

# Trip Notes

**2020 Root Institute Pilgrimage to Buddha's Sites**  
27 January - 9 February, 2020  
14 days, 13 nights



**Time:** India is 4:30 hours behind Australian EST and 5:30 hours Eastern Time.

**Language** - Hindi is the official national language of India, however, there are 22 official languages. English is also widely spoken and you will be escorted by a local guide who speaks Hindi and English.

**Visa/Entry Requirements** - Passports must be valid for six months beyond the length of stay. Visas are required for all travelers. You can apply for a 60 day e-visa. You have to apply and pay online before your arrival at <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. You will then pickup your visa at the airport. Please do not apply until 30 days before arrival.

You will also need an Indian reference. Please use us if you wish: Ekno Tours & Travels PVT LTD, Dickey's Cottage, Village Molhi, PO Sidhpur, HP 176057, Tel: +91 98166 85999 India

**Vaccinations and Your Health** - We recommend that you contact either your GP or consult your nearest Travel Doctor about Vaccinations. If you have a medical condition and are taking medication for this please let us know at the time of booking.

**Insurance** - Travel insurance is compulsory. We recommend that you take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with you while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. The documents should be stored separately from the originals.

**Climate** - Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found at [www.accuweather.com](http://www.accuweather.com).

## Suggested Packing List

A complete list will be provided with deposit documentation.

## Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each on domestic flights; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 15kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that Indian authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage maybe confiscated. Domestic airlines within India have recently reviewed their checked luggage limits, as such all airlines have now implemented a maximum checked luggage limit of 15kg. Please keep this in mind when packing for your upcoming trip. Any excess luggage charges incurred will be at the expense of the passenger.

## Tipping

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry. A nominated tipping amount is included in all group tour pricing, however is not collected in your final payment received by us. This is so that it can be paid directly to your Local Guide who will then distribute the tips among your main service providers – guides, drivers and attendants – on your behalf. Suggested amount is US\$60 per person.

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Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services. The final tipping amount will be outlined in your final documentation.

**Exchanging Cash** - Machines that dispense cash are readily available throughout India which accept overseas debit/credit cards. They will dispense Indian Rupees in cash only (up to IR10,000 or US\$200 equivalent at any one time). Please notify your bank that you intend travelling to India. If you have cash, it is highly recommended that when travelling to cities outside of Delhi, Jaipur and Agra, and other main cities that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money. Australian, US Dollars Euros are easily exchanged throughout India however, other currencies can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your Local Guide will remind you to do this before departure.

### **Personal Expenses**

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of USD250 per week should be sufficient; however for those that can't resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

Your India tour does not include meals while on tour (only breakfast), providing you with freedom to explore the city and discover unique culinary delights. With this in mind, you will also need to allocate a certain amount of money for dinners, snacks and drinks while on tour. These meals are at your own arrangements so the amount allocated will be different for each tour participant.

**Optional Tours** - Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by

your Local Guide.

**Your Accommodation** - All group tour hotels have private Western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty please speak to your Local Guide. Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a boutique family run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage type hotel. In remote areas accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all Western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local 4 star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between United States and India. Rest assured that all hotels used by us are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

**Late Check-Out** - Late check-out until 12pm is included in this group tour for passengers travelling on our package in the last hotel of stay. If you want to stay past the 12pm deadline please let us know on at the time of booking as extra charges will apply.

**Development** - Although India is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in United States. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in United States; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your Local Guide.

**Traffic in India** - Main and inner city roads in India have a reputation for being very congested.

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For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road – not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections below are approximations only.

**Seatbelts** - Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in India and therefore the Indian people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving.

**Rail Journeys** - Your trip may or may not involve a train journey in India. Ekno Experience tries to book 1st or 2nd A/c depending on the availability. Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disordered and confrontational as passengers will start boarding well before people have finished getting off! If your group is disembarking at a stop that is not the end of the line, the train will only stop for 10 minutes and you must have your luggage ready and by your side a few minutes before the train pulls into the station. Follow your Local Guide at all times.

**Climbing Steps** - Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance,

and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

## Electricity

240V 50Hz

Electric Plug Details

Indian-style plug with two circular metal pins above a large circular grounding pin



OR



European plug with two circular metal pins

## Consider Cultural Differences

India has many religions, cultures and histories. Foreign tourists, particularly females, may be stared at as many Indian women don't often go out without their father or husband. Be considerate of this belief, dress with consideration and don't take it personally.

## Safety & Security

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade states, 'Due to the risk of harassment and assault, women should take particular care in all parts of India and exercise caution even if they are travelling in a group.' For full advice on travelling to India, visit <http://smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/India>

## Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in non-revealing clothes. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable

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while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove them, you will have to remain outside.

