Buddha Maya, Crystal and other big hotels in Lumbini also accept major international credit cards.
- Basic health and first-aid facilities are available in Lumbini. Hospital facilities are available at Bhairahawa and Butwal only.
- Taxi and car can be hired from Gautam Buddha Airport and Lumbini. There are about 70 environmental friendly E-rickshaws and 120 manual rickshaws for getting around in the



major sites within the Master Plan areas as well as the surrounding cultural villages and natural sites in Lumbini. Bicycle can be hired from Mahilwar and Parsa Chowk in Lumbini.

- Village tour and cycling tour are offered by some hotels and travel/tour agencies in Lumbini. Trained and experienced heritage tour guides are available at Lumbini Bus Park and Mahilwar. Bird watching guides can be contacted through the tour/travel agencies in Mahilwar and specialized hotels in Lumbini.
- Free tourist information is provided by big hotels and travel/tour agencies in Lumbini. Visitors' Information Center (VIC) of Lumbini Development Trust located at the Lumbini Cultural Zone provides information to the visitors through brochures and its official website www.lumbinidevtrust.gov.np.

What to Take Home?

- Buddha's sculptures, singing bowls, CDs/DVDs and books on the birth and life of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha make excellent souvenir to take back home. Locally made handicrafts including grass and fiber products, incense stick are also worth buying. Handicrafts are available in the souvenir shops at the Lumbini Bus Park, Mahilwar Bazaar and in the tourist class hotels in Lumbini.
- Pawan Misthan Bhandar in Bhairahawa is a popular shop to buy sweets, especially for domestic visitors.

Entry Formalities

- Visitors need to get an entry ticket from Lumbini Development Trust to enter the Lumbini Sacred Garden. Such ticket can be obtained by paying Nepalese Rupees (NRs) 16 for Indian nationals, NRs. 100 for national of other SAARC countries and NRs. 200 for citizens of other countries. There are separate charges and procedures for still and video photography.

Travel Distance from Gate # 5 (Mahilwar)

Mahilwar Chowk	→ Parsa Chowk.....	2. 4km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Khungai	4. 2km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Lokhadiya	3. 9km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Padariya	2. 4km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Lakhimpur	2. 9km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Hatihawa Lake.....	3. 3km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Madhubani Village ...	2. 3km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Bhaisaiya Chowk	6. 3km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Punnihawa Lake	6. 7km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Gaidahawa Lake	16. 1km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Gajedi Lake.....	21. 5km
Mahilwar Chowk	→ Kakrahawa Border	9. 5km



CHAPTER THREE

ANCIENT KAPILAVASTU

The Hometown of Prince Siddhartha
The Capital of the Ancient Sakya Kingdom



66

3.1. Significance of the Ancient Kapilavastu

Ancient Kapilavastu: The Capital City of the Sakya Kingdom

The Ancient Kapilavastu or the present day Kapilavastu district of Nepal is situated on the foothills of the Siwalik range and is 29km west of Lumbini. The kingdom is

believed to have received its name from the great sage Kapila, who practiced penance here and suggested the exiled prince and princesses of Kosala kingdom to settle at present day Tilaurakot. Later, these royal offspring of Kosala kingdom were known as the Sakyas and their kingdom as Kapilavastu. Prince Siddhartha spent his early 29 years of worldly life as a prince here in the Ancient Kapilavastu.



Kapilavastu lies on the bank of Bhagirathi (Banganga) River. Tilaurakot is close to the Siwalik Hills to the north. *Ambattha Sutta* of *Dighanikaya* (one of the Baskets of discourses of *Tripitaka*) locates Kapilavastu on the slope of (near) Himalayas. According to the celebrated Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang, Lumbini lies about 30km east of Kapilavastu which exactly fits in the present context as Lumbini is situated 29km east of Tilaurakot.

Box-6: Early life of Prince Siddhartha

Queen Mayadevi passed away after seven days of the birth of Prince Siddhartha. His stepmother Prajapati Gautami with much love, affection and care brought up the young prince in the Ancient Kapilavastu, the capital city of Sakya kingdom. Prajapati Gautami was also the mother of two children; Princess Sundari Nanda and Prince Nanda but she raised Prince Siddhartha as her own child. Prince Siddhartha even could not remember queen Mayadevi, his own mother.

This newly born prince merited divine natal signs, which indicated that the new born child would bring about deliverance to this mundane world. King Suddhodhan invited ascetics and hermits (Rishis) from the Himalayas on the birth of Prince Siddhartha and asked to read the signs. One of such great ascetics *Asita* proclaimed that Prince Siddhartha would become a holy man and universal teacher if he ever came across human sufferings. The anxious king lavished all possible privileges and luxurious life upon the prince to dissuade him from becoming a monk. In order to immerse the prince in the world of indulgence and to keep away from the human sufferings and any unpleasant thing the king had provided three different palaces- Subha, Ramma and Suramma; one for winter, one for summer and one for rainy season. At the age of 16, Prince Siddhartha was married to Princess Yashodhara. The king had made available every possible comfort and luxury to the newly married royal couple. His cousin Devadutta, another suitor of Yashodahara, nurtured a serious grievance against Prince Siddhartha and made several dangerous attempts to harm him later. The couple did not have any child for a long time until the birth of Rahul, their only child.

Historical references, travel accounts of the well-known pilgrims and travelers, holy Buddhist scriptures and archaeological excavations carried out by various archaeologists and scholars including P. C. Mukherji, D. Mitra, T. N. Mishra and B. K. Rijal have identified the present day Tilaurakot as the ancient capital city of the Sakyas.

Ancient Kapilavastu: The Place of Great Renunciation by Prince Siddhartha



At the age of 29, Prince Siddhartha renounced all the worldly comforts and left Kapilavastu through the eastern gate of the palace. After witnessing *Chatur Nimitta Darshan* (four causative sights), Siddhartha made a silent pledge to find the path of salvation for the sentient beings. He renounced his family and royal lineage and one night, he left the palace secretly on his horse Kanthaka with the help of his charioteer Chhanna through the Eastern Gate (*Mahaviniskramana Dwara*) in a quest for enlightenment. This event is recorded as *Mahaviniskramana* or the Great Renunciation, one of the twelve deeds of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in the Buddhist scriptures.

Box-7: The Four Passing Sights and the Great Renunciation or Mahabhiniskramana

As Prince Siddhartha grew older, he increasingly became curious about the world outside the palace walls. On one fateful day, the prince asked his charioteer Chhanna to take him outside the palace. During the journey, he came across the sights of an old man, a diseased man and a dead body being carried away for a funeral, followed by a group of weeping mourners. Deeply shocked, when the prince asked Chhanna about these sightings, his courtier replied that everybody gets old if not died young, anybody may fall sick and no one can escape from the death. The prince sighed, "is this the happy world they brought me forth to see". He also saw a wandering saint; clam, peaceful, and undeterred by these human sufferings. Chhanna told the troubled prince that the saint had renounced the world and was seeking a lasting liberation from these sufferings. Despite all the precautions, King Suddhodhan could not keep his son oblivious to the inevitable human sufferings.

The prince returned to his palace in deep contemplation. He could not set his mind free from the sights he had seen outside the palace. He also got the message that his wife Yasodhara had just given birth to a baby boy. King Suddodhana named his grandson as Rahula and organized grand festivities. But Prince Siddhartha did not participate to celebrate but uttered, "a fetter is set upon me". His life at the palace became increasingly agonizing and unbearable.



After witnessing Chatur Nimitta Darshan (four passing sights), one night, when his wife Yasodhara and son Rahula were asleep, Prince Siddhartha, at the age of 29, embarked upon his quest for salvation. Accompanied by Channa and his favorite horse Kanthaka, he quietly left Tilaurakot palace from the eastern gate and reached river Anoma the next morning. The prince dismounted from horse, put off his royal robes and jewelry and handed them to Chhanna and asked him to return. Channa took the prince's belongings back to the palace. Chhanna, with a very heavy heart and in tears, made farewell and left for Kapilavastu with Kanthaka. It is believed that the horse dropped dead out of grief in

front of the eastern gate and was reborn as a disciple of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. An earthen mound dedicated to Kanthaka is still there, a few meters away from the eastern gate of Tilaurakot palace. Chinese traveler Hsien Tsang mentions about a commemorative stupa of Kanthak east to the Mahaviniskramana Dwara.

Ancient Kapilavastu: A sacred pilgrimage and spiritual center predating Lord Sakyamuni Buddha



Historians believe that great Hindu sage Kapila practiced penance and propounded Sankhya Darshan (an important oriental philosophy) here in ancient Kapilavastu. It is also the birthplaces of two earlier Buddhas (Krakuchhanda Buddha and Kanakamuni Buddha) before the advent of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

Lord Sakyamuni Buddha visited Kapilavastu several times and preached five important suttas (sutras) at Kudan during his first visit to the kingdom after attaining the enlightenment.

The first nunnery, in the Buddhist history, was also established in Kapilavastu. Women from Sakya clan including Queen Prajapati Gautami (step-mother of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha), Yasodhara (his wife) and other 500 Sakya women became the first nuns here in the Ancient Kapilavastu.

Box-8: In Search of Wisdom and the Enlightenment of Prince Siddhartha as Buddha

Leaving the royal life behind, the prince entered into the world of penance and uncertainty in order to seek the ultimate wisdom and moksha or release from the eternal cycle of birth and death. Barefooted and dressed like a mendicant, he wandered from place to place. He spent six years learning from the religious teachers and practiced austere fasting, holding breath for a long time and trying to tie the air into knots. Such self-mortification left him emaciated and enervated to the extent that at times he would fall senseless to the ground. By now Prince Siddhartha was known as Ascetic Gautama and he had five friends who supported him through his self-struggle. He strived to attain the apogee of self-realization with nadir of self-mortification. However, he got nothing out of it, the wisdom he sought remained subtle.

