Foreword

There are numerous sites in Uttar Pradesh that are associated with Lord Buddha and Buddhism. In fact Uttar Pradesh along with modern Bihar form the hub of early Buddhism. It was from these parts that the religion spread to the rest of the world. This book is an attempt to showcase the prominent Buddhist sites in Uttar Pradesh, mainly:

Kapilvastu - The capital city of Shakya clan whose ruler was King Suddhodana, father of the ‘Enlightened One’
Sarnath - Where the Buddha after attaining enlightenment delivered his first historical sermon
Sravasti - Where he spent 27 monsoons and showed his divine prowess
Sankisa - It is said that Gautam Buddha descended here after giving a sermon to his mother in heaven
Kaushambi - Where Buddha visited in the sixth and ninth years after attaining enlightenment
Kushinagar - Lord Buddha achieved his Mahaparinirvana, freedom from cycle of birth and rebirth

Uttar Pradesh is a cradle of Buddhism where all significant aspects of Buddha’s life can be seen and experienced.

Director General Tourism
Uttar Pradesh
Siddhārtha Gautama was the historical founder of Buddhism. After asceticism and meditation, he discovered the Buddhist Middle Way—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Early texts suggest that after asceticism and meditation, he discovered the Buddhist Middle Way—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. According to the early Buddhist texts, after realizing that extreme asceticism didn't work, Gautama discovered what meditative jhana was the right path to awakening, but that the jhāna. According to the early Buddhist texts, after realizing that extreme asceticism didn’t work, Gautama discovered what was blissful and refreshing, the jhāna.

After nearly starving himself to death by restricting his food intake to around a leaf or nut per day, he collapsed in a river while bathing and almost drowned. Siddhartha began to reconsider his path. Then, he remembered a moment in childhood in which he had been watching his father start the season’s plowing. He attained a concentrated and focused state that was blissful and refreshing, the jhāna. According to the early Buddhist texts, after realizing that meditative jhāna was the right path to awakening, that extreme asceticism didn’t work, Gautama discovered what Buddhists call the Middle Way—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.
For the remaining years of his life, the Buddha is said to have travelled in the Gangetic Plain, in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and southern Nepal, teaching a diverse range of people: from nobles to outcaste street sweepers, murderers such as Angulimala, and cannibals such as Alavaka. From the outset, Buddhism was equally open to all races and classes, and had no caste structure. The Sangha traveled through the subcontinent, expounding the Dharma. This continued throughout the year, except during the four months of the Vassana rainy season when ascetics of all religions rarely travelled. One reason was that it was more difficult to do so without causing harm to animal life. At this time of year, the Sangha would retreat to monasteries, public parks or forests, where people would come to them.

The first Vassana was spent at Varanasi when the Sangha was formed. After this, the Buddha kept a promise to travel to Rajagaha, capital of Magadha, to visit King Bimbisara. During this visit, Sariputta and Maudgalyayana were converted by Assaji, one of the first five disciples, after which they were to become the Buddha’s two foremost followers. The Buddha spent the next three seasons at Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery in Rajagaha, capital of Magadha.

Upon hearing of his son’s awakening, King Suddhodana sent, over a period of time, ten delegations to ask him to return to Kapilavastu. On the first nine occasions, the delegates failed to deliver the message, and instead joined the Sangha to become Arahants. The tenth delegation, led by Kaludayi, a childhood friend of Gautama’s (who also became an Arahant), however, delivered the message.

Two years after his awakening, the Buddha agreed to return, and made a two-month journey by foot to Kapilavastu, teaching the Dharma as he went. Buddhist texts say that King Suddhodana invited the Sangha into the palace for a meal, followed by a Dharma talk. After this he is said to have become a Sotapanna. During the visit, many members of the royal family joined the Sangha. The Buddha’s cousins Ananda and Anuruddha became two of his five chief disciples. At the age of seven, his son Rahul also joined, and became one of his ten chief disciples. His half-brother Nanda also joined and became an Arahant.

Of the Buddha’s disciples, Sariputta, Maudgalyayana, Mahakasyapa, Ananda and Anuruddha are believed to have been the five closest to him. His ten foremost disciples were repeatedly completed by the quintet of Upali, Subhuti, Rahula, Mahakaccana and Punna.