Bring some shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The itinerary below will indicate when you need to consider this.

### **Itinerary changes**

1. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.
2. Many roads are uneven and or sections may be undergoing repair. Travelling by car is a slow process in India and usually cars travel on average 50kms per hour for distance travel (ie 500kms take 10 hours).
3. The domestic airlines in this region have frequent schedule changes. We will make alternative arrangements if flights are cancelled and your Local Guide will be informed of these.

### **Flight Delays or Changes to Arrival Times**

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our India office on + 91 9418791001 (Local Guide) OR + 91 98168 38454 (24 hours) to urgently advise your arrival ....

details have changed. Please ensure you have details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in India. This will ensure your Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival. If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Ekno Experience/Travels cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in India as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on.

We will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival times.

## **Itinerary**

**27 Jan 2020**

**Day 01**

**Arrive Delhi**

Welcome to incredible India! An Ekno representative will meet you and escort you to the hotel upon your arrival at the airport in Delhi. After checking into the hotel, spend the rest of the day at your leisure exploring the local area and soaking up the vibrant atmosphere.

Overnight: Hotel, Delhi

**28 Jan 2020**

**Day 02**

**Delhi**

After breakfast at the hotel, we will meet with the Root Institute representative – Venerable Drolma who will accompany us on our pilgrimage. We will spend the day taking in the many sights and sounds of Delhi, including a visit to the National Museum which houses the Sacred Relics of Buddha (5th-4th century BC) which were discovered in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The relics are outstanding specimens of Buddhist art and are illustrated through exhibits in a variety of materials and forms from the three principal Buddhist traditions - Hinayana, Mahayana & Vajrayana.

In the afternoon we will visit some of the most famous

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monuments of Delhi – including India Gate, Rajpath and the Secretariat Buildings.

Overnight: Hotel, Delhi.

**29 Jan 2020**

**Day 03**

**Delhi – Varanasi**

This morning we will take a flight to Varanasi, considered to be the spiritual gateway of India and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Upon arrival we will check into our hotel before taking a sightseeing trip to the Main Ghat area and the Vishwanath Temple.

Varanasi is the holiest of the seven sacred cities in Hinduism and Jainism and played an important role in the development of Buddhism. This evening you will have the opportunity to participate in the breathtaking evening puja (prayer ceremony) which accompanies sunset on the Ganges.

Overnight: Hotel, Varanasi.

**30 Jan 2020**

**Day 04**

**Sarnath**

After breakfast we will drive to Sarnath, one of the four main Buddhist pilgrimage sites in North India. On arrival in Sarnath, we will visit the Deer Park where the Buddha taught The Four Noble Truths (his first teachings) after attaining enlightenment. At Deer Park we will offer prostrations, incense and Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha by circumambulating the Dhamekh Stupa and reflecting on the Four Noble Truths. This is the site where Buddha gave this teaching as he turned the first wheel of Dharma. Time permitting we will visit the Buddhas relics at the Sri Lankan Temple.

The Dhamekh Stupa is said to mark the exact spot of the Buddha's first teaching of the Four Noble Truths. In the late afternoon we will return to Varanasi. The evening is free to explore or rest at your leisure.

Overnight: Hotel, Varanasi

**31 Jan 2020**

**Day 05**

**Varanasi – Sravasti**

After a very early breakfast, we will be driven to Sravasti (approximately 8 hours), stopping for breaks along the way. Sravasti is where the Buddha spent the greater part of his monastic life, as well as many rainy seasons teaching to his disciples.

Overnight: Hotel, Sravasti

**1 Feb 2020**

**Day 06**

**Sravasti**

Today we will spend the day exploring the ruins of Sravasti, the capital of an ancient kingdom and we reflect on the story of Angulimala as we circumambulated his commemoration stupa, and the generosity of Anathapindada at his commemoration stupa. We will offer Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha upon Miracle Hill. Then at Jeta Grove, at the entrance of Buddhas main residence we will offer prostrations, circumambulate three times, offer incense and recite the Vajra Cutter Sutra, at the place this sutra was first taught.

We will be able to see more age old stupas, majestic viharas, and several temples, the remains of which have been used to establish Buddha's association with the town.

Overnight: Hotel, Sravasti

**2 Feb 2020**

**Day 07**

**Sravasti – Kushinagar**

This morning we will leave for Kushinagar (approximately 6 hours drive). Kushinagar is an important Pilgrimage site where the Buddha attained paranirvana after his death and is where the statue of the reclining Buddha is housed. The image was unearthed during excavations in 1876. Carved from sandstone, the statue represents the dying Buddha reclining on his right side. We will also have the opportunity to visit the site of the Maitreya Statue Project.

