

## Rājagaha (Rajgir-Bihar state)

During the Buddha's time Rajgir, then known as Rājagaha, was the capital of Magadha and the largest city in north India. Spread out over a fairly wide area with cool and shady trees, the important places to visit are Bamboo Grove, Devadatta's Cave at Makdum Kund, the Sattapann Cave where the First Council was held, Jivaka's Mango Grove, Ajatasattu's stupa, the Pipphili Cave where Maha Kassapa liked to stay and the Boar's Grotto where Sariputta was enlightened.

The Buddha spent several months meditating and preaching at Rajgir, converting the king of Magadha and many others to Buddhism including Jivaka (the king's physician), Sariputta and Mogallana who were to become chief disciples. Royal patronage allowed monastic buildings (vihāras) to be constructed, providing a retreat for monks during the rainy season. Looming over it all is the dazzling white and gold Japanese stupa on Ratana Hill. The thermal springs now built into a Hindu temple are often referred to in the Buddhist scriptures and are a good place to have a hot bath. A good time to visit in the evening when there is less crowds Rajgir was the scene of many important incidents in the Buddha's career but it is an important place for Jain pilgrimage as well.

When you are up on the Vultures Peak read the Mahasaropama Sutta and on the way down sit in the Boar's Grotto and read the Digha Nikaya Sutta. On the way back to town stop at the ruins of the Jivaka's Mango Grove and read the Jivaka Sutta. There are well maintained and peaceful gardens in the Bamboo Grove, a good place to sit and read the Abhayarajakumara Sutta, the Dantabhumi Sutta or the Culavedalla Sutta which was taught by a nun Ven. Dhammadinna. All these discourses are from the majjhimanikaya.

The Gijjhakuta, the Vulture Peak, was the Buddha's favorite retreat in Rājagah and the scene for many of his discourses. According to the commentaries this place got its name because vultures used to perch on some of the peak's rocks.

The several rock shelters around Gijjhakuta, its fine view across the valley, and its peaceful environment made it the perfect place for meditation. Climbing the steps that lead to the top, the pilgrim passes a large cave. This is



**Vulture Peak - Rajgir** The small structure (small room) designates the place where Buddha used to stay when living on Vulture Peak. This picture was taken from , nearby mountain. The valley is on the outskirts of the old city of Rajagaha.

the Sukarakhata (the Boar's Grotto) where the Buddha delivered two discourses, the Discourse to Long Nails and the Sukarakhata Sutta.

It was here too that Sariputta attained enlightenment. The Sukarakhata seems to have been formed by excavating the earth from under the huge rock that forms the grotto's roof, an impression confirmed by text. According to the Pali commentaries during the time of Kassapa Buddha a boar rooting around under the rock made a small cavity which was later enlarged when monsoon rains washed more earth away. Later, an ascetic discovered the cave and, deciding it would be a good place to live in, built a wall around it, furnished it with a couch, and 'made it as clean as a golden bowl polished with sand.'

Climbing further, the pilgrim can see the ruins of stupas and the foundations of a small temple built on the summit in ancient times. When the simple and devoted Chinese pilgrim monk Fa Hien came here, he was deeply