Now, the prince realized that self-mortification is not the way to moksha or release from the eternal cycle of sufferings. It dawned on him that the path of liberation was through the discipline of mind rather than starvation.

While the prince was meditating under the banyan tree on the bank of Niranjana river, a lady by the name of Sujata came to offer him rice pudding in a golden bowl. She had prepared the rice pudding, made from thick sweet milk with great respect and reverence. After having the lovely meal, the prince bathed in the Niranjana river. This was the last meal and bath he would have for seven weeks. But his five friends, who had been supporting him in his quest of wisdom, were disappointed as they thought the prince reneged from his higher pursuit and deserted him.

After the meal and bath the unfeigned prince went to Gaya and sat cross-legged under the banyan tree. He had a tenacious resolution that he would not leave this seat until the attainment of highest wisdom or supreme enlightenment that leads to the everlasting liberation from human sufferings.

It was full moon and according to the Buddhist scriptures, the ordeal of the prince during that auspicious night was divided into three parts. During the first part, the prince experienced intractable thoughts of craving, fear and attachment but unperturbed, he continued his meditation. Once the prince let these thoughts pass by he gained the power to recall events of his past lives.

In the second, the prince comprehended the impermanence of life and knowledge of death and rebirth of all living beings. In the third part of that night, the prince understood how to end human sufferings, old age and death. He also arrived at the three basic components of Dharma; the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path and the Middle Way. And, as the morning star rose in the sky, at the age of 35, Prince Siddhartha pierced the shell of ignorance and became the Enlightened One or Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, entering the living Nirvana !

The Enlightened One was in deep meditation under the Bodhi tree that transcended the experience of ordinary human being. And he saw the world as it was, not as it appeared to be. His mind and soul were so purified that six rays of different colors emanated from his body: blue, yellow, red, white, orange and the mixture of all five. Each of these five colors reflects probity of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in the Buddhist flag; blue for peace and universal compassion, yellow for holiness, red for blessings of practice, white for purity, and orange for the wisdom.

Pilgrimage to the area by Emperor Asoka in 3rd century BC, early Chinese travelers Fa-hsien and Hiuen Tsang (during 5th and 7th century AD respectively), and King Ripu Malla of western Nepal during 14th century AD signify the importance of the Ancient Kapilavastu as a center of pilgrimage from the ancient times till the medieval period.

Ancient Kapilavastu: An open museum and one of the oldest cities in Asia

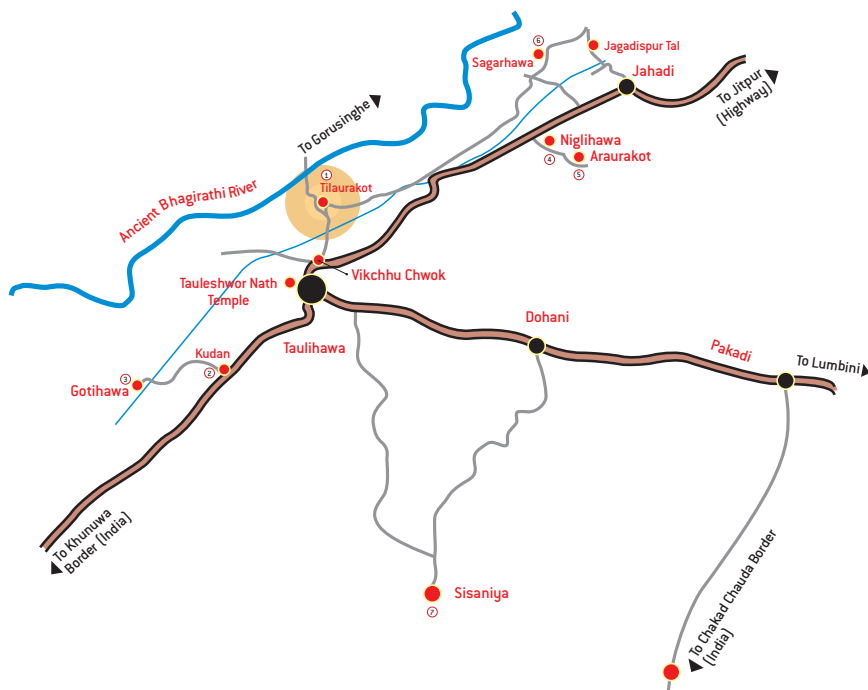
The Ancient Kapilavastu is an open museum as it alone houses more than 130 important archaeological sites. The most interesting thing to note in the historic ruins of Tilaurakot are the earth ramparts, the brick fortification, the ancient habitation, thirteen layers of human depositions dated from 9/8th century BC and 2nd/3rd century AD.

Artefacts recovered from the various excavation works are displayed in the Kapilavastu museum. The Kapilavastu Museum exhibits the coins, pottery and toys (dating back to 7th century BC and 4th century AD) along with a good collection of jewelry and other ornaments. The terracotta figures and plaques recovered at Tilaurakot dates back to the pre-Mauryan, Mauryan, Sunga and the Kushana periods. Both the pilgrims Fa- Hien and Huen-Tsang noted that they saw Kapilavastu in complete ruins and counted 10 deserted cities within Kapilavastu.



3.2. Major Monuments, Sites and Attractions in the Ancient Kapilavastu

Major monuments and sites of great religious, archaeological and historic value located in the Ancient Kapilavastu include the followings:



1) Tilaurakot: The hometown of Prince Siddhartha

Situated 29km west of Lumbini, 3km north-west of Taulihawa, Tilaurakot was rediscovered in 1899 by P. C. Mukherji and is recognized by many scholars as the ancient capital city of the Kapilavastu, the Sakya kingdom where Prince Siddhartha spent his early life.

Tilaurakot exhibits perfect features of ancient palace architecture as it is at a higher elevation secured by a wide and tall fortification wall and a moat encircling it from outside. Archaeological excavations at Tilaurakot have revealed Grey ware (9/8th century BC), NBP (6/5th century BC) ; coin minting factory, palace structures, temples, ponds, roads, earth ramparts, brick fortification, ancient habitation and various antiquities within thirteen layers of human depositions dated from 9/8th century BC to 2-3 century AD. These findings support the fact that Tilaurakot had been a capital city.

Important archaeological and religious monuments have been uncovered from Tilaurakot and these are: (a) The Western Gate, (b) Central Structural Complex, (c) Central Pond, (d) Samai Mai Temple, (e) The Eastern Gate (Mahabhiniskramana Dwara), (f) The Fortification Wall, (g) The Northern Twin Stupa (Dhamnihawa Stupa), (h) Eastern Stupa and Monastery (Hastigarta), and (i) The Southern Industrial Mound (Lohasaudiya).

The major monuments uncovered from Tilaurakot includes the followings:

a) The Western Gate: The city gates were where farmers, merchants, pilgrims and inhabitants would enter and exit the ancient city. The western



some of these structures at various points within Tilaurakot.

c) The Central Pond: To the west of the Central Structural Complex is a pond measuring 30×30 meters in size. Fitting the gridiron city layout, on face of the pond had 26 surviving brick courses. The pond resembles the water reservoirs of Kathmandu's medieval towns and alludes to the possibility that such architectures were developed in the Terai region of Nepal before moving to the valley.



gate was excavated by the Department of Archaeology (DoA) and evidence of wooden door was uncovered at the western gate.

b) Central Structural Complex: The Central Structural Complex consists of conserved rectangular brick structures. Recent geophysical survey has identified similar structures between roads and lanes oriented on the cardinal directions forming a grid iron city layout across the entire site. Recent excavations have uncovered



d) Samai Mai Temple: Near the center of the site lies a temple dedicated to the deity Samai Mai. The temple is located on top of a mound, which had 4 meter occupation sequence with early timber architecture followed by carved brick structures.



e) The Eastern Gate: The eastern gate was excavated by the Department of Archaeology (DoA). It was through the eastern gate that Prince Siddhartha, aged 29, departed Kapilavastu, on his quest for enlightenment.



f) The Fortification Wall: The fortification wall defines the grid iron plan of cardinaly orientated structures within the city. Recent excavations across the northern stretch of the fortifications have identified three major construction phases. The earliest two represented by timber palisades-fence-lines of large wooden posts-which were later replaced by a smoothed clay rampart was subsequently embellished with a brick fortification wall, much of which has been conserved by the Lumbini Development Trust.



g) The Northern Twin Stupas: The Twin Stupas, to the north of the palace, were excavated by the Department of Archaeology in 1968-69. Traditionally, they are thought to be built to commemorate the Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's parents, King Suddhodana and Queen Mayadevi.

h) The Eastern Stupa and Monastery: The Eastern Stupa is

not an isolated monument but part of large monastic complex as discovered by a geophysical survey. An excavation carried out here in Gotihawa identified a well, just below the ground surface, including the edges of formalized ponds that would have provided water for the monks who dwelled in this ancient monastery. A collection of 497 silver punch-marked coins was excavated from the monastery.

This might represent a foundation deposit, demonstrating the sanctity of this location to the ancient communities of Tilaurakot.

i) The Southern Industrial Mound: To the south of the city, there is a mound scattered with waste from iron-working. Findings from archaeological excavations indicate that this was a major industrial zone. Almost 8 tons of iron slag recovered from a trench measuring 4×3 meters is sufficient evidence of large scale smelting at Tilaurakot in the past.

2) Kudan: The ancient Nyigrodharama



Situated about 3km south of Taulihawa, is the ancient and historical site of Nyigrodharama, currently known as Kudan or Lori-Ki Kudan. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha met king Suddhodhana here for the first time after enlightenment. Some scholars have also identified Kudan as the natal-town of Krakuchhanda Buddha. Early Chinese travelers Fa-hsien (5th century AD) and Hiuen Tsang (7th century AD) describe several events in their travel accounts including the arrival and welcoming of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha by the king Suddhodhana at the Nyigrodharama.