Overnight: Hotel, Kushinagar

**3 Feb 2020**

**Day 08**

**Kushinagar**

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First stop after breakfast we will offer prostrations and circumambulations at the Rambhar Stupa, which marks Lord Buddha's cremation ground. In the Mahaparinivana temple shrine room of the Reclining Buddha, we will offer prostrations and circumambulations, reciting many prayers together including Praises to Shakyamuni Buddha, Seven Limb Prayer, Praise of Dependent Origination and the Foundation of All Good Qualities. If the opportunity arises we can offer incense and robes and meditate at Buddha's side on death and impermanence, then chant Buddhas mantra around the beautiful Buddha statue in the shrine room nearby.

We will then visit the Rambhar Stupa, which marks Lord Buddha's cremation ground.

Overnight: Hotel, Kushinagar

**4 Feb 2020**

**Day 09**

**Kushinagar – Vaishali**

After breakfast we will leave for Vaishali, an important pilgrimage location known as the place where 500 women were ordained by the Buddha.

On the way we will visit Kesariya Stupa, the venue where the Buddha delivered his Kalama Sutta. The Stupa has 5 large terraces which vary in shape and house a life like statue of Lord Buddha. We will make a brief stop to offer prostrations and circumambulations at this huge Stupa.

At Vishali we will make prostrations and circumambulate the site where Buddhas relics are kept, and time permitting a visit to the museum. Here we will offer prostrations as we circumambulate Anandas' Stupa, Buddha's residence and the first ever nunnery. We will offer praises to Tara and make heartfelt prayers.

Overnight: Hotel, Vaishali

**5 Feb 2020**

**Day 10**

**Vaishali – Nalanda Monastery - Rajgir**

After breakfast we will depart for Nalanda Monastery (4 hours drive). Nalanda was the most renowned university in ancient India and was home to the great Buddhist scholars of the time. Established in the 5th century BC, it remained the centre of learning up until the 12th century AD.

In the afternoon we will leave for Rajgir, which during the Buddha's lifetime was the capital of the powerful Magadhan kingdom, ruled by the virtuous King Bimbisara.

We will make prostrations and offer incense at Shariputra's Stupa and recite prayers including Praises to Shakyamuni Buddha and to the Seventeen Nalanda Pandits, the Seven Limb Prayer, Praise of Dependent Origination, Foundation of All Good Qualities Lam Rim prayer and complete our practice with Shantidevas dedication verses.

We will make our way to our hotel for the evening.

Evening at leisure.

Overnight: Hotel, Rajgir

**6 Feb 2020**

**Day 11**

**Rajgir – Bodhgaya**

After breakfast we will take the chairlift to visit Vultures Peak and the Japanese Stupa. On top visit the beautiful Peace Pagoda and be enchanted by the perpetual beating of the drum of truth. We will prostrate and circumambulate the pagoda and reflect on emptiness and dependent arising. It is a great place to participate in a walking meditation to Vultures Peak and offer prostrations, circumambulations, incense and light and recite the Heart Sutra here in the place where Buddha first taught this essential sutra.

Vulture Peak Mountain is one of several sites that was frequented by the Buddha and his community of disciples for both training and retreat. It is also the location where the Buddha gave sermons including the renowned Heart Sutra.

During the late afternoon we will be driven to Bodhgaya. In the centre of Bodhgaya is the ancient Mahabodhi Temple, the holiest Buddhist temple in the world. The temple marks the location where the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment.

Overnight: Root Institute, Bodhgaya

**7 Feb 2020**

**Day 12**

**Bodhgaya**

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After breakfast we will make a pilgrimage to the Mahabodhi Stupa.

During the next two days we will go together to the Mahabodhi Stupa where we offer prostrations, circumambulations at the stupa. If the occasions arises we will offer robes to the Buddha and recite Praises to Shakyamuni Buddha and around the inner and out koras. The history of this site goes back over 2500 years and it is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Enjoy spending a relaxing morning here, watching other pilgrims and quietly contemplating life. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure to explore the town.

Overnight: Root Institute, Bodhgaya

**8 Feb 2020**

**Day 13**

**Bodhgaya**

This morning we will attend Buddhist teachings at the Root Institute. In the afternoon we will have the opportunity to visit other significant Buddhist temples around Bodhgaya.

Overnight: Root Institute, Bodhgaya

**9 Feb 2020**

**Day 14**

**Depart Bodhgaya**

The pilgrimage tour ends after breakfast this morning. We will transfer you to the airport in time for your ongoing flight. If you wish this pilgrimage package can be combined with one of our other tours or India extensions.