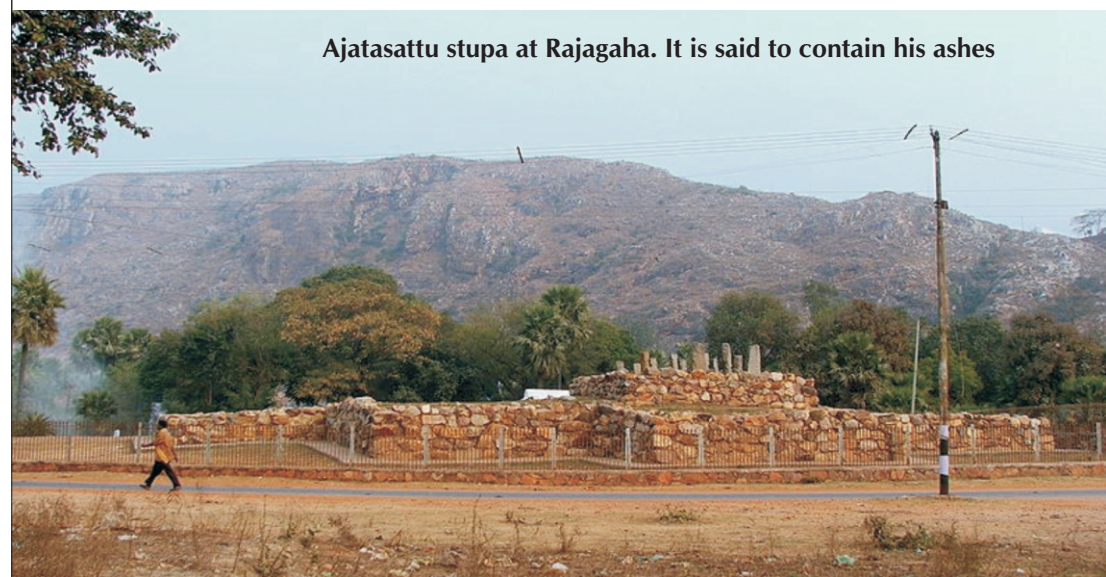
moved by the atmosphere on the Gijjhakuta. 'In the new city, Fa Hien bought incense, flowers, oil and lamps and hired two monks, long residents in the place, to carry them to the peak. When he himself arrived, he made his offerings with flowers and incense and lit the lamps when the darkness began to come on. He felt melancholy but restrained his tears, and said, 'Here the Buddha delivered the Surangama Sutra. I, Fa Hien, was born when I could not meet the Buddha and now I only see the footprints which he has left and the place where he lived and nothing more.' With this, in front of the rock cavern, he chanted the Surangama Sutra, remaining there overnight and then returned towards the new city.' In Dharmasvamin's time (13th century), the Gijjhakuta was 'the abode for numerous carnivorous animals such as tiger, black bear and brown bear,' and in order to frighten away the animals, pilgrims visiting the Gijjhakuta would beat drums, blow conches and carry tubes of green bamboo that would emit sparks. A Buddha statue, dating from the 6th century CE, found on the Gijjhakuta, is now housed in the Archaeological Museum at Nalanda. The Gijjhakuta is located about 5 kilometers south-east of the town of Rajgir and is a popular destination for both local tourists and Buddhist pilgrims from overseas. Because the Sadharmapundrika Sutra (Lotus Sutra) was taught on the Gijjhakuta, the place is particularly popular with Japanese and Korean pilgrims.

It is also the location of the First Buddhist council at Rajagaha. The Triple Gem is fully represented at Vulture Peak by the fact that Buddha spent so much time there, also teaching Dhamma and the other Sangha members going there for instruction, to teach, to meditate, and to compile all of the teachings at the First Buddhist council.

Vulture Peak is at the elevation of 2354 ft., 718 meters. Most Buddhist pilgrims climb up Vulture Peak, whereas others take a motorized chair lift to the top. The stair climb up is roughly equivalent to 1500 steps.



Remains of what has been identified as Bimbisara's Jail, at Rajagaha, Bihar. This is considered to be the place where Prince Ajatasattu jailed his father King Bimbisara, and starved him to death. Devadatta told him to do so and he acted on it. The Gijjhakuta hill (Vulture Peak) can be seen from the site



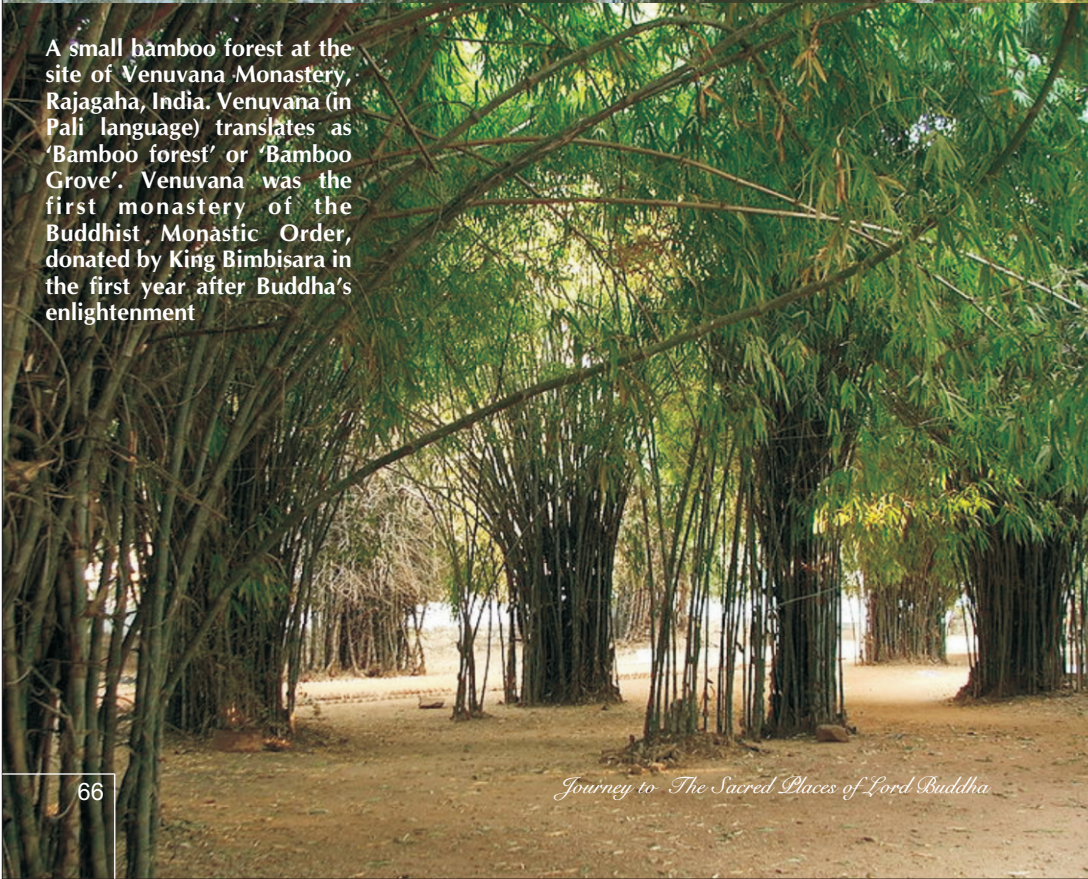
**Ajatasattu stupa at Rajagaha. It is said to contain his ashes**



