

WHICH ARE THE BUDDHISTS' SACRED PLACES?

Many of the most sacred places of Buddhism are those connected with events in the Buddha's life. These include Lumbini in Nepal, where the Buddha was born, and three places in India – Bodh Gaya, where he achieved enlightenment, Sarnath, where he taught for the first time, and Kushinagara, where he died. Buddhist pilgrims – monks, nuns and ordinary people – come from all over the world to visit these holy sites and thousands of other temples, *stupas* and shrines across the Buddhist world. There are many reasons for making these special journeys, or pilgrimages. They help people to feel closer to the Buddha and his teaching, and to gain good *karma* which will help them get nearer to *nirvana*.



SACRED PLACES