Recent joint excavation carried out by the Department of Archaeology, Lumbini Development Trust and Durham University of the UK under the JaFIT project (2014-2016 AD) has identified the wooden post-hole dating back to the 8th century BC at Kudan. Major structural ruins excavated and conserved, so far, in Kudan include three stupas, a well and a pond (Nyigrodharama pond).

Box-9: Returning Home after the Enlightenment

The news about Lord Sakyamuni Buddha reached the Ancient Kapilvastu and king Suddhodhana invited his son to visit him. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha met king Suddhodhana, for the first time after enlightenment in Nyigrodharama park, which now is known as Kudan. Here, the chief disciple Sariputra ordained Rahula and Lord Sakyamuni Buddha was offered Kashaya Vastra by queen Prajapati Gautami. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha went to the palace with his Sangha and accepted the meals offered by king Suddhodhana and Yasodhara. A large number of relatives and Sakyas became his followers, some were ordained and some of the wealthy merchants built monasteries for the Sanghas. It is said that Lord Sakyamuni Buddha accepted king Suddodhan's request to get consent of the parents before the children were ordained into the monastic order or Sangha. Ananda, the closet disciple of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, pleaded that women be allowed to join Sangha, and the first order of nuns was also established in the Ancient Kapilvastu. It is believed to be the first formal association of women in the human history. Following the several discourses from Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, King Suddhodhana attained the level of *shruta-panna* [stream-entry].



Stupa 1: Located in the southeastern corner and also called the Rahula Stupa, it is believed to have been built to commemorate the event and spot where Rahula, the Buddha's son, was accepted into the monastic order as a novice (*shramanera*). The Stupa also bears an octagonal Shiva temple on its top built later by the Hindus.



Stupa 2: It is believed to have been built during the Sakya period to commemorate Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and king Suddhodana's first meeting (after enlightenment), Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's discourse on the five Suttas of the *Majjhimanikaya* and conversion of Sakyas into Buddhist. The stupa was renovated and restored during the Mauryan, Sunga, Kusana and Gupta periods.



Stupa 3: Located in the northernmost part of the garden, this stupa is believed to have been built during the Sakya period to commemorate the incidences and place where Queen Prajapati Gautami offered Lord

Sakyamuni Buddha the Kashaya Vastra, and Yasodhara invited him and his Sangha for a meal at the Kapilavastu palace.

The Nyigrodharama Pond: Nyigrodharama Pond is believed to have been built during the first visit of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and his Sangha to the Garden in the ancient Kapilavastu. The Sakyas might have created a lotus pond in the honor of the Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's imminent arrival in Kapilavastu and stay at Nyigrodharama.



The Ancient Well: The ancient well is believed to have been built prior to the 3 stupas with the assumption that Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and his sangha used water from this well during their stay at the Nyigrodharama Garden.

3) Gotihawa: The Birthplace of Krakuchhanda Buddha

Located about 5km southwest of Taulihawa, Gotihawa is identified as the holy place where Krakuchhanda Buddha was born and attained enlightenment. Emperor Asoka visited the site in 249 BC, erected the stonepillar and built a big stupa, dedicating to the Krakuchhanda Buddha.

The Asoka Pillar: The Asoka Pillar was erected by Emperor Asoka in 249 BC to commemorate his visit to the birth spot of Krakuchhanda Buddha. Standing in-situ on the original masonry basement foundation, the existing pillar is 3.25m high and has a diameter of 83/79 cm.



The inscription bearing upper portion of the pillar is broken off long ago and is still missing. Prominent Chinese travelers Fa-hsien (399 -413 AD) and Hiuen Tsang (636 AD), mention about the erection of pillar, bearing a lion capital atop, at Gotihawa by Emperor Asoka to mark the birthplace of Krakuchhanda Buddha.



The Stupa: It was built by the Emperor Asoka to pay reverence to Krakuchhanda Buddha in 3rd century BC. It is estimated that the enlargement of the stupa was carried out in Saka and Kushana time (end of 1st century BC to the 2-3 century AD). As per the

excavation report of researcher Dr. L. A. Waddell, the stupa has a 22m diameter with a Pradakshinapatha (circumambulatory path) around it. At the center of the present village there is an ancient well, and in the south there lies an ancient water tank.

There are several ancient potteries, brick structures of stupas and monasteries outside modern Gotihawa village. The site is believed to have started developing in 6th century BC. At the center of the present village there is an ancient well, which is still used by the villagers and in the south there lies an ancient water tank (pond). A small stone statue with image of Kakruchhanda Buddha has been established in the nearby area.

4) Niglihawa: The Birthplace of Kanakamuni Buddha



Situated about 7km northeast of Taulihawa, Niglihawa is identified as the holy place where Kanakamuni Buddha was born. Emperor Asoka visited the site in 249 BC and erected the stone pillar with inscription on it. The Asoka inscription engraved on the pillar

in Brahmi script and Pali language attests the fact that Emperor Asoka enlarged the Kanakamuni Buddha's stupa, worshiped it and erected a stone pillar to mark the birthplace of Kanakamuni Buddha on the occasion of the twentieth year of his coronation. The pillar also bears an inscription, "*Om mani padme hum and Sri Ripu Malla Chiram Jayatu 1234*" of King Ripu Malla written in the year 1234 (Saka Era corresponding to 1312 AD).

Dr. Alois Fuhrer discovered this pillar in 1895 AD. It is now in a broken state, into two pieces. The lower part of the pillar with an edict measures 10 feet, 6 inches (3. 20 m). The upper half of Asoka's Pillar is 14 feet 9 inches in length with 2 feet diameter at its uppermost and 2 feet 6 inches at its lower end.

Celebrated Chinese pilgrims, Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang, describe the Kanakamuni Stupa and Asoka Pillar in their travel accounts. Unfortunately, both the basement and the capital of the pillar together with the lion atop of which Hiuen Tsang speaks are still missing. A small stone statue with image of Kanakamuni Buddha has been established here recently.



Roman version of the inscription on the pillar written in the Brahmi script and Pali language:

*Devanam piyena piyadasin lajina-
chodasavasa bhisitena
Budhasa Konakamanasa thube-dutyam
vadhite*

*Visativa sabhisitena –cha atana-agacha-mahiyite
silathabe-cha usa papite*

The English translation of the inscription (by Smith 1969) is as follows:

“His Majesty King Priyadarsina in the 14th year of his reign enlarged for the second time the stupa of the Buddha Kanakamuni and in the 20th year of his reign, having come in person, paid reverence and set up a stone pillar”.

5) Araurakot: The Hometown of Kanakamuni Buddha



Located 1.4 km east of Niglihawa, and about 10 km northeast of Taulihawa, Araurakot is identified as the town where Kanakamuni Buddha lived, grew up, and spent his married life. It used to be a walled forest in ancient times. Today, it is a large rectangular fortified area with the remains of ancient moat and brick fortifications.

Very little has been done to excavate the details of this site. Archaeologist T. N. Mishra in 1977 described the old ruined city being closer to the Nigalisagar to the east and recommended for a thorough excavation of Araurakot and the surrounding areas to locate the original place of the pillar.

The joint archaeological team of Nepali-Italian archaeologists (1996-1997) has identified nine archaeological sites including Araurakot in this area. Other important sites include Thumwa, Semari, Thagi Baba Ki Dadi, Derwa, Gobari, Shivapura, Banduli and Niglihawa and its surroundings. A UNESCO led joint geophysical survey of Lumbini Development Trust (LDT), Department of Archaeology (DoA), and Durham University, the UK under JaFIT project in 2015 unveiled many huge structural ruins underneath the citadel.

6) Sagarahawa: The Massacre Site of the Sakyas



Located about 12km north of Taulihawa, Sagarhawa is identified as the place where the Sakyas were massacred by the King Virudhaka, the son of Prasenajita Raja of Kosala out of revenge. Later, in the memory of the noble Sakyas, hundreds of stupas were built here by their descendants. Also known as Lumbu Sagar it is 1,059 feet long and 225 feet wide. The ancient

ruins, primarily the stupas and monasteries, are situated on the west and south banks of the pond.

Dr. Fuhrer in 1897 AD, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, carried out the first excavation in Sagarahawa and uncovered thousands of small relic stupas arranged in long symmetrical rows on the four sides of the largest square stupa. The Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang describes his visit to Sagarahawa and presence of several thousands of stupas, indicating the spot where the members of the Sakya clan were slaughtered.

7) Sisaniya: The Ancient City of Sakyas

Sisaniya is an important archaeological site with an ancient mound. The site is believed to have had an ancient stupa and a Sangharama built by the Sakyas. Prof. Giovanni Verardi, the Director of 1993-94 Nepalese and Italian joint



investigation team mentions existence of an important craft center of Kusana period in Sisaniya. His conclusions are based on the evidences found during the excavation, for instance, iron slogs and glass wastes during the investigation. Other artifacts found during the excavation include wares and terra-cotta figurines of Kusana Period.

3.3. Interesting Cultural and Natural Sites in the Ancient Kapilavastu

Cultural and Religious Sites and Attractions

Major cultural villages worth to visit in the Ancient Kapilavastu include Jagadispur Tharu village, Tilauri, Herdewa, Gotihawa, Shivpur, Nigali, Bikuli Kot, Sisaniya etc.