View of the pond at the site of Venuvana Monastery, Rajagaha. This was the first monastery of the Buddhist Monastic Order, donated by King Bimbisara in the first year after Buddha's enlightenment.



A small bamboo forest at the site of Venuvana Monastery, Rajagaha, India. Venuvana (in Pali language) translates as 'Bamboo forest' or 'Bamboo Grove'. Venuvana was the first monastery of the Buddhist Monastic Order, donated by King Bimbisara in the first year after Buddha's enlightenment



*Journey to The Sacred Places of Lord Buddha*



Putting my right and left hands together as one, I just  
Just bow to become one with Buddha and  
Just bow to become one with everything I encounter  
Just bow to become one with all the myriad things  
Just bow as life becomes

Kosho Uchiyama in Opening the Hand of The

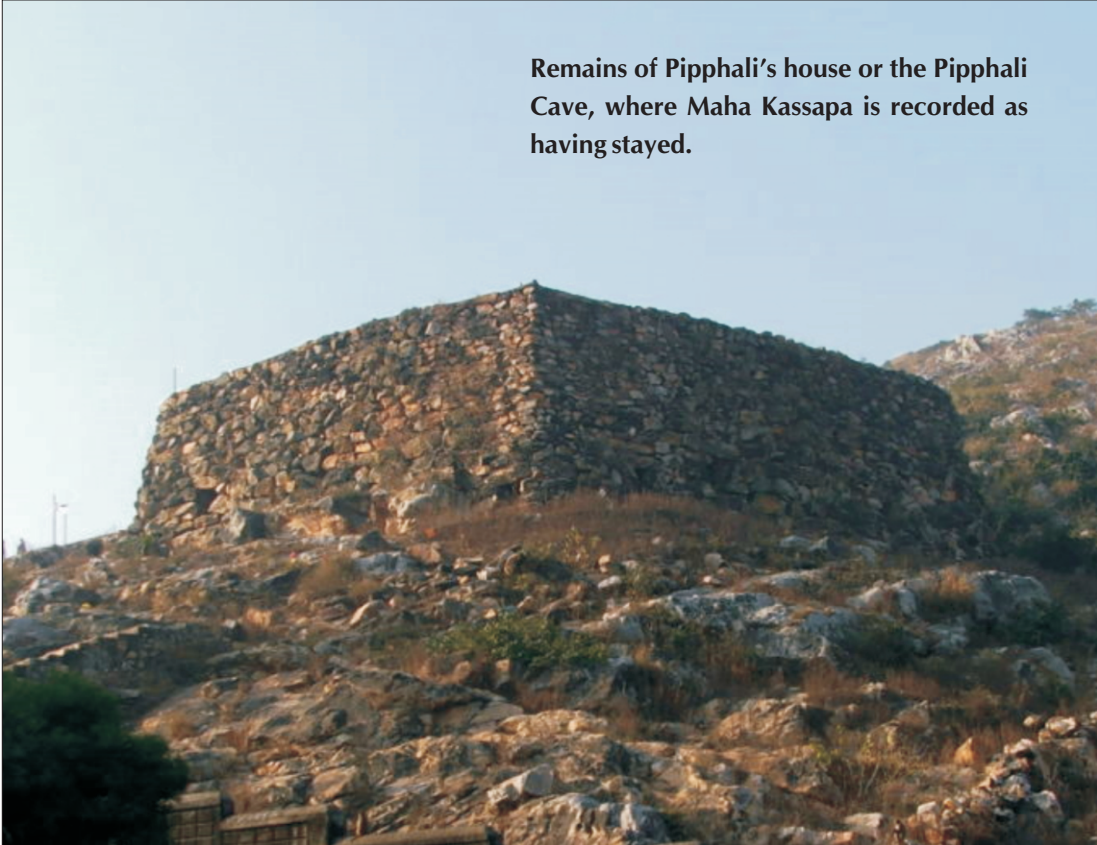
Remains of Jivakambavana, the monastery donated by Physician Jivaka to the Sangha, so that Buddha and other monks might stay there when they were sick and needed treatment by him.



