



Kagyu Institute for Buddhist Studies (KIBS)

“Wonders of the Buddhist Heritage” Pilgrimage to India 08 - 18 October 2015 led by Ven. Shangpa Rinpoche & his lamas jointly organized with Karma Kagyud Buddhist Center Singapore

*“In various Sutras and Tantras, the Buddha mentioned the greatness of visiting the holy land of the Buddha. In the Tantra it also mentioned that our body channel, wind and bindu correspond with outer world. Thus, holy places play an important part in balancing our outer and inner energies. They positively affect our inner body to invoke clarity and peaceful mind. That’s why many great practitioners practice at certain special places and gain realization.”
Ven. Shangpa Rinpoche*

This pilgrimage will cover Hyderabad, Amravati, Nagarjuna Sagar - (Andhra Pradesh)
& Kanheri Caves, Ajanta Caves, Ellora Caves & Aurangabad – (Maharashtra)

Brief Introduction of Buddhism in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh has 140 listed Buddhist sites, which provide a panoramic view of the history of Buddhism from 3rd century B.C. to 14th century A.D. Some of the famous Buddhist sites in Andhra are Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati and Bavikonda. According to sutta nipata identified as one of the older parts of Tripitakas, Buddhism came to Assaka country (modern Nizamabad district of Andhra) during the lifetime of the Tathagata himself. An ascetic by name Bavari set up ashram on the banks of river Godavari and pursued religious life. Having come to know that a Buddha had arisen in the north, he sent his disciples to meet him and engage him in a spiritual dialogue. The dialogue of the disciples of Bavari with Buddha at Vaishali is recorded in sutta nipata, which also says that the Bavari’s disciples having heard the dhamma from Tathagata himself converted to Buddhism, and took dhamma to the Telugu country, Andhradesa. Buddhism in Andhra flourished for over 2000 years as one of the important religions, right from 5th century B.C. to 14th century A.D. as confirmed by literary, epigraphical and archaeological accounts. Buddhism through Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana phases flourished for longer duration.



Nagarjunakonda

Nagarjunakonda (meaning **Nagarjuna Hill**) is a historical Buddhist town, now an island located near Nagarjuna Sagar in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, India. It is 180 km west side of the state capital, Vijayawada. It is one of India's richest Buddhist sites, known in the ancient times as Sri Parvata. It now lies almost entirely under the Nagarjunasagar Dam.

Nagarjunakonda was one of the largest and most important Buddhist centres in South India from the second century BC until the third century AD. It was named after Acharya Nagarjuna, a renowned Buddhist scholar and philosopher, who had migrated here from Amaravati to propagate and spread the Buddha's message of universal peace and brotherhood. Mahayana Buddhism was first founded by Acharya Nagarjuna. Noble Nagarjuna was like a second buddha in this world. He composed commentaries explaining all the Buddha's views. The Six Ornaments and Two Supreme Ones of the noble land of India asserted that there is no difference between Nagarjuna's commentaries and the Buddha's teachings. This is because Nagarjuna's commentaries cover all three turnings of the wheel as well as the secret-mantra vajrayana. His teachings provide the foundation for the Madhyamika School, which propounds the 'Middle Way' philosophy, accepted as the highest view within the sutrayana. He was also the revealer of the Prajñāparamita Sutras, the core teaching of the second turning of the wheel of the Dharma. He is also counted among the eighty-four mahasiddhas, and among the eight vidyadharas. The founder of Mahayana Buddhism, this revered monk governed the sangha for almost 60 years and the Madhyamika school he established attracted students from far and wide including Sri Lanka and China.

Nagarjunakonda was a marvelous city of stupas, chaityas, monasteries, and impressive structure adoring them. The city had a large amphitheatre with ideal acoustics, royal baths, and harbors and bathing ghats along the river, an altar to sacrifice horses and a fine designed drainage system. The excavations have also unearthed some outstanding memorial pillars, jewelry, coins, statues and some impressive white marble excellent sculptures of Buddha, depicting the life of Lord Buddha. All the excavated items are now housed in the Museum on the island. It also features a statue of Buddha which is 10ft high.

The main stupa is called the Mahachaitya and contains the sacred relics of the Buddha - an earring and a small tooth. The stupa is decorated by a large garland-ornament. The Ikshvaku princess, Chamtisiri, renovated the original stupa in the 3rd century AD and erected ayaka-pillars of stone. The outer railing was made of wood and its uprights erected over a brick plinth. The stupa is 32.3 m in diameter with height of 18 m and 4 m wide circumambulatory path. The stupa had a circular central column, with eight radial walls gathering a peripheral circular wall, thus creating the appearance in the sketch of a cart wheel with its hub, spokes and felly.