In the fifth Vassana, the Buddha was staying at Mahavana near Vesali when he heard news of the impending death of his father. He is said to have gone to King Suddhodana and taught the Dharma, after which his father became an Arahant.

The king’s death and cremation was to inspire the creation of an order of nuns. Buddhist texts record that the Buddha was reluctant to ordain women. His foster mother Maha Pajapati, for example, approached him, asking to join the Sangha, but he refused. Maha Pajapati, however, was so intent on the path of awakening that she led a group of royal Sakyan and Kolowan ladies, which followed the Sangha on a long journey to Rajagaha. In time, after Ananda championed their cause, the Buddha is said to have reconsidered and, five years after the formation of the Sangha, agreed to the ordination of women as nuns. He reasoned that males and females had an equal capacity for awakening. But he gave women additional rules (Vinaya) to follow.

Buddha found patronage in the ruler of Magadha, emperor Bimbisara. The emperor accepted Buddhism as personal faith and allowed the establishment of many Buddhist “Viharas.” This eventually led to the renaming of the entire region as Bihar.

The Maurya empire reached its peak at the time of Emperor Asoka, who himself converted to Buddhism after the Battle of Kalinga. This heralded a long period of stability under the Buddhist emperor. The power of the empire was vast - ambassadors were sent to other countries to propagate Buddhism.

The Buddha did not appoint any successor and asked his followers to work for personal salvation. The teachings of the Buddha existed only in oral traditions. The Sangha held a number of Buddhist councils in order to reach consensus on matters of Buddhist doctrine and practice. Buddha attained Parinirvana in the abandoned jungles of Kuśināra, modern Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh.
nce the capital city of the mighty Shakya clan, it was in Kapilvastu’s opulent environs that prince Siddharth (later Lord Buddha) spent most of his early childhood. Kapilvastu was the seat of King Suddhodhana, the father of the Enlightened One. The excavations at the site has been identified with the present day township of Piprahwa. One and a half kilometer away from Piprahwa lie the two excavated mounds. The bigger one, with a thick walled structure was supposedly King Suddhodhana’s palace. The Second is identified as the ruins of Piprahwa Stupa, erected by Shakya rulers. While excavating this site an inscribed seal was discovered, which read ‘Om Devaputra Vihare Kapilvastu Bhikku Sanghas’ (This is the Devaputra Vihara of the Kapilvastu Bhikshu Sangha). There also lies a small Sri Lankan monastery, the Mahindra Mahavihara in the vicinity of these ruins. Meandering their way through Kapilvastu, the devotees feel transferred thousands of years back to an era when young Prince Siddharth having seen the pains of life, renounced all worldly pleasures to turn into an ascetic, centuries before the birth of Christ.

The story is so old, that every point on the Buddhist circuit has a history steeped in myth and meaning; every monument stands testimony to faith fused into reality; as centuries passed and people lost bits of their oral heritage. In Sanskrit, the word “Bodh” means knowledge; Buddha would thus mean “One who has attained all knowledge” or “one in whom there is no conflict, no suffering”; in short, one, who has mastered himself. 
The Chinese would call him the Zen Master.

For more than 40 years, Gautam Buddha traveled across the Gangetic Plains and talked to the people about his doctrine. This is how Buddhism spread across the world and Gautama Buddha came to be regarded a revered saint.

If you are looking for the same Buddha in you, the main sites of interest would be:
Kapilvastu : Where Prince Siddharth grew up as a child.
Sarnath : Where he held his first public discourse.
Kausambi : Where Buddha delivered many a sermons.
Sankisa : Where he descended after addressing his mother in Heaven.
Sravasti : His favorite monsoon retreat.
Kushinagar: Where he attained Mahaparinirvana (Demise).
Ganwaria Archaeological Site

Ganwaria Archaeological Site
Sarnath

About 10 km from the holy city of Varanasi, Sarnath is the place where more than 2,500 years ago Buddha delivered his first sermon after attaining enlightenment. An imposing conical structure, 34 meters in height, called Dhammakaya Stupa signifies the 'seat of the holy Buddha.' There are also the ruins of Dharanirekha Stupa, besides the original Mulgandhakuti Temple, which according to Hieun Tsang was about 61 mtr. high. That's the place where Buddha rested and meditated in Sarnath. After converting to Buddhism, Emperor Ashoka visited Sarnath in 273-232 B.C. and erected a smooth glistening stone pillar here, to mark the foundation of the Buddhist Sangha. The Lion Capital on top of this pillar is now India's National Emblem. Then there is the Chaukhandi Stupa, which was a terraced temple during the Gupta period (4th to 6th century). All three stupas—Dharanirekha, Chaukhandi and Dhammakaya—are outstanding in their architectural features. A journey to Sarnath would be incomplete without a visit to the library at Mughal Kuti Vihara, which houses some amazing frescoes done by Koset Nosu. The Sarnath Museum, not far from the site, also houses some of the finest specimens of Buddhist sculpture.