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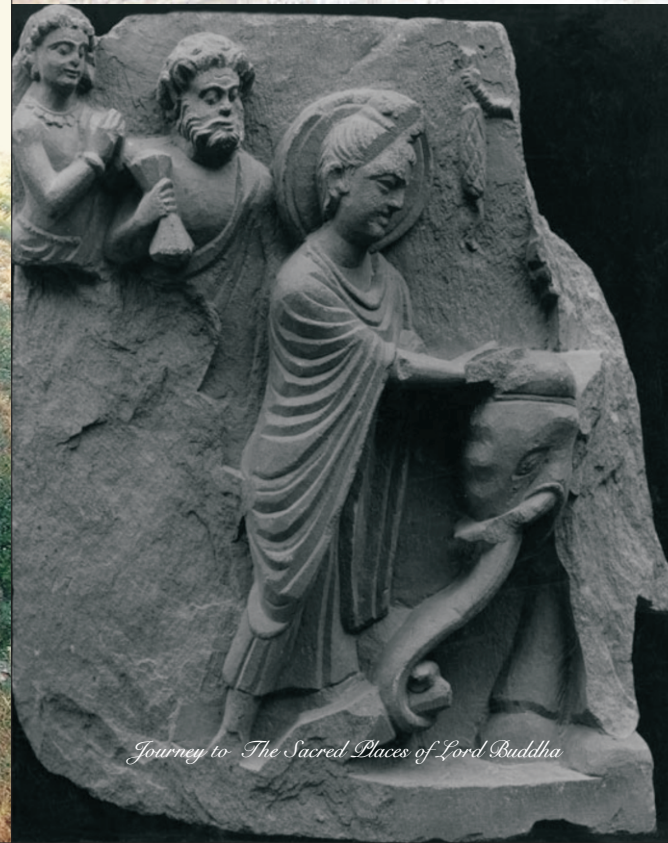
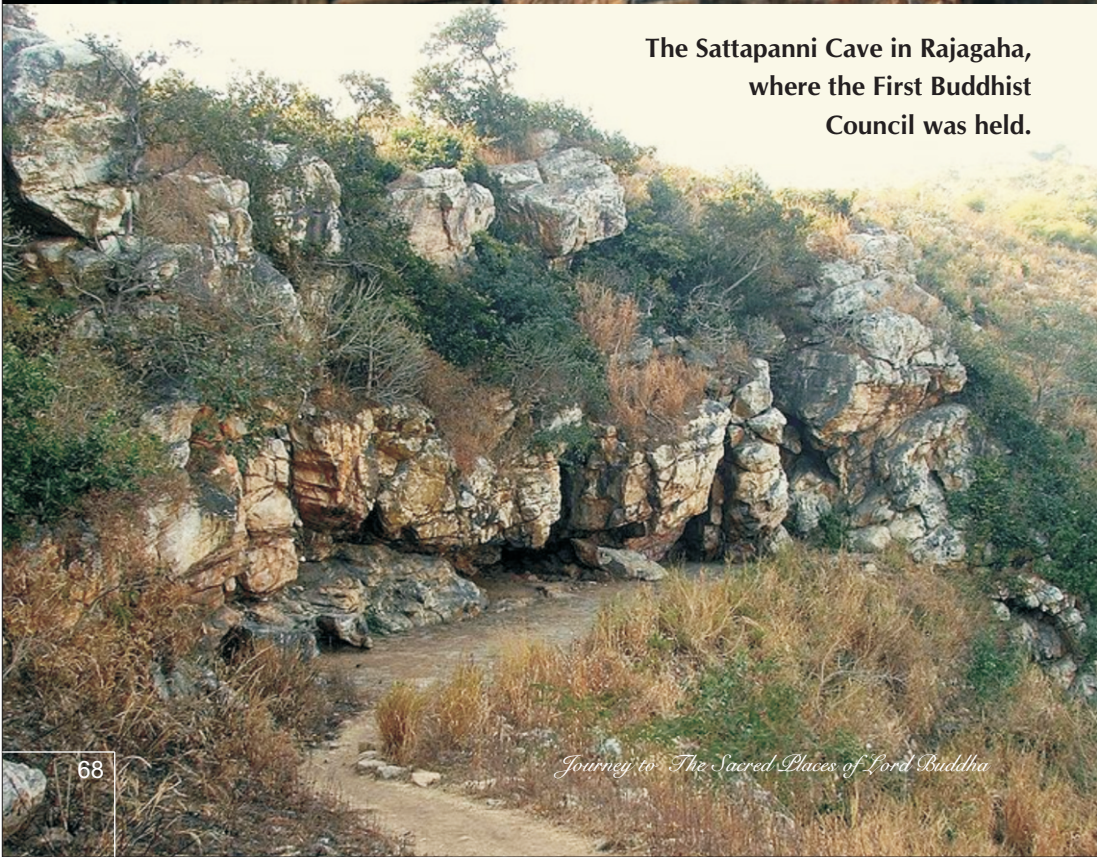