## INCLUDES

- Fully accompanied by a representative of the Root Institute and Ekno Travels
- Met on arrival at Delhi International Airport
- 13 nights' accommodation with breakfast
- 13 Dinners
- Flight from Delhi to Varanasi
- **Private transportation for all transfers and sightseeing as mentioned below:**
  - Delhi airport pickup and drop off
  - Sightseeing in Delhi
  - Pickup in Varanasi and transferred to hotel, sightseeing to Sarnath

- Car/Mini Bus from Varanasi – Sravasti – Kushinagar – Kesariya – Vaishali – Nalanda – Rajgir - Bodhgaya
- All attractions and entrance fees as per itinerary
- Boat Ride in Varanasi
- Local guides in Delhi, Varanasi, Sarnath, Nalanda and Rajgir
- Accompanied by local English speaking guide from Delhi to Bodhgaya

## EXCLUDES

- Return airfares to India
- Cost of Indian tourist visa (on arrival)
- Lunch
- Extra activities and transport not stipulated in the itinerary
- Personal expenditure such as drinks, laundry service and souvenirs
- Tipping
- Camera and video entry charges at local sights and monuments
- Occasional optional items not identified in itinerary description
- Donations
- Compulsory insurance of any kind

**Updated on 9 April 2019**

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# Traveller's Checklist

Print this checklist out and then - see if you have forgotten anything!

Most people have their own individual preferences for what they like to travel with so our list won't be comprehensive for everyone. It's intended to be a handy reference point from which you can build.

**Documents** - Don't leave home without them - THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS YOU'LL CARRY! nearly everything else can be bought en route if necessary

- Passport
- Visa
- 4 Spare Passport photos
- (Prescriptions, Doctors letters)
- Emergency Information - (contacts, Embassy addresses, travel insurance card and contact numbers)
- Australian Currency
- Credit / Debit Cards
- Address / phone list
- Photocopies of important documents
- Business Cards - good even for pleasure trips

**Clothes** - depends on what you will be doing. The key to travelling light is to set out what you want to take and then halve it!

- Trousers or dresses / skirts
- Underwear/Thermals ie 2 tops, 1 bottom
- Socks
- Belt
- Cold weather gear (jumper, coat, warm hat, gloves, scarf)
- Sleep Clothes
- Rain gear (jacket or umbrella)
- Comfortable walking shoes (must be worn in)
- Sun Hat

**Toiletries** - a lot of items can be purchased wherever you go so don't take industrial-sized bottles unless you know it is not available or you can't live without it

- Comb and/or brush
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss etc
- Deodorant
- Soap
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Skin-care lotion
- Razor & shaving cream
- Personal hygiene items
- Vitamins

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- Toilet Paper (at least 2 rolls)
- Small Bath towel
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Nail clippers

**Medicine Kit** - these items often won't be available or at least not easily found, so it's best to take what you think you will need.

- Aspirin
- Plasters
- Antiseptic wipes
- Antibiotic cream
- Insect bite cream
- Sterile bandages and safety pins / clips
- Waterproof tape
- Upset stomach medication
- Diarrhea medicine
- Sunburn relief / lip balm
- Cold/flu medicine
- Thermometer
- Prescriptions - (malaria pills, altitude sickness pills, antibiotics, pain killers)
- Regular medication, plus a letter from your doctor for anything unusual.

#### **Miscellaneous**

- Luggage - suitcase, backpack, convertible bag
- Day pack
- Wallet
- Money belt
- Organizer bags (mesh or different colors)
- Phone/Ipad
- Camera
- Guide book and maps
- Phrase books
- Reading books
- Travel journal & pens cards
- Small padlocks
- Luggage ID tags
- Watch - (preferably with alarm)
- Alarm Clock
- Sunglasses and case
- Torch
- Mini sewing / repair kit

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- Travel clothesline & pegs
- Sink plug - (multi size)
- Laundry bag
- Ziplock plastic bags
- Large plastic garbage bag - to use as rain protection for your main bag
- Swiss Army style pocket knife with scissors, corkscrew, screwdriver etc
- Electrical converter / adapter if you have AC appliances
- Electrical plug adapters
- Earplugs / eyeshades
- Lighter & candle
- Mosquito net
- Sleeping bag if you will be in cold climates (Cheap hotels don't have the best bedding or heating)

#### **Before you go**

- Stop deliveries and hold mail
- Arrange for care of pets, lawn, house plants, garden, swimming pool
- Arrange for home security if you're worried
- Empty refrigerator and garbage
- Turn off hot water cylinder
- Pre-pay bills (or ask close friend to collect mail and pay bills for you)
- Lock all doors and windows
- Secure grounds if in cyclone area & season
- Triple check that you have Passport / Tickets / Money

## **HAPPY PACKING!**

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