Accessibility

Air
Gorakhpur Airport-109 Km. Sravasti airstrip-146 Km. Amausi Airport, Lucknow-310 Km. and Babatpur Airport, Varanasi-330 Km.

Rail
Nearest Railway Station is Naugarh 22 km.

Road
Some of the major road distances are: Berdpur-8 Km., Sonauli-48 Km., Lumbini (Nepal)-86 Km., Gorakhpur-104 Km., Sravasti-147 Km., Kushinagar-157 Km., Lucknow-308 Km., Varanasi-327 Km.

UP Tourism Accommodation
- Rahi Motel, UPSTDC Hotel Shakya. Phone: 05544-261489.

Other Accommodation
- Sri Lankan Temple Dharamshala
- The Royal Retreat (Heritage Hotel) Mohana-Shohratgarh Route (14 km from Kapilvastu). Phone: 05544-261219.
- Sarkar Hotel at Navgarh (14 km)

Lotus Pond

Gunwaria Archeological Site

Buddha’s Statue At The Thai Temple

Ganwaria Archeological Site

Buddha's Statue At The Thai Temple
Dhamek Stupa

Chaukhandi Stupa
After attaining Enlightenment Lord Buddha was constantly mobile spreading his message of humanity, Universal brotherhood and salvation amongst the different segments of the society. This service to humanity would stop for a brief period in the monsoons. This period too, however, would be used by Lord Buddha to meditate and preach, on choosing an ambient place. It was during this process that Lord Buddha turned towards Shravasti, 134km. from Lucknow. The town played host to Lord Buddha for 27 years and was his annual rainy season retreat. Believed to be founded by the mythological King Sravasti (hence names after him), the site holds ruins of many ancient Stupas, majestic monasteries and beautiful temples. This place also has an Anand Bodhi tree, an offspring of the original bodhi tree, planted by Buddha’s main disciple Anand.

The site of Mahet is spread over an area of 400 acres. The two main attractions here are the Pakki Kuti and the Kachchi Kuti. While Sahet, spread over an area of 32 acres and a little distance away from Mahet, it was here that Anathpindak, a wealthy merchant, constructed the Jetavana Vihar. The remnants of several temples, Stupas and Viharas have been found here. Like wise the huge World Peace Bell is another attraction, which was established with the help of the Japanese. The motive was to convey the message of humanity of Lord Buddha through the bell’s toll. There are also the Thai-Sri Lankan-Myanmar-Chinese-Korean Buddhist Temples, the Shobhnath Temple, Swarna Gandha Kuti, the Ananda Bodhi Tree and the Angulimal Cave here.

Accessibility

Air
The nearest airport is Babatpur : 30 Km.

Rail
Sarnath is directly connected by Varanasi - Gorakhpur Exp. 549/550 and Varanasi - Bhatni - Varanasi Exp 551/552.
Sarnath is directly Connected by one trains -Budha Purema Express upto Bodhgaya (M.W.F.)

Road
Sarnath, 10- km from Varanasi, is well connected by road to other destinations of the state.

UP Tourism Accommodation
• Modern Reception Centre, Sarnath
• Tourist Bungalow, (UPSTDC), Sarnath. (0542)2595965 Fax:(0542)2595877
• Jain Dharma Mandala, Sarnath.
• Rahi Tourist Bungalow (UPSTDC) Sarnath Ph. : (0542)2595965 Fax : (0542)2595877 e-mail: rahimrigdave@up-tourism.com
• Hotel Golden Buddha Ph.: 9935039368
• Sarnath Motel & Resort Ph.: (0542)2591212, 13
• Hotel Surabhi International Ph.: (0542)2587992, 13 Fax: (0542)2587992
• Kumar Guest House Ph. : (0542) 2587373