Remains of Pippali's house or the Pippali Cave, where Maha Kassapa is recorded as having stayed.



Ven. Ananda cave at Vulture peak

The Sattapanni Cave in Rajagaha, where the First Buddhist Council was held.



Relief panel showing the Buddha subduing the elephant Nalagiri with Vajrapani holding a thunderbolt and a young worshipper behind him (Takht-i-bahi 2nd century schist Museum no. IS.3302-18883)



Burmese Buddhist vihar – Rajgir



## How to reach Rajgir:

### Road:

Rajgir is connected to Patna via Bakhtiarpur by rail and road. Bakhtiarpur lies midway between Patna and Mokameh. Road access is by NH 30A to Bakhtiarpur and NH 31 towards south to reach Bihar Sharif, from Mokameh NH 31 to Bihar Sharif. From there, NH 82 will lead to Rajgir. Rajgir is around 100 KM from both Patna and Mokameh.

### Rail:

Indian Railways run trains directly from Rajgir to Kolkata and New Delhi.



## BUDDHIST HISTORICAL PLACES

### Sanchi

(Madhya Pradesh)

Sanchi in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh is famous for its magnificent Buddhist monuments and edifices. Situated on a hill, these beautiful and well-preserved stupas depict the various stages of development of Buddhist art and architecture over a period of thirteen hundred years from the third century B.C. to the twelfth century A.D. Inscriptions show that these monuments were maintained by the rich merchants of that region.

The great stupa was built by Asoka and was damaged during the break-up of the Mauryan Empire. In the 2nd century B.C., during the rule of the Sungas it was completely reconstructed. Religious activity led to the improvement and enlargement of the stupa and a stone railing was built around it. It was also embellished with the construction of heavily carved gateways.



The Great stupa has a large hemispherical dome which is flat at the top, and crowned by a triple umbrella or Chattra on a pedestal surrounded by a square railing or Karmika. Buddha's relics were placed in a casket chamber in the centre of the Dome. At the base of the dome is

a high circular terrace meant for parikrama or circumambulation and an encircling balustrade. At the ground level is a stone-paved procession path and another stone Balustrade and two flights of steps leading to the circular terrace. Access to it is through four exquisitely carved gateways or Toranas in the North, South, East and West. The diameter of the stupa is 36.60 metres and its height is 16.46 metres. It is built of large burnt bricks and mud mortar. It is presumed that the elaborately carved Toranas were built by ivory or metal workers in the 1st. Century BC during the reign of King Satakarni of the Satavahana Dynasty. The last addition to the stupa was made during the early 4th Century AD in the Gupta period when four images of Buddha sitting in the Dhyana mudra or meditation were installed at the four entrances.



Sanchi – old vihara



View – 1 of Great Sanchi Stupa



View – 2 of Great Sanchi Stupa







**Northern Gateway, Great Sanchi Stupa**

The first Torana gateway to be built is the one at the principal entrance on the South. Each gateway has two square pillars. Crowning each pillar on all four sides are four elephants, four lions and four dwarfs. The four dwarfs support a superstructure of three architraves or carved panels one above the other. Between these are intricately carved elephants and riders on horseback. The lowest architrave is supported on exquisitely carved bracket figures. The panels are decorated with finely carved figures of men, women, yakshas, lions and elephants. The entire panel of the gateways is covered with sculptured scenes from the life of Buddha, the Jataka Tales, events of the Buddhist times and rows of floral or lotus motifs. The scenes from Buddha's life show Buddha represented by symbols - the lotus, wheel, a riderless caparisoned horse, an umbrella held above a throne, foot prints and the triratnas which are symbolic of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. The top panel has a Dhamma chakra with two Yakshas on either side holding chamaras. To the South of the scenes depicted from Buddha's life are the Enlightenment of Buddha (a throne beneath a peepul tree); the First Sermon (a Dhamma chakra placed on a throne); The Great Departure (a riderless horse and an empty chariot with an umbrella above); Sujata's offering and the temptation and assault by Mara.