Popular archaeological and religious sites include Touleshwor Nath temple, Ram Ghat, Laxman Ghat-Bolbom Dham, Shivagadhi (located on the top of Chure hill; 2 hours hiking from Dhankhola-border of Dang and Kapilavastu), Shringi Rishi Ashram (8km north from Banganga bridge), Shantakunja Madhuwan Dham, Kailash Ashram, Tarakeshwor Dham, Kapil Dham, Samay Mai, Hanuman Mandir, Patthar Kot, Ram Datiwan Kuti (about 7km north after crossing the Bangai Bridge), Bikuli Kot, Dohani

Kot, Darkhaswa (about 1.5 km south from Sagarhawa), Chetra Dehi ((about 4km northwest from Taulihawa), Semara Temple, Pipari, Gaurigunj, Murchahawa, Derwa Stupa (about 500m east from Kapilvastu Museum), Sarkup Pokhari, Kopawa Stupa, Ram Kumari, Sonwagadh (5km north from Chandrauta and in the forest), Pipari, Daldalhawa, Simari, Rajuwapur, Babhani, Dohani etc.



Box-10: Experiencing Tharu Culture at Jagadispur Tharu Home-stay

About 12 km north of Tilaurakot, situated on the bank of Nepal's largest man-made reservoir, Jagadispur Tal, Jagadispur Jhalasaya Tharu Home-stay is the first community home-stay in the Ancient Kapilavastu.

Visitors can have a unique experience by visiting cultural, natural and Buddhist heritage sites in a single visit by staying at this home-stay. Currently, 13 Tharu houses have developed basic home-stay facilities that include clean accommodation (maximum 26 beds), typical Tharu food and Tharu cultural experiences. Visitors are offered opportunity to have first-hand experience of the age-old cultures and hospitality of the people who claim themselves the progenies of the ancient Sakya clans.



Natural Sites and Attractions

Worth visiting important natural sites in Ancient Kapilavastu include Jagadishpur Reservoir (enlisted as a RAMSAR site), Bhagirathi River, Agigara Lake (20km south of Taulihawa), Shankarpur Tal, Bajaha Tal, Tilaurakot Sajhedari Forest, Churia Forest etc.



Box-11: Jagdishpur Reservoir



Jagdishpur Reservoir is the largest man-made reservoir in Nepal and enlisted as one of the Wetlands of International Importance, known as RAMSAR site in 2003. It spreads in an area over 225 hectares with 157 hectares covered by water surface. Maximum depth of the lake is 5 meters in south-west with an average depth of 3 meters. It has a capacity to hold 47,500,000 cubic liters of water and a home to at least 61 species of birds, 11 of these are rare. Apart from being a natural habitat to the indigenous ones, the lake lies on the flight path of migratory birds from Siberia, Russia, China, Mongolia, Central Asia, Turkmenistan and Kirgizstan. It is also a home to 9 species of turtles, 25 species of snakes, 23 species of mammals, 39 to 47 species of fish and 14 species of lizards. The lake

irrigates 6350 hectares of surrounding agricultural field benefitting more than 6700 households.

3.4. Recommended Tour Itineraries and Activities

A visit to the Ancient Kapilavastu gives the visitors a brief insight on life of Prince Siddhartha and foundation of Buddhism. There are at least 130 identified archeological sites scattered throughout the Kapilavastu district. Seven of these sites are highly recommended to the visitors.



Tour Highlights to Ancient Kapilavastu

- Visit Tilaurakot, the Prince Siddhartha's hometown and the ancient capital city of Sakya Kingdom.
- Visit Kudan, the ancient Nyigrodharama.
- Visit the birth places of two early Buddhas, Krakuchhanda at Gotihawa and Kanakamuni at Niglihawa.
- Visit Sagarhawa to pay homage to noble Sakyas who were massacred here.
- Visit Araurakot, Sisaniya, Bikulikot etc.
- Indulge in bird watching and leisure visit to Jagadispur Tal, the largest man-made reservoir in Nepal.
- Enjoy the indigenous Tharu cultures at Jagadispur Tharu home-stay.
- Village/cultural tours in the rural villages to experience the exceptional cultural beauties, rural livelihood and traditions.
- Visit other pilgrimage and historic sites such as Tauleshwor Nath temple, Ramghat, Lakhman Ghat, Shivagadhi, Kapiladham, Shringi Ashram, Madhuban Dham etc.



Tour Itineraries and Activities

i. Day-Tour to Ancient Kapilavastu

- Arrival in Taulihawa by public bus or private vehicle.
- Visit Tilaurakot.
- Visit Kapilavastu Museum.
- Visit Kudan and Gotihawa.
- Visit Niglihawa and Araurakot.
- Visit Jagadispur reservoir
- Departure.



ii. 1 Night and 2 Days Tour to Ancient Kapilavastu

☀ DAY 01:

- Arrival in Taulihawa by private vehicle or public bus.
- Visit Tilaurakot, the Ancient Capital city; feel spiritually awakened by visiting the Eastern Gate (Mahabhiniskramana Dwara), and other important monuments and sites in and around Tilaurakot.
- Visit Kudan where Lord Sakyamuni Buddha met his father King Suddhodhana for the first time after enlightenment.
- Visit Gotihawa, the birthplace of Krakuchhanda Buddha (the earlier Buddha).
- Visit Sisaniya, the industrial city of Sakya era.
- Observation of evening lighting and chanting ceremony at one of the Viharas at Kudan or Tilaurakot.
- Stay at hotels/lodges in Taulihawa or at the Tharu home-stay in Jagadispur.

☀ DAY 02:

- Visit Niglihawa: The birthplace of Kanakamuni Buddha (one of the earlier Buddhas of Bhadra Kalpa).
- Visit Arourakot: The hometown of Kanakamuni Buddha.
- Visit Sagarhawa: The massacre site of the Sakyas.

- Lunch at Tharu homestay at Jagadispur village.
- Visit Jagadispur Tal and enjoy bird watching, leisure walks and sightseeing.
- Depart to the desired destination.



iii. 2 Night and 3 Days Tour to Ancient Kapilavastu

☀ **DAY 01: PROGRAMS AS SUGGESTED ABOVE.**

☀ **DAY 02: PROGRAMS AS SUGGESTED ABOVE AND STAY AT THE JAGADISPUR THARU HOMESTAY.**

- In the evening, stay at Tharu homestay and enjoy Tharu cultural dance.
- Spend leisure time near the reservoir watching the tranquil lake environment and birds from the view tower.

☀ **DAY 03: SIGHTSEEING TOUR TO OTHER PILGRIMAGE, CULTURAL AND NATURAL SITES**

- Enjoy guided jungle walk to Tilaurakot Sajhedhari Forest and ancient Bhagirathi river (Banganga river).



- Enjoy fishing and swimming in the Banganga river.
- Visit Banganga Laxman Ghat.
- Day hiking and trekking to Churia hill through Madhuban Dham, Kapiladham and Shringi Ashram.
- Visit Shivagadhi with 1-2 hours of hiking.
- Hike back to Dhankhola and depart to the desired destination.

3.5. Available Facilities and Services

How to Get There

- Taulihawa is linked by local road networks to Lumbini, Bhairahawa, Krishnanagar, Jitpur/Butwal, Bangai, and Gorusinghe.
- Public bus services are available in Bhairahawa-Lumbini-Taulihawa, Jitpur-Jahadi-Taulihawa and Krishnapur-Taulihawa routes.
- Currently there are day and night bus services to Taulihawa from Kathmandu and major cities in the eastern and western Nepal. More frequent bus services are available in Lumbini, Bhairahawa and Butwal.
- E-rickshaw can be hired at Taulihawa to visit major sites in the Ancient Kapilavastu.

Where to Stay

- Only a few tourist hotels with very limited bed capacity are currently available in Taulihawa. But several local hotels are available in Taulihawa and Gorusinghe.
- A newly established Tharu home-stay at Jagadisapur village offers homestay accommodation and meals for the visitors.
- Ranges of accommodation facilities are available in Lumbini, Bhairahawa and Butwal, the nearby cities from the Ancient Kapilavastu.
- Indian nationals can also enter into the Ancient Kapilavastu via Khunuwa and Chakadchouda entry points along Nepal-India borders.

Other Facilities and Services

- Tourist class and big hotels offer free Wi-Fi facility to their guests.
- Credit card is accepted by tourist standard hotels in Bhairahawa and Lumbini.
- Limited trained heritage tour guides are available at Tilaurakot.



- Tourist information can also be obtained from Lumbini Development Trust site office inTilaurakot.
- Basic health and first-aid facilities are available at Taulihawa. Hospitals are located in Bhairahawa and Butwal only.

Travel Distance

Lumbini → Tilaurakot.....	29 km
Tilaurakot → Kudan	6.0km
Kudan → Gotihawa.....	3.0km
Gotihawa → ChoubisHajari.....	7.5km
Tilaurakot → Sagarhawa	8.0km
Sagarhawa → Jagadishpur	0.8km
Jagadishpur → Niglihawa	8.5km
Sagarhawa → Niglihawa.....	3.7km
Tilaurakot → Niglihawa	9.0km
Niglihawa → Araurakot.....	1.4km
Tilaurakot → Sisaniya	18.0km
Kudan → Sisaniya.....	10.km
Taulihawa Bus Park → Kudan.....	1.5km
Taulihawa Bus Park → Tilaurakot	3.0km
Jitpur → Tilaurakot.....	23.3km
Taulihawa → Gorusinghe.....	14.0km
CDO Chowk → Dohani	4.7km
Dohani → Sisaniya	8.2km
Dohani → Lumbini.....	17.4km



CHAPTER FOUR

DEVADAHA

The Maternal Hometown of Queen Mayadevi,
Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's Mother



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4.1. Significance of Devadaha

Devadaha, the ancient capital of the Koliya Kingdom, located 57km east of Lumbini, is identified as the maternal hometown of Queen Mayadevi, Prajapati Gautami and Princess Yasodhara, the mother, stepmother and consort of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha respectively. It is believed that Prince Siddhartha had spent few years of his childhood with his stepmother/aunt Prajapati Gautami in Devadaha.