The Nagarjunakonda is a captivating place to be as even at sky-scraping noon it offers a 360 view of the surrounding lake circled by forest covered hills. A visit to Nagarjunakonda is fascinating as it takes you to that launch ride of Nagarjuna Sagar Dam (124 km high and 1 km long one of the largest masonry in the world), was completed in 1966. It is the third largest manmade lake in the world. There is an image of Nagarjuna on a pylon not too long from the dam. At a distance of 4 kms from the dam is a viewpoint which provides panoramic view of landscapes.



Amaravati

"Amaravati" or Dhanyakataka/Dharanikota means Deathless Realm/Abode of Immortals (Nirvana) in the Buddhist scriptural language Pali. Amaravati is considered as one of the most sacred pilgrim center for the Buddhists in India and a very important place for Vajrayana teaching. Amaravati is where Lord Buddha taught the Kālacakra (King of Tantra) for the first time.

History of Kālacakra:

According to the Kālacakra Tantra, Suchandra (Tibetan Dawa Sangpo), dharmaraja of Shambhala, requested that Gautama Buddha teach him how to practice the dharma without renouncing worldly responsibilities. In response to his request, the Buddha taught the first Kālacakra root tantra in Dharanikota (Palden Drepung in Standard Tibetan, near Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh) in southeastern India, supposedly bilocating (appearing in two places at once) at the same time as he was also delivering the Prajñāpāramitā sutras at Vulture Peak Mountain in Bihar. Along with King Suchandra, ninety-six minor kings and emissaries from Shambhala were also said to have received the teachings. The Kālacakra thus passed directly to Shambhala, where it was held exclusively for hundreds of years. Later Kings of Shambhala, Manjushrikirti and Pundarika, are said to have condensed and simplified the teachings into the Śri Kālacakra or Laghutantra and its main commentary, the Vimalaprabha, which remain extant today as the heart of the Kālacakra literature. Fragments of the original tantra have survived, the most significant fragment, Sekkodesha has been commented upon by Naropa.

Amaravati lies on the right bank of River Krishna, 65 km from Vijayawada in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It is famous for the ruins of a 2000-year-old Buddhist settlement and the Great Buddhist stupa, which is the largest Buddha's stupa in India. It has 32 meters height and 32 meters diameter. The local refer to it as the Mahastupa and is also known as Deepaladinne or the Mound of Lamps. An envoy of King Ashoka, who spread Buddhism in this region, laid the foundation of the Great Stupa at Amravati. The stupa is made of brick with a circular vedika and platforms protruding in four cardinal directions are 95 ft high. The stupa is kept at the Government Museum in Chennai. Buddha is depicted in a human form on the circular panel subduing an elephant. It is based on a story of Devadatta, Buddha's cousin sending the elephant to attack the Buddha.



Kanheri Caves

The Kanheri Caves constitute a group of rock-cut monuments that are located to the north of Borivali on the western outskirts of Mumbai, India. Located within the forests of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, the caves are 6 km from the main gate and 7 km from Borivali Station. The Kanheri Caves demonstrate the Buddhist influence on the art and culture of India. Kanheri comes from the Sanskrit Krishnagiri, which means black mountain. They were chiseled out of a massive basaltic rock outcropping. Kanheri Caves served as a center of Buddhism in Western India during ancient times



Aurangabad

Aurangabad is an important city in the state of Maharashtra, India. It sees a lot of international tourist traffic due to world heritage sites, Ajanta & Ellora caves. Aurangabad, a dream destination of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, founded in 1610, is known today, as one of the four important cities in Maharashtra. The city is heading towards rapid industrial growth, but retains its past glory and charms, heritage and traditions. Conspicuously seen on the Deccan plateau, it has a rich culture and a plethora of magnificent arts on display

Ajanta Caves

The Ajanta Caves depict the stories of Buddhism spanning from the period from 200 B.C. and 650 A.D. These caves were discovered in the 19th century by some British Officers who had been on a tiger hunt. These 29 caves were built by Buddhist monks using simple tools like hammer & chisel. These caves were the retreats of Buddhist monks who taught and performed rituals in the Chaityas and Viharas, the ancient seats of learning. The elaborate and exquisite sculptures and paintings depict stories from Jataka tales. The caves also house images of nymphs and princesses. The Ajanta caves and the treasures they house are a landmark in the overall development of Buddhism as such.

The UNESCO world heritage site of Ajanta is one of the finest preserves of Buddhist glorious past and religious art. A wonderful example of man's excellent creativity devotion and will power, the Ajanta caves are the repositories of some of the finest paintings associated with the life of Gautama Buddha.

The Ajanta caves are situated, at about a 100 km from Aurangabad, in the state of Maharashtra. The rock caves, excavated in the horseshoe shaped gorge of the Waghora River in the Sahyadri hills lie in a picturesque location. The wonderful cave shrines at Ajanta are cut out of rock by hand and are regarded as one of the most astonishing examples of architectural heritage of India.