The Big Stupa at Bharhut also in Madhya Pradesh was constructed in the 2nd century BC in the Sunga Period. It is a hemispherical dome built of brick and is surmounted by a shaft and an umbrella to represent the spiritual sovereignty of Buddhism. The railing surrounding it is of red sandstone. Scenes from the life of Buddha and the Jataka Tales are sculptured on the gateways, pillars, uprights and cross-bars of the railings.

During the same period, a number of stupas, chaityas, viharas and pillars were constructed in Sanchi, Bodh-Gaya, Mathura, Gandhara, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. Though most of these have not remained in their entirety, the ruins are of architectural interest can still be seen.

The Stupas of Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati, both in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh show that the Stupas of the Southern region differ in structure from those of the North. The architecture here is a shift from the usual Buddhist style, which reflected the two main divisions in Buddhism - Theravada and Mahayana. Different trends and styles were incorporated here giving rise to new architectural forms, i.e. a quadrangular monastery, square and rectangular image shrine, pillared hall and a small stupa on a square platform.

The stupas of Nagarjunakonda are in the form of a hemispherical dome



depicting the life of Buddha. A notable feature of the stupas here is ayaka platforms in the four directions with five inscribed pillars on each of them. The five pillars symbolise the five important events in the life of Buddha - his Birth, Renunciation, Enlightenment, First Sermon and Parinirvana.

Some of the stupas are built on a square platform having an apsidal shrine on either side and a pillared hall within a quadrangular monastery. Some stupas were wheel-shaped having four to ten spokes and a two or three winged vihara.

The earliest of the Nagarjunakonda stupas is the Maha Chaitya which contains the tooth relic of Buddha. The stupa is wheel-shaped with ayaka platforms surmounted by pillars. The smallest stupa here has only two cells and the Chaitya griha enshrines the image of Buddha.

Stone carvings at Sanchi



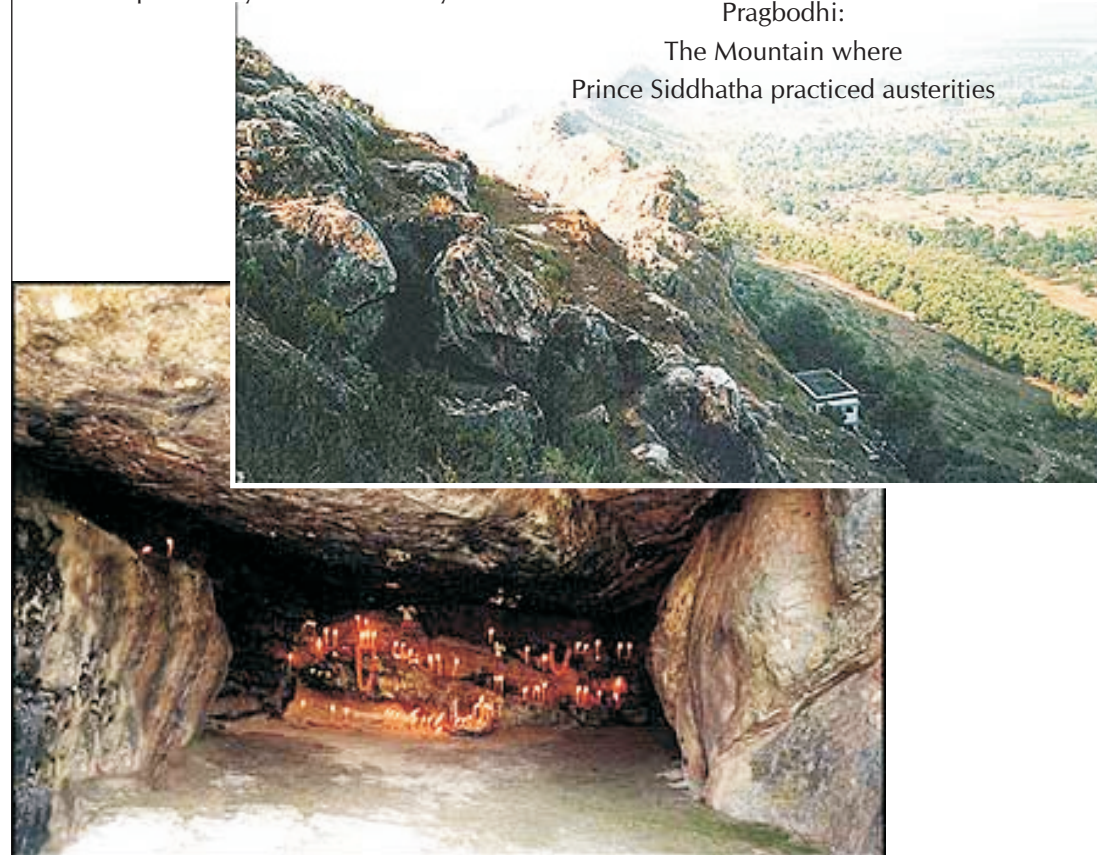
*Journey to The Sacred Places of Lord Buddha*