After seven years of attaining the enlightenment, Lord Sakyamuni Buddha visited Devadaha and ordained the follower of Jain Sadhu Nirgrantha Nathputra. Present day Devadaha area has been identified as ancient Koliya Kingdom with the reference of distance and direction from Lumbini and other Buddhist sites and various early Buddhist scriptures and archaeological excavations.



Nevertheless, it requires a full-fledged archaeological research to trace the exact location of the capital city of the ancient Koliya.

Box-12: Historical Background of Koliya Kingdom

Devadaha was at the heart of ancient Koliya kingdom where ancient Koliyan civilization developed and flourished. According to Buddhaghosha, Priya, the eldest princess among the banished children of king Ikshvaku of the Kosala kingdom settled in the Ancient Kapilavastu. She was honored with the role of queen mother. King Okkamukha and other siblings consorted between themselves to maintain the pure blood of their caste and established the Sakya dynasty. They received equal love and care from the eldest sister and guardian of the state. Unfortunately, she happened to contract leprosy. Despite immense love and honor from the royal members, the circumstances compelled her to leave the palace. She went away from the city and lived in a den in the forest.

Legend has it that Rama, the king of Vanarasi, too, was suffering from the same disease. He went to the forest and lived in isolation. Having stayed under a Kolan tree (nauclea cordifolia), he was cured of the disease. Coincidentally, Priya and the king Rama met in the forest. Having told his story, the king persuaded her to live under the same Kolan tree, and she was healed. Princess Priya was not only impressed but also highly indebted to Rama. After her recovery, they married and lived happily. It is said that they had 32 children.

They built a new city named Kolanagar or Koliyapur, which later on known as Devadaha (the pond of gods) today and the royal descendants became the Koliyas. The name of the place and dynasty was thus associated with the tree 'Kolan'.

In the due course of time the Koliyas established marital relations with the Sakyas of Kapilavastu. The relations between these dynasties lasted until the life of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. One of the Koliya kings, Aukaka, had a son (Anjana) and a daughter (Kanchana). Anjana married princess Yasodhara, the daughter of the Sakya king Jayasen whereas Kanchana was married to the Sakya prince, Singhahanu. The Koliyan royal couple Anjana and Yasodhara had two sons, Suprabuddha and Dandapani; and two daughters Mayadevi and Prajapati. Prince Suprabuddha married Amrita, the Sakya princess, and Mayadevi and Prajapati were married to Suddhadhana, the king of Kapilavastu. The Bodhisattva decided to appear in the lineage of the Sakya king, Suddhodhana, because the lineage had behaved faultlessly for seven generations in both the maternal and parental ancestry. Royal couple Suprabuddha and Amrita gave a daughter, Yasodhara, who was later married to prince Siddhartha, the son of Sakya king.

4.2. Major Monuments, Sites and Attractions in Devadaha

Major archaeological, religious and historical sites in Devadaha include the followings.



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1) Bhawanipur/Devidamar

The historical site of Bhawanipur, also known as Devidamar, is located 4km south of Mahendra Highway at Devadaha Municipality. It is believed to be the ancient Devadaha, the capital of Koliya Kingdom. The site has a temple dedicated to Queen Mayadevi and other significant religious and archaeological sites, including a long stone column (some consider it to be an Asoka Pillar), stone image of Sun God, ancient brick well etc. Structural wall of ancient constructions are visible even at the surface level here.

2) Devadaha

Situated at Devadaha Municipality, about half kilometer north of Ghodaha,

Devadaha is a pond having religious and historical significance. In Sanskrit language, *Deva* means god and *daha* means a pond, hence the literal meaning of Devadaha is “pond of the god”. It is believed that the gods and goddesses and saints bathed in this pond. Prince Siddhartha himself is believed to have bathed in this holy pond during his visit here in Devadaha. And legend has it that the water of this holy pond was supplied to the Koliya palace.

3) Khayardada

Situated in Devadaha municipality, near Ghodaha, Khayardada is believed to have been the main city of the ancient Koliya Kingdom. Three mounds can be distinctly seen here, and there are pieces of burnt bricks, potteries and various objects scattered everywhere within a radius of two kilometers. Excavations carried out by Lumbini Development Trust and



Department of Archaeology have discovered a few extra-large bricks, a single piece weighing upto 12 kilograms. The burnt bricks found here at Khayardada are similar to those of Kudan and Saina Maina. Structural ruins of ancient palace also have been uncovered here. It is believed that Prince Siddhartha lived in that palace and bathed in Mangal Puskarini Daha (pond) while at maternal uncle's home. The locals opine that the name of the nearby village was coined Ghodaha because the stable of Prince Siddhartha's Ghoda (horse) during his visit was located here.

4) Kanyamai

Located in Devadaha Municipality, just 1km south from the junction of Sitalnagar, the Kanyamai Temple is believed to be built in the memory of Queen Prajapati Gautami, the stepmother of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. Major images found in the temple include standing stone image of Lokeshwore holding a lotus flower in one hand (the other hand is broken off), and many stone idols. Ancient potteries are still visible on the nearby mound. Excavations carried out



by Department of Archaeology (DoA) and Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) have uncovered several structural ruins and stone antiquities at this site. The structures of traditional palace and a well also have been uncovered during the excavation in 2011.

5) Bairimai

Bairimai is located a little more than 1km south from the junction of Sitalnagar in Devadaha Municipality. It is believed that the temple of Bairimai was built to pay homage to Mayadevi, mother of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. Local people believe that the word Bairimai was derived from Badimai, meaning big mother or elder sister referring to Mayadevi, the eldest princess of the Koliya Kingdom. It is believed that both Mayadevi and Prajapati, one gave birth to Prince Siddhartha and the other cared him, were so revered by the people of Devadaha that they were bestowed upon a status of goddess over the passage of time. Archaeologist Ram Bahadur Kunwar while exploring the site, found decorated bricks, similar to those of Kudan. The temple houses stone images of Goddess and Gods but in more or less fragmented condition.



6) Historical wells

Two historical wells have been found in Devadaha, one at Petwaniya and another at Bangala. These wells are also believed to have been built during the time of Koliyas.

7) Pakadi Tree

Locals relate this tree to the popular “Koliya tree” the tree of Koliya/ Sakya era, which is also mentioned in the legends. It is 96 feet tall with a diameter of 82 feet. The fact that birds never nest on this tree; vultures and crows never perch on it, and elephants never go near it, amaze the people. The villagers are proud of this long-standing and mysterious tree and have named their village Pakri after this legendary tree.



8) Rohini River

The Rohini River is one of the holiest and most revered rivers in Buddhist scriptures. The river originates from the Siwalik hills and flows through a dense evergreen forest and cultivated plains. It irrigates a large area of land in the region. Once, during a long drought, the Sakyas and the Koliyas were about to fight a battle for its water. The dispute arose between the two states over the sharing of water of a dam constructed close to the river. As the princes and soldiers from both sides had gathered for a battle, Lord Sakyamuni Buddha was informed about it. He traveled from Vaisali and convinced the hostile groups not



to fight; telling them blood was thicker than water. The two confronting sides then, calmed down, thereafter shared the water without losing their temper. Harmony was restored and peace prevailed in the region. Some 500 Sakyas and Koliyas converted into Buddhist upon hearing the teachings of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha.

Kumarabarti

Located on the bank of the holy Rohini river at Makrahar village, Kumarabarti is believed to be the place where Mayadevi and Prajapati had spent a night while on their way to Devadaha, their maternal home. A temple has been discovered here recently with the images of Mayarani (Mayadevi) and Prajarani, (Prajapati). Two ancient wells have also been uncovered here close to the temple.

Kotiamai

Located at Devadaha Municipality, Kotiamai is another historical and archaeological site, but little is known about this place since no archaeological research has been carried out here yet.

Mathagadhi

Atop the Churia hills, the fort is believed to have been the western gateway to the Kapilavastu kingdom from Koliya in ancient times. Many ancient weapons

have been found here at the site. Soldiers of Nepali army used Mathagadhi fort to confront the British soldiers during Anglo-Nepali war. The local communities have conserved the weapons and built a temple at the site. One can see spectacular views of Devadaha, Nawalparasi and Palpa from Mathagadhi hills.

4.3. Interesting Cultural Attractions in and around Devadaha

Cultural Attractions

Major cultural/ethnic villages worth to visit in Devadaha include Sispur and Bhawanipur Tharu villages, Sarantandi Magar village, and Khairahani Gurung village. Other sites of tourist interest include Mayadevi Park, Dharmodaya



Vihara (Sitalnagar), Lokeshwore Temple (Khairahani), Kalika Temple (Sitalnagar), Durga temple (Sitalnagar) etc.

Mayadevi Park: Mayadevi Park is located on the bank of holy Rohini river. Locals have built various facilities including green picnic spot, Monastery, Mayadevi Temple and Mayadevi Park here. Besides enjoying the activities in the park, locals also celebrate Buddha Jayanti each year on Baisakh Purnima.



Festivals of Devadaha: Major festivals and events of tourist interest in these villages include Buddha Jayanti, Chaite Dashain, Holi Festival, Lhosar, Maghi, Durga Puja (Dashain), Deepawali, Chhata Parva etc.

Sispur Tharu Village: Located in the south from Bhawanipur, Sispur is one of the ideal Tharu villages in Devadaha to observe and experience the age old cultures, rituals, lifestyle and architecture of the only tribal community (Tharu) that has been in existence since the ancient Koliya Kingdom.



Sarantandi Magar Village:

Located 3km north from Ghodaha, on the lap of Churia Hill, Sarantandi is one of the beautiful Magar villages worth to visit. One can see the traditional terraced farming system using traditional equipments and producing pure organic agricultural products. Spending a night with these indigenous people is a memorable experience for visitors.