The Ajanta caves are decorated with number of astonishing painting which even today appears as fresh as ever. It can easily be said that by the time one finishes visiting all of them one gains an enlightened perspective on the life of Buddha and Buddhism by mere glancing at the marvelous paintings of Ajanta caves

History:

The great Buddhist King Ashoka was responsible for the spread of Buddhism to most part of India and its neighboring countries. In the 3rd century BC he had sent religious emissaries to Maharashtra. As the religion grew in popularity Buddhist monks began to excavate monasteries at different places, Ajanta being one of them. The Ajanta caves are said to be made after being inspired from Ashoka's rock-cut Barabar caves in Bihar. In the whole of western India, between the 2nd and 7th century AD, as many as 800 caves were excavated, sequentially numbered from one end of the gorge to the other end the oldest of caves are located in the center and the newer ones are close to each end.

Amongst the Ajanta caves, five are chaityas or prayer halls and the rest are viharas or monasteries. The Chaityas and Viharas were the centre of learning and cultural activities in those periods. Compared to viharas chaityas are very few in numbers at Ajanta. Only cave 9, 10, 26 and 29 belongs to chaityas. All the rest of the caves are viharas. The architectural differences between them is also symbolic of the difference between philosophies of the two schools of Buddhist thought, the older Hinayana school where the Buddha was represented only in symbols like the stupa, a set of footprints or a throne and the later Mahayana sect which preferred giving the Lord a human form. Those which were made during the 2nd century BC belong to the Hinayana sect and those which were excavated later, between AD 450 to 650 belong to the Mahayana sect. The gap between the emergence of Hinayana and Mahayana sect is of 400 years.



Ellora Caves

The Ellora (Vērūḷa) Caves structures represent the three faiths of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Ellora Caves is an archaeological site 29 km north-west of the city of Aurangabad in the Indian state of Maharashtra, built by the Rashtrakuta dynasty. It is also known as Elapura (in the Rashtrakuta literature-Kannada). There are a total of 34 caves in number. They also hold the distinction of being declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. They are fascinating and the finest example of cave temple architecture housing elaborate facades and exquisite interiors. Twelve of the caves (cave number 1 to 12) belong to the Mahayana sect of Buddhism and were built between 550 AD and 750 AD. Seventeen caves (cave number 13 to 29) comprise of Hindu temples and were constructed between 600 AD and 875 AD. All the caves are adorned with magnificent paintings and sculptures. The Buddhist caves have beautiful carvings that illustrate the life of Lord Buddha. Some of the caves have exquisite carvings and sculptures and have been based on the classical Indian art. Then, you have the Kailash Temple in cave number 16, deemed to be the largest monolith structure in the entire world. The nobility, grace and serenity inherent in Buddha is reflected in the sculptures of these caves. Caves 6 and 10 house images from the Buddhist and Hindu faith, under the same roof, the latter dedicated to Vishwakarma, the patron saint of Indian craftsmen. The Vishvakarma cave is both a Chaitya and a Vihara, with a seated Buddha placed in the stupa. Its two - storeyed structure sports a colourful pageant of dwarfs, dancing and making music. The Kailasa temple in Cave 16 is architecture. The entire structure was an exquisite piece carved out of a monolith, the process taking over a century to finish.

History:

The caves at Ellora were carved out of the vertical face of the Charanandri hills between the 6th and 10th centuries. The carving work began around 550 AD, about the same time the Ajanta Caves (100km northeast) were abandoned.

The Ellora Caves were built at time when Buddhism was declining in India and Hinduism was beginning to reassert itself. The Brahmanical movement was especially powerful under the patronage of the Chalukya and Rashtrakuta kings, who oversaw most of the work at Ellora - including the magnificent Kailasa Temple built in the 700s.

The last period of building activity took place in the 10th century, when the local rulers switched allegiance from Shaivism (Hinduism devoted to Shiva) to the Digambara sect of Jainism. The coexistence of structures from three different religions serves as a splendid visual representation of the prevalent religious tolerance of India. For this reason and others, the Ellora Caves were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.



TOUR FARE

Adult – SGD1450 per person (Twin Sharing)

[We have price for Single, Triple Sharing & under 16 year old; please check with us if you're interested]

Fare includes:

- ✓ Train tickets in India (2 AC Tier Sleeper Class/3 Tier AC Sleeper Class for sector Hyderabad/Aurangabad)
- ✓ Standard rooms on twin sharing basis
- ✓ Full meals (3 times per day) – except 08 Oct 2015
- ✓ Private AC Large Coach with driver
- ✓ Entrance Fees
- ✓ English speaking guide for all mentioned tours
- ✓ Eco friendly Battery Bus at Ajanta Caves in Aurangabad
- ✓ Motor boat ride in Nagarjunakonda
- ✓ All prevailing hotel & government taxes

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

- To register, please submit the completed registration form via email to admin.kibs@gmail.com
- Closing date for registration 21 June 2015
- If you are travelling from Singapore, please contact Chiu Yuin at chiuyuvin@gmail.com for flights group rate & reservations