## Pragbodhi

After Prince Siddhartha renounced the world he practiced austerities for six years. One of the places he stayed during this period was a mountain that later came to be called as Pragbodhi (Prior to Enlightenment) and presently known as Dhungeswara. Tradition says he sheltered in the small cave half way up this mountain. Today there is a small temple near the cave run by some Tibetan monks. If you climb from the cave to the top of the mountain you will see the remains of several ancient stupas. You will also be able to see the spire of the Mahabodhi temple at a distance. Pragbodhi is a wonderful place to spend a day or even a few days.

Pragbodhi:

The Mountain where  
Prince Siddhatha practiced austerities



### How to reach Pragbodhi:

**Road:**

Bus from old Gaya road , get off at the village of Kiriya and walk from there or East of Bodh Gaya crossing the neranjara river and proceed towards north of the mountains about 6 kms to reach the pragbodhi

*Journey to The Sacred Places of Lord Buddha*



## Prabhosa

While you are at Kosambi make a point of visiting Prabhosa. This hill was known in ancient times as Mankula and is where the Buddha spent his sixth rains retreat. There are no discourses in the Tipitaka taught at Prabhosa so perhaps the Buddha spent the whole stay here in silence. If so this would be quite understandable; Prabhosa is a particularly lonely and peaceful place.

The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang came here in the 7th century and saw a stupa built by King Asoka but neither this or any other Buddhist antiquities can be found here today. There are caves and rock shelters all over Prabhosa particularly on the steeper and rockier north side. The largest cave, now called Sita's Window, may have been where the Buddha stayed during his visit. In later centuries it was the Jains who came to dominate Prabhosa as is clear from their many inscriptions and images in the area. Climb to the top of the hill and you will get a sweeping view over the Yamuna River and the small temple town of Prabhosa nearby.



Prabhosa: The hill where the Buddha spent his sixth rains retreat

### How to reach Prabhosa:

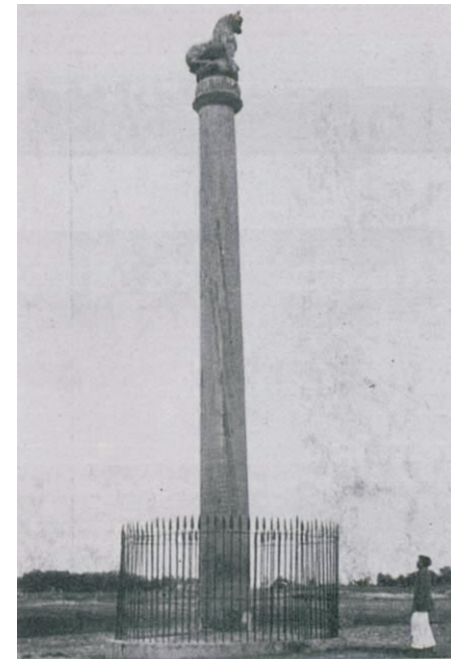
Road:

About a kilometer from Kosambi the main road back to Allahabad branches to the left. Proceed along it for about 10 kms and you will come to Prabhosa

## Lauriya Nandangar - Bihar

King Asoka is believed to have raised some forty pillars but the only one that still stands complete and in its original location is in this village. Rising to just over 12 meters high and still exhibiting a remarkable polish despite centuries of exposure to the elements, it is a most impressive monument. Six of Asoka's edicts issued in 244 BC are inscribed on the pillar and a crouching lion sits on its top. It is a fine piece of sculpture but its face is missing, having been shot at with by cannon in 1660.