Khairahani Gurung Village: This village is located between Sitalnagar and Sunwal and densely populated by the Gurung people migrated from the hills. The Gurungs here are credited for preserving their cultures and traditions. One can observe the traditional attire, Ghantu Dance and foods of Gurungs in this village.



Natural Attractions

Located on the foothills of Churia Hills, Devadaha possesses a huge potential in terms of eco-tourism activities including bird watching, eco-hiking, meditation and trekking to Tansen-Palpa via Rampur. The wetland area located within the complex of traditional Nagthan, north of Ghodaha at Devadaha Municipality, has been identified by many Thai visitors as a good meditation place blessed with high spiritual vibes.



4.4. Recommended Tour Itineraries and Activities

Tour Highlights

- Visit Bhawanipur, Kanyamai and Bairimai Temple in Devadaha
- Visit Khayardada (considered to be the capital city of Ancient Koliya Kingdom), Mathagadhi (ancient fort), and ancient Bangala well etc.
- Take holy bath in the sacred Rohini river and Devadaha.
- Visit the symbolic Koliya era tree: The Pakadi tree.
- Observe meditation in the spiritual vibes at Bhawanipu and Simsar (wetland) site in Ghodaha.
- Visit cultural villages such as Sispur Tharu village, Sarantandi Magar village and Khairahani Gurung village.
- Observe birds and wild animals in the Ghodaha area and Churia forest.



Tour Itineraries and Activities

i. Day Tour to Devadaha (Suitable for local and regional visitors only)

- Arrival at Devadaha (Ghodaha) and visit the ancient and sacred Devadaha (lake).
- Visit Khayardanda.
- Visit Kanyamai and Bairimai temples and associated archaeological sites.
- Visit the Pakadi Tree.
- Visit Bhawanipur and pay homage to the temple dedicated to Queen Mayadevi and other significant religious and archaeological monuments such as the long stone column, stone image of Sun God, ancient brick well etc.
- Visit ancient Bangala well and Mayadevi Park.

ii. 1 Night and 2 Days Tour to Devadaha including Ramagrama

☀ DAY 01:

- Arrival at Bhawanipur by private vehicle.

- Arrival at Devadaha (Ghodaha) and visit the ancient and sacred Devadaha area.
- Visit Khayardanda,
- Visit Kanyamai and Bairimai temples and archaeological sites.
- Visit the Pakadi Tree.
- Visit Bhawanipur and pay homage to the temple dedicated to Queen Mayadevi and other significant religious and archaeological monuments such as the long stone column, stone image of Sun God, ancient brick well etc.
- Visit ancient Bangala well and Mayadevi Ban Batika.
- Visit the ethnic Tharu community at Sispur, Magar community at Sarantandi village and Gurung community at Khairahani village.
- Stay at one of the hotels in Sitalnagar, Khairahani or Sunwal and proceed to Ramagrama the next day.

DAY 02:

- Visit Ramagrama Stupa and observe the site and meditate.
- Visit a temple with a standing image of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, built by a Japanese Buddhist Organization, Bishinokai.
- Experience Tharu cultures in Barahi Mahuwa Tharu village nearby Ramagrama.
- Visit Triveni Dham, Gajendramokchha Dham and Balmiki Ashram.
- Travel back to Bhairahawa via Ramagrama or visit Daunne Devi Temple and monastery on the way to Chitwan.

4.5. Available Facilities and Services

How to Get There

Bhawanipur is linked by road networks to Sitalnagar (4km), Butwal (17km), Manigram (10km) and Ramnagar at Bhairahawa-Bhumahi road (33.5km). Public bus service is available between Butwal-Sitalnagar and Sitalnagar-Sunwal-Parasi Bazaar routes. E-rickshaw can be hired at Sitalnagar and Khairahani to visit major sites in Devadaha. Taxi and car can be hired from Butwal and Bhairahawa as well.

Where to Stay

Three tourist standard hotels with very limited bed capacity are currently available at Sitalnagar, Khairahani and Sunwal. But several local hotels are available at Sunwal, Bhumahi and Parasi Bazaar. Ranges of accommodation facilities are available at Sunauli, Bhairahawa, and Butwal, the nearby cities from Devadaha.

Other Facilities and Services

- Tourist class hotels provide free Wi-Fi to their guests.
- Banking facility is available at Sitalnagar, Khairahani, Sunwal and Butwal. Money exchange facilities are available at Bhairahawa, Butwal and at tourist class hotels.
- Credit cards are accepted by tourist standard hotels in Bhairahawa and Butwal, the nearby cities.
- Basic health and first-aid facilities are available at Khairahani and Sitalnagar. There are hospitals in Butwal and Bhairahawa.
- Trained and experienced heritage tour guides are available but only in Lumbini.
- Free of cost tourist information are provided by tourist class hotels and travel/tour agencies in Sitalnagar, Sunwal, Butwal, Bhairahawa and Lumbini.

Distance between Bhawanipur and Various other Sites

Bhawanipur	→	Lumbini.....	57km
Bhawanipur	→	Manigram.....	10km
Sitalnagar	→	Sunawal	7km
Bhawanipur	→	Sitalnagar	4km
Bhawanipur	→	Butwal	17km
Bhawanipur	→	Panditpur	14km
Bhawanipur	→	Mayadevi Park.....	3km
Bhawanipur	→	Kanyamai	3km
Bhawanipur	→	Devadaha.....	4km
Bhawanipur	→	Khayardanda	4km
Bhawanipur	→	Sarantandi	7km
Bhawanipur	→	Marthagadhi.....	13km
Bhawanipur	→	Pakadi Tree	2.8km
Bhawanipur	→	Ramagrama	25.19km
Bhawanipur	→	Ramnagar-Ramagrama	33.5km

CHAPTER FIVE

RAMAGRAMA

The Only Stupa Containing the Sacred Body Relics of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha



5.1. Significance of Ramagrama

Enlisted as UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Property in 1996, Ramagrama is a site of great archaeological and pilgrimage importance as the stupa is believed to be the only stupa that was not interfered by Emperor Asoka in the 3rd century BC and hence still contains the body relics of Lord Shakyamuni Buddha. Among the eight Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's relic stupas, this is the only one which is still in its original form. Therefore, it is one of the holiest pilgrimage sites for Buddhists and they dream of making a pilgrimage to Ramagrama at least once in their lifetime.

Box-13: Mahaparinirvana of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha and Distribution of his Body Relics

Lord Sakyamuni Buddha preached on the essence of his teachings and showed the right paths to his followers and people in general throughout his life. But when he reached Beluva village near Vaishali, traversing the villages and towns and subsisting on meager alms, he disclosed his imminent nirvana and preached to a congregation of his disciples and followers on the ephemeral nature of life and told them that his own life was coming to an end.

From Vaishali he went to a place called Pava where he had a meal prepared by Chunda, a humble metal-smith. But having tasted the meal he immediately realized that there was something wrong and asked Chunda not to give the meal to any other disciple but to bury it. Lord Sakyamuni Buddha fell sick but assured Chunda that the meal had equal significance as the meal he had before enlightenment. Then he reached a grove of sal trees just outside Kushinagar and took his last bath in Kakuttha river. Here he asked his faithful disciple Ananada to prepare a couch between two sal trees and inform the people of Kushinagar that he would pass away into nirvana soon.

Before his final nirvana, he accepted Subhadda as his last disciple and uttered the last words "O Vikshus, this is my last advice to you, all things in the world are subject to change, they are not lasting. Work hard go gain your own salvation". Then on the night of Baishakha purnima or full moon in 543 BC, Lord Sakyamuni Buddha entered into the ultimate nirvana.

A large number of people thronged for six days in order to pay the final homage to the earthly remains of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha. The venerable Mahakashyapa, one of his major disciples, lit the funeral pyre in Kushinagar. Immediately after the cremation, the great powers fought for the possession of the body relics but finally these were divided and encased in eight stupas of the respective kingdoms. Ramagrama Stupa in Nepal was one of the eight stupas, and today it is the only stupa in the entire world where the body relics of Lord Sakaymuni Buddha are still interred. The great Mahaparinirvana Temple in Kushinagar enshrines a statue of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha in parinirvana posture.



Subsequent to the Mahaparinirvana, the body of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha was cremated by the Mallas of Kushinagar and the body remains were distributed among eight claimants, including the Koliyas of Ramagrama. The Koliya King,

having enshrined the body relics of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, erected the stupa with great devotion and reverence. According to Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang, people witnessed miracles at the holy site. They occasionally saw divine light flashing around the stupa; sick people were cured after praying at the stupa. Even Emperor Asoka himself witnessed a Nag (snake god) and elephants worshipping this Astudhatu (relic) stupa.



Box-14: Emperor Asoka's Visit to Ramagrama

Emperor Asoka visited Ramagrama and wished to open the stupa in order to re-distribute the relics among 84,000 small stupas throughout his vast empire in 249 BC. According to the legends, Emperor Asoka was astonished to behold a dragon king guarding it and a herd of wild elephants worshipping the shrine by offering flowers and sprinkling water. According to another legend, the local people (possibly Naga tribe) who were devout to the shrine, requested the Emperor to spare intact the stupa for them. Respecting the local sentiment, he did not open the stupa but worshipped it, paid homage to Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's shrine and returned home leaving it intact. Hence, it has remained the only stupa in the world where Lord Sakyamuni Buddha's mortal remains are still intact.

5.2. Important Sites in and around Ramagrama





1) Ramagrama Stupa

Situated about 50km east of Lumbini and 29km east of Bhairahawa. Ramagrama Stupa is one amongst the eight original relic stupas where the corporeal remains of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha were enshrined. The 7m high brick mound (stupa) is located on the bank of Jharahi river.