Other Accommodation
• Forest Rest House, Sarnath.
• Mahabodhi Society Dharamshala, Sarnath. Ph. (0542)2595955, Telefax : (0542)2595922 Fax 2595877
• Jain Dharma Mandala, Sarnath.
• Rahi Tourist Bungalow (UPSTDC) Sarnath Ph. : (0542)2595965 Fax : (0542)2595877 e-mail: rahimrigdave@up-tourism.com
• Hotel Golden Buddha Ph.: 9935039368
• Sarnath Motel & Resort Ph.: (0542)2591212, 13
• Hotel Surabhi International Ph.: (0542)2587992, 13 Fax: (0542)2587992
• Kumar Guest House Ph. : (0542) 2587373
Eight Stupas

Prayers At Swarn Gandh Kuti Vihar
Set up as a centre of learning by Maha Upasika Sithipol Bongkot of Thailand, this Thai meditation centre is a unique experience for visitors to Sravasti. The entire area is converted into a natural forest surrounded by a fresh water reservoir, houses six large halls of approximately 3000 capacity each for meditation, several solitary meditation huts, large dinning halls and a state of art reserve osmosis purification plant. About 200 women from various countries committed to service of mankind promote non formal education and other charitable activities from the centre. The eco friendly dwelling, management and lifestyle of the settlement inculcate within the visitor a sense of protection of biodiversity and compassion for all beings.
Daen Muhamongkol Chai Thai Monastery

Meditation Center
Sankisa is identified with the present village of Basantpur in Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh. Situated on the banks of river Kali, Sankisa is most easily accessible from Agra which is 175 km away on the Agra-Mainpuri road. The nearest railhead is Pakhna which is 11.5 km away. Sankisa is the place where the Buddha descended from heaven along with Lord Brahma and Devraj Indra after giving a discourse to his mother, Mayadevi. Emperor Ashoka erected an elephant pillar here to mark this holy spot.

Accessibility

Air
Nearest Airport is Lucknow - 176 km, from where Sravasti can be reached by rail upto Balrampur via Gonda.

Rail
Nearest railway station is at Balrampur - 17 Km. The rest of the route can be covered by road.

Road
Bus services are available from all major neighboring centres. Sravasti is - 119 km from Basti and - 17 km. from Balrampur.

UP Tourism Accommodation

- Tourist Bungalow, Sravasti, Distt. Sravasti (Run by U.P State Tourism Development Corporation)

Other Accommodation

- Inspection Bungalow, PWD.
- Burmese Temple. Rest House.
- Chinese Temple Rest House.
- Jain Dharamshala.
In his bid to spread his message, Lord Buddha also visited Kaushambi, 60 km from Allahabad, counted amongst the most prosperous cities of those times. It was the capital city of the then Vatsa Janpada, with Udayan as the king. This place is believed to have been visited by Lord Buddha in the 6th and 9th year after attaining enlightenment. He delivered several sermons here, elevating it to a centre of higher learning for the Buddhists. Excavations have revealed ruins of an Ashokan Pillar, an old fort and the Ghositaram Monastery, besides a huge number of sculptures and figurines, cast coins and terracotta objects.

Accessibility

Air
Agra 207 km., Amausi, Lucknow 245 km.

Rail
Nearest railway station Pakhana 10 km. and Neemkaroli 14 km.

Road
Fatehgarh 40 km., Farrukhabad 45 km., Kanpur 175 km., Agra 200 km.

Accommodation

UPSTDC Rahi Tourist Bungalow, Sankisa.
Ruins of Ghoshita Ram Vihar

Ruins of Ghoshita Ram Vihar
ushinagar, is one of the principal centres of Buddhist pilgrimage, is the place where Lord Buddha left his corporeal self and attained Mahaparinirvana. The credit for bringing this ancient site to light goes to General A. Cunningham and A.C.I. Carlyle, who, after excavating the site in 1861, later, between 1904 and 1912, several excavations conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India at Kushinagar confirmed its identity.

The monuments of Kushinagar are situated in three distinct groups comprising the main site of the Nirvana Temple, the central stupa and surrounding monasteries, the Mathakuar shrine to the southwest, and the Ramabhar Stupa a kilometer to the east.