For a translation of the edicts on the pillar read The Edicts of King Asoka, Wheel No.386/387. The other thing to see in Lauriya Nandangarh is the huge stupa located behind the local sugar mill. Although now only 24 meters high it has a circumference of nearly 457 meters, making it one of the biggest stupas ever built in India. It must have been built to commemorate some important event or enshrine some precious relic, but what it was not yet known.



Asokan Pillar, Lauriya - Nandangarh, Bihar.

### How to reach Lauriya Nandangar:

**Road:** About 22 kilometer North West of Bettiah (Head Quarters of West Champaran District) which is 190 kms North West of Patna, the National Highway 28B passes through Lauriya Nandangarh.



## Kurkihar

The site of an ancient Buddhist monastery

The large mound that this village sits on the top of is the remains of what was a Buddhist monastery in ancient times. The village hit the headlines in 1930 when one hundred and forty eight bronze artifacts were dug out of this mound. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of all sizes, bells, stupas and ritual objects of the finest workmanship were recovered.

Most of these are now on display in a special room in the Patna Museum.

The second of Kurkihar two Hindu temples still have a large collection of Buddhist sculptures in them that have been found in the area over the years. One of the best of these is a fine statue of Buddha just outside the entrance of the temple.

Note the fourteen carved pillars in the temple also; they date from about the 9th century. Numerous other stone sculptures from Kurkihar can be seen in the Indian Museum in Calcutta.



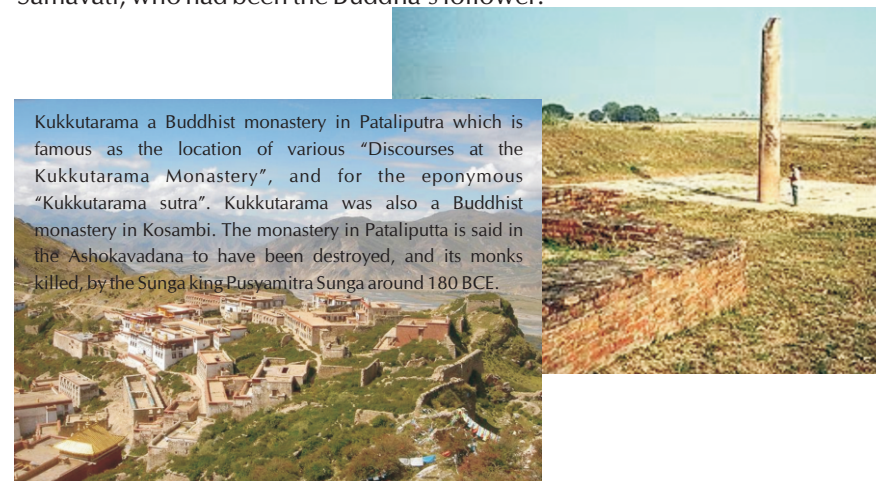
### How to reach Kurkihar:

#### Road:

About 3 kms off the Gaya –Rajgir road and it's about 22 kms from Gaya near village of Wazirganj.

## Kosambi

This once great city was the capital of Vamsa and the scene of several important events in the Buddha's life. You will see one of Asoka's pillars and a little further on the ruins of the Ghositarama, first built during the Buddha's lifetime. Already in the Buddha's time there were four establishments of the Order in Kosambi - the Kukkutarama, the Ghositarama, the Pavarika-ambavana (these being given by three of the most eminent citizens of Kosambi, named respectively, Kukkuta, Ghosita and Pavarika), and the Badarikarama. The Buddha visited Kosambi on several occasions, stopping at one or other of these residences, The Buddha spent his ninth rainy season at Kosambi, and it was on his way there on this occasion that he made a detour to Kammassadamma and was offered in marriage a daughter of brahmin Magandiya. The circumstances are narrated in the Magandiya Sutta. Magandiya took the Buddha's refusal as an insult to herself, and, after her marriage to King Udena (of Kosambi), tried in various ways to take revenge on the Buddha, and also on Udena's wife Samavati, who had been the Buddha's follower.



### How to reach Kosambi:

Road: To get to Kosambi you have to pass through Allahabad, about 35 miles south-west of Allahabad. At Allahabad two things worth seeing are.

- 1) The Allahabad Museum has most of the antiquities discovered at Kosambi, an excellent collection of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain sculpture, admission fees of Rs. 200, the museum is on Kamala Nehru Road and is open from 10:15 am to 4:30 pm and closed on Monday, public holidays and every second Sunday.
- 2) The Archaeological Museum in the Department of Ancient History, Allahabad University, has an extensive collection of the minor antiquities