The mound structure was first discovered in 1899 AD by Dr. W. Hoey, a historian from the Asiatic Society of Bengal before it was confirmed to be a stupa by S. B. Deo later in 1964. The Department of Archaeology (DoA) of Nepal carried out an excavation of the mound in 1997. Adequate information about the history of the stupa has been brought to light from the five-year excavation program. However, the core of the stupa was not touched to respect the sentiment attached to its sanctity.

The stupa had four distinct phases of construction, which proves that it is an age-old monument. The archaeological findings reveal that restoration and reconstruction of the Stupa occurred during Mauryan, Sunga, Kusan and Gupta periods. It can be assumed that the stupa (the core untouched part) belongs to the Sakya era, which was enlarged and restored in phases

during different periods of history. The regular maintenance of the stupa in all major historical periods (Maurya, Sunga, Kusan and Gupta) testifies the glory, significance and ancientness of the site. The great value of the precious stupa is confirmed by the due care given to it consistently over major historic periods.

A series of excavation conducted by the DoA, Nepal uncovered grey ware, Painted Grey Ware (PGW) and Northern Black Polished (NBP) ware among the pottery types, while other major findings of the excavations included beads, bangles and art objects that belong to various periods.

Other important sites and monuments worth to visit in the periphery of Ramagrama Stupa include sacred Jharahi lake and river and the park with the standing image of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha, built by a Japanese Buddhist Organization, Bishinokai.

2) Panditpur



Based on the findings of the recent excavations carried out by the Department of Archaeology (DoA), Panditpur area of Nawalparasi district (13.5km from Ramagrama and 11.69km from Bhawanipur) has also been identified as an important archaeological site. Considering the huge area covered by the ruins, some archaeologists have claimed it to be the possible palace site of the ancient Koliya Kingdom.

3) Triveni Dham



Situated in the southern part of Nawalparasi district, on the western border of Chitwan National Park, Triveni Dham is a confluence of three rivers, Sona, Tamasa and Sapta Gandaki. Legends link this site to Balmiki Ashram, where Sita, consort of Lord Rama lived with her two sons Lava and Kush while she was in exile. Located in a lush natural setting amidst hills and rivers, it is a sacred site for the Hindus. In addition to the religious destination, this place can be developed as a recreational site with hiking and water based

activities. Equally important pilgrimage sites in Triveni are Gajendra Mokchha Dham, Shivalaya, Balapuri temple, Laxmi Narayan temple, Narmadeshwor Panchayan temple etc.

4) Daunne Hill



Located just off the highway, at a mid point between Lumbini and Chitwan, Daunne Hill provides a respite with a cool breeze and lush greenery plus an option of a short hike to Daunne Devi temple and a monastery. Daunne hilltop is also believed to be the meditation site of Queen Mayadevi, the mother of Lord

Sakyamuni Buddha. This spot also provides beautiful views of the Himalayan range in the north as well as of the Terai in the south. Recently this is being developed as a lunch/tea stop and a rest area.

5.3. Other Interesting Cultural and Natural Attractions

Major ethnic villages potential for village tour include Tharu village in Panditpur and Barahi Mahuwa Tharu village near Ramagrama. Other interesting religious and cultural sites worth to visit in the area include Mahal Pokhari, Ghumauri Ghat, Kumarvarti Mai,



Shivapuri Gadi, Mukundapur palace, temple of Laxmi Narayan, Baba Bardagoria, Nrisingha Dham, Siddhidatri Durga temple, Kailash Sanyas Ashram, Hanuman temple, Devasthan pond, Shiva temple, Nanda Bhauju Tal, Zalim Shah Mazar (grave), Devachuli Hill, Palhi Temple, Bardagariya, Mamisavariya and several other ethnic villages. Gandak irrigation canal is another attraction in the district worth to visit, especially for the domestic visitors.

5.4. Recommended Tour Itineraries and Activities



Tour Highlights

- Spiritual visit to Ramagrama Stupa, the only stupa in the world where the sacred relics of Lord Sakyamuni Buddha are still interred.
- Visit the nearby Japanese temple with the standing image of Buddha.
- Take a spiritual and religious bath at the holy Jharahi river
- Participate at meditation sessions with spiritual vibes at Ramagrama Stupa.
- Visit other religious, cultural and natural sites such as Triveni Dham, Madarbaba Ashram, Daunne Hill, Gandak Irrigation Canal etc.
- Visit the nearby Tharu and mixed culture villages.

Tour Itineraries and Activities

i. Day Tour to Ramagrama

- Arrival in Ramagrama via Bhumahi or Sunwal or Bhairahawa.
- Visit Ramagrama Stupa and worship the original relic stupa
- Meditation, recitation and participation at spiritual discourses, circumambulation etc. at the relic stupa site.
- Visit the Baby Buddha Temple built by Bishinokai, Japan.
- Visit the Gandaki Irrigation Canal, Gandak Hydropower Station and border market at Maheshpur (10.5km south from Ramagrama Stupa).

ii. 1 Night and 2 Days Tour to Ramagrama including Devadaha

☀ DAY 01:

- Visit the Ramagrama Stupa
- Meditation, recitation and participation at spiritual discourses,

circumambulation etc. at the relic stupa site.

- Visit the Baby Buddha Temple built by Bishinokai, Japan.
- Experience the Tharu cultures in Barahi Mahuwa Tharu village near Ramagrama.
- Visit Triveni Dham, Gajendramokchha Dham and Balmiki Ashram (optional).
- Travel back to Ramagrama and visit Panditpur, an archaeological site.
- Stay at one of the hotels in Parasi Bazaar, Bhumahi, Sunwal or Khairahani and proceed to Ramagrama the next day.

DAY 02:

- Arrival at Devadaha (Ghodaha) and visit the ancient and sacred Devadaha area.
- Visit Khayardanda,
- Visit Kanyamai and Bairimai temples and other archaeological sites.
- Visit Pakadi tree.
- Visit ancient Bangala well and Mayadevi Ban Batika.
- Visit Bhawanipur and pay homage to the temple dedicated to Queen Mayadevi and other significant religious icons of Gods and Goddesses including the stone image of Sun God, and observe archaeological monuments such as the long stone column, ancient brick well etc.
- Visit ethnic Tharu community at Sisipur, Magar community at Sarantandi village and Gurung community at Khairahani village.
- Travel to Bhairahawa/Lumbini via Manigram or to Butwal/Chitwan via Sittalnagar/Khairahani.

5.5. Available Facilities and Services

How to Get There

Ramagrama is linked by road networks to Bhairahawa (28.5km), Sunwal (13.5m), Bhumahi (11km), and Triveni (23km). Public bus services are available in Bhairahawa-Parasi Bazaar, Sunwal-Parasi Bazaar and Bhumahi-Parasi Bazaar routes. E-rickshaw can be hired at Parasi Bazaar, Bhumahi or Sunwal to visit major sites in Ramagrama. Taxi and car can be hired from Bhairahawa or Butwal.

Where to Stay

Only a few tourist hotels with very limited bed capacity are currently available at Sunwal, Khairahani and Sittalnagar. But several local hotels are available at

Parasi Bazaar, Bhumahi, Sunwal and Khairahani. Ranges of accommodation facilities are available at Sunauli, Bhairaha, and Butwal, the nearby towns from Ramagrama.

Other Facilities and Services

- Tourist class hotels offer free Wi-Fi facility to their guests.
- Banking facility is available at Sitalnagar, Khairahani, Sunwal, Ramagrama and Bhairahawa. Money exchange facilities are available at Bhairahawa and Ramagram Bazaar.
- Credit cards are accepted by tourist standard hotels in Bhairahawa and Butwal, the nearby cities from Ramagrama.
- Basic health and first-aid facilities are available at Ramagrama, Bhumahi and Sunwal. Hospitals are located in Butwal and Bhairahawa.
- Trained and experienced heritage tour guides are available but only in Lumbini.

Distance from Ramagrama to Various Sites

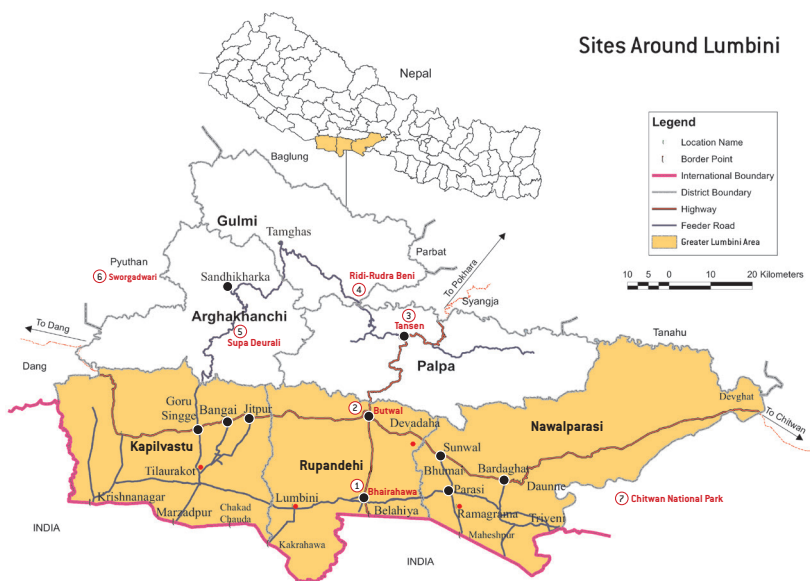
Ramagrama (Stupa) → Bhumahi.....	11km
Ramagrama → Sunwal.....	13.5km
Parasi Bazaar → Triveni.....	23km
Parasi Bazaar → Maheshpur	11km
Ramagrama → Parasibazaar	4.5km
Ramagrama → Panditpur	13.5km
Panditpur → Parasi Bazaar	9km
Ramagrama → Bhawanipur	25.19 km
Ramagrama → Bhairahawa.....	28.56 km
Ramagrama → Lumbini	49.5km
Ramagrama → Ramnagar-Bhawanipur	33.5km
Sunwal → Sitalnagar	7.0km



CHAPTER SIX

SITES AROUND LUMBINI

6.1. Major Sites of Visitors' Interest



1) Bhairahawa and Surroundings

Located 22km east of Lumbini, Bhairahawa serves as the main gateway and service center to Lumbini. Sunauli, 3km south of Bhairahawa is the nearest entry point from Lumbini along Nepal India border with immigration facility.