Nirvana Stupa is a huge brickwork stupa, exposed by Carlyle in 1876, which stands at a height of 2.74 mtr. A copper vessel was unearthed at this site. It bore an inscription in ancient Brahmi, which stated that Lord Buddha's remains had been deposited here. Mathakuar shrine lies about 400 yards from the Parinirvana stupa. A black stone image of the Buddha in the bhumi sparsha mudra was recovered here. The last sermon by Lord Buddha was given here. Ramabhar Stupa is a large stupa which rises to a height of 49 ft. It marks the site where the Lord Buddha was cremated. In ancient Buddhist texts this stupa has been referred to as Mukut-Bandhan Vihar.

Accessibility

Air
The nearest airport is Bamrauli, Allahabad 40 km., Bahapur, Varanasi 200 km., Amaus, Lucknow 260 km

Rail
Rail Route is available till Bharwari (15 km) but the convenient rail connections are available from Allahabad Railway Station (60 km), which is well connected with all major cities.

Road
Allahabad 60 km., Kanpur 150 km., Varanasi 185 km., Sarnath 190 km., Lucknow 260 km.

UPTourism Accommodation

- Rahi Ilawart tourist bungalow, 35, M.G. Marg, Civil Lines, Allahabad. Ph: 0532-2407440
- Rahi Triveni Darshan, Yamuna Bank Road, Kydganj, Allahabad. Ph: 0532-2536646

Other Accommodation

- P. W. D. Dak-Bungalow at archeological site
- Jain Dharamshala, Kaushambi
- Sri Lanka Buddha Vihar, Kaushambi.

Ruins Of Ghoshita Ram Vihar

Inscription On Ashokan Pillar

Buddha's Statue At Mata Kuar Shrine

Kushinagar is one of the principal centres of Buddhist pilgrimage, the place where Lord Buddha left his corporeal self and attained Mahaparinirvana. The credit for bringing this ancient site to light goes to General A. Cunningham and A.C.I. Carlyle, who, after excavating the site in 1861, later, between 1904 and 1912, several excavations conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India at Kushinagar confirmed its identity.

The monuments of Kushinagar are situated in three distinct groups comprising the main site of the Nirvana Temple, the central stupa and surrounding monasteries, the Mathakuar shrine to the southwest, and the Ramabhar Stupa a kilometer to the east.

Nirvana Stupa is a huge brickwork stupa, exposed by Carlyle in 1876, which stands at a height of 2.74 mtr. A copper vessel was unearthed at this site. It bore an inscription in ancient Brahmi, which stated that Lord Buddha's remains had been deposited here. Mathakuar shrine lies about 400 yards from the Parinirvana stupa. A black stone image of the Buddha in the bhumi sparsha mudra was recovered here. The last sermon by Lord Buddha was given here. Ramabhar Stupa is a large stupa which rises to a height of 49 ft. It marks the site where the Lord Buddha was cremated. In ancient Buddhist texts this stupa has been referred to as Mukut-Bandhan Vihar.
kushinagar

Mahaparinirvana Temple

Reclining Buddha
Thai Temple

Relics Of Buddha In The Thai Temple
Accessibility

Air
Kasia airstrip - 5 Km, Gorakhpur Airport - 46 Km, Amausi Airport, Lucknow - 252 Km, Babatpur Airport, Varanasi - 286 Km.

Rail
The nearest railway stations are Deoria - 35 Km and Gorakhpur - 53 Km, which are linked with important destinations. Kushinagar does not have a railway station; one has to go up to Gorakhpur by train and from there reach Kushinagar by road.

Road
Situated on National Highway No. 28, with frequent bus services, Kushinagar is well connected with other parts of the state. Some major road distances are: Gorakhpur - 53 km, Lumbini (Nepal) - 170 km, Kapilastu - 157 km, Sarnath - 253 km, Saranath - 274 km.

UP Tourism Accommodation

- Pathik Niwas (UPSTDC), Kushinagar. Ph: 05564 - 273045, 273046. Fax: 05564 - 273045 e-mail: rahipathikniwas@up-toursim.com

Other Accommodation

- Hotel Nekko Lotus, (3 Star) Ph.: (05564) 273025-26
- International Guest House. Ph.: (05564) 273082
- Birla Hindu Buddha Dharmshala Ph.: (05564) 273105
- Burmese Dharmshala Ph.: (05564) 273105
- Hotel Royal Residency, (3 Star) Ph.: (05564) 273011-15
- Hotel The Imperial, (3 Star) Ph.: (05564) 273096-97
- Linshon Chinese Rest House Ph.: (05564) 273093