Gautama Buddha Airport at Bhairahawa, currently a domestic airport, is being upgraded into a regional/international airport. Bhairahawa is also a business hub and offers shopping, medical treatment, and entertainment facilities including casino for the visitors, particularly from India. Other sites to visit in the area include Gangolia Ostrich Farm, Chhapiya and other fish farms etc.

2) Butwal and Surroundings



Sprawled on both sides of the East-West Highway, at the threshold of the great Mahabharat range and 44km northeast of Lumbini is the city of Butwal. It is an emerging tourism hub for domestic and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Exhibitions) visitors. This beautiful city also serves as a gateway to Lumbini, Palpa Tansen, Ridi and

Dhorpatan, the major tourist destinations in the region. Tourist attractions in the vicinity of Butwal include Jit Gadhi (historical fort), Siddhababa Dham, Ramapithecus park, Mani Mukunda Sen Botanical Garden, Hill park etc. The ancient Silk Road sub-corridor connecting The Tibet AR of China via Mustang and Lo Manthang with Sunauli also passes through this point. Nuwakot Durbar, Sainamaina and Parrowa Bolbum Dham are the nearest sites of interest to visit from Butwal. Visitors can also have a home-stay experience at a nearby village of Dobhaanghat.

3) Palpa Tansen and Surroundings



Located 39km north of Butwal and 119km southwest from Pokhara, Palpa Tansen, also known as the Queen of the Hills for its pleasant climate, is a typical Newari town of western Nepal. It is located at an altitude of 1372m on the southern slope of the Srinagar hill. The history of Tansen started from around the 11th century when the region was a part of the Barah Magarat, the twelve territories

administered by the Magar rulers. The town evolved as a market centre for the Newar traders and artisans famous for their metal and Dhaka (cloth) industry. Some historians see Tansen as a replica of the Kathmandu valley in terms of the Newari architecture and living heritages.

Ruins from the Sen Period (15th to 18th century) can be observed at various sites in Tansen. Tansen is popular for its traditional compact settlements dotted with numerous temples, monasteries and sculptures such as Bhairavasthan temple, Purankot Durbar, Srinagar Durbar (fort), the Bansha Gopal, the Mukundeshwar Mahadeva, and Amar Narayan temple, the Ran-Ujjeshwari Bhagawati temple and the Tansen Durbar. Tansen is included in UNESCO's Tentative World Heritage list since 2008.

Other attractions include Ranimahal, Ridi, Bougha Gumha home-stay village, Madanpokhara, Kaudeko Lekh (view point), Bagnas, Srinagar hill etc. Baldyangadi, one of the most important palaces of Barah-Magarat regime, lies on the way to Padini Tapobhumi from Saljhandi.

4) Ridi-Ruru Kshetra and Resunga



One of the Hindu pilgrimages and a crematory centre mentioned in the Hindu scriptures, Ridi-Ruru Kshetra lies on the ancient route to Muktinath and Damodar Kunda. The Rishikesh complex here presents various forms of architectures; typical medieval temple complex, and sculptures of Sen Period (15th to 18th century). The living heritage of Rishikesh of Ruru Kshetra is still preserved, with fairs and festivals being held regularly, and

ongoing ancient worship practices related to the propagation of Vedic rituals and cultures. This complex is also included in UNESCO's Tentative World Heritage List in the cultural category since 2008.

Situated at 2347 meters and famous for spectacular 180-degree view of snow-capped mountains, Resunga is a meditation place of Shringi Rishi. Other attractions include Siddheshwor Mahadev temple, Yagyashala (fireplace), old temples, ponds and a view tower.

5) Supa Deurali and Surroundings

Supadeurali is one of the popular temples in the region, particularly for the domestic visitors. Major sites



worth to visit by the domestic and international visitors include scenic mountain road traversing through the Churia-Mahabharat forest, Thada Banganga Lake (Damaru lake), Parvat (Narapani), Mashina Lekh, Seng-Leng lake, Khanchi Kot (ancient fort), Argha Kot, Durbasheshwor Gufa, Padini Tapobhumi, Argha Kot (Durbar), Siddheshwor Shivalaya, Narsinghsthan, Chhatradeva Maharaj, Mathura Gopeshwor Pith, Parashurameshwor, Balkot, Pouwa, etc.

6) Swargadwari, Pyuthan

Located in the northwest direction from Lumbini at an elevation of 1740m in Pyuthan district, Swargadwari is one of the famous Hindu pilgrimage sites for domestic and Indian visitors. The temple here is famous for the continuing Vedic Yagyan which has been commenced by Swami Shree Hansananda Giri Sworgadwari Mahaprabhu and is being carried out 24 hours a day without any interruption till this day. Legend has it that the king of all deities; Indra had also performed a Yagyan in Satya Yuga at this place. It is one of the best sites for observing the scenic natural beauties and spectacular mountain views.



7) Chitwan National Park



Spread over in an area of 932 sq.km. in Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Makawanpur and Parsa districts, Chitwan National Park is the country's first national park and a very popular wildlife safari destination. The park is famous for its 50 species of mammals including the great one-horned rhinoceros, the Royal Bengal tiger, leopard, Asiatic and wild elephants, Gangetic Dolphin etc. There are over 526 species birds, 150 species of butterflies and 49 species of reptiles including python, gharial and magar crocodile etc. Safari on the trained elephants, jungle walk, jeep drive, bird watching, dug-out canoe ride are the popular activities among visitors here in the park. Major villages around the national park include Amaltari, Rajahar/Piprahar, Sauraha, Meghauli, Patihani, Kashara/Jagatpur, Madi



etc. Triveni Dham, one of the important sites of Chitwan National Park, is about 70km from Lumbini and 23km from Ramagrama Stupa. It is listed in UNESCO's World Heritage Site in the natural category.

Bardia National Park

Located to the west from Lumbini, Bardia National Park, with 968 sq



km of forest, grassland and riverine area is the largest national park in the plain ecological belt of Nepal. It offers excellent wild animals sightings including the most elusive Royal Bengal tiger. Together with newly formed Banke National Park it is the

largest protected area and natural habitat for tigers in Nepal. This park also supports 30 species of mammals, 250 species of birds including the endangered Bengal florican, sarus crane, geese, ducks and parakeets. It is also equally famous for beautiful natural landscape, Babai valley and indigenous Tharu cultures. Major sites to visit while here include Thakurdwara (headquarter of the national park), Geruwa (a branch of Karnali River), Babai Valley, Dalla homestay etc. Newly established Banke National Park and Shuklaphanta National Parks are also other worth visiting destination.

Pokhara



Tony Hagen, a Swiss geologist who traveled Nepal extensively in the 50s and 60s, and greatly contributed to highlight Nepal's tourism resources in the west, termed Pokhara as "*one of the most extraordinary and beautiful places in the whole world*". The city is nestled in the tranquil valley (850m), which was formed when the huge lake gradually went dry. Today, only a few lakes remain in the valley; Phewa, Begnas and Rupa lakes being the most

prominent ones. The Lake Side area, on the bank of Phewa Lake is the most

popular tourist centre in Nepal, bustling with domestic and international visitors throughout the year.

The valley offers almost 250km long panoramic view of the Himalyan peaks of Dhawalgiri, Annapurna and Manasalu ranges in a clear day. The view of Machhapurchhre or Mt. Fishtail is the most stunning one, rising in the skyline without any immediate range between the valley and the mountain peak. Pokhara is also the starting or ending point for many popular trekking areas such as Annapurna Base Camp Trek, Upper Mustang Trek, Jomsom Trek, Royal Trek, Mardi Himal Trek, Round Annapurna Trek etc.

With its natural surrounding and moderate climate, Pokhara is also very popular among the visitors who come for holidaymaking and relaxation. The Siddhartha Highway connects Pokhara to Bhairahawa, the city near Lumbini.

6.2. Recommended Tour Itinerary to Sites around Lumbini

Recommended tour itinerary to the sites around Lumbini after completing the Greater Lumbini Buddhist Circuit (GLBC) is as follows:

DAY 01:

Visit tourist sites in and around Butwal/Bhairahawa. These include Ostrich Farm at Gangolia village, Mani Mukundasen Botanical Garden, Jit Gadhi and Nuwakot Darbar in Butwal. Stay at Butwal or travel to Siddhababa Temple, then to Tansen and stay at a home-stay or a hotel.

DAY 02:

Visit Srinagar hill, Ranimahal, Ridi-Rudrabeni, Resunga, Mathura Gopeshwor Pith, Parashurameshwor Balkot Pouwa, Argha Kot and stay at a hotel/lodge in Narapani Hill Station near Supa Deurali.

DAY 03:

Enjoy the morning view of mountain panorama from Narapani, visit the historic Khanchi Kot, Mashina Lekh and Supa Deurali. Travel to Swargadwari (Pyuthan) via Gorusinghe and Bhalubang (Dang) or via Jhimruk. Observe evening prayer and Arati at Sworgadwari and spend a night at a guesthouse or Dharmashala in Sworgadwari.

DAY 04:

Observe scenic mountain panorama from Sworgadwari and travel back to Bhairahawa/Chitwan/Pokhara/Kathmandu on the same day or travel to Banke National Park and Bardia National Park and fly back to Kathmandu from Nepalgunj Airport, the next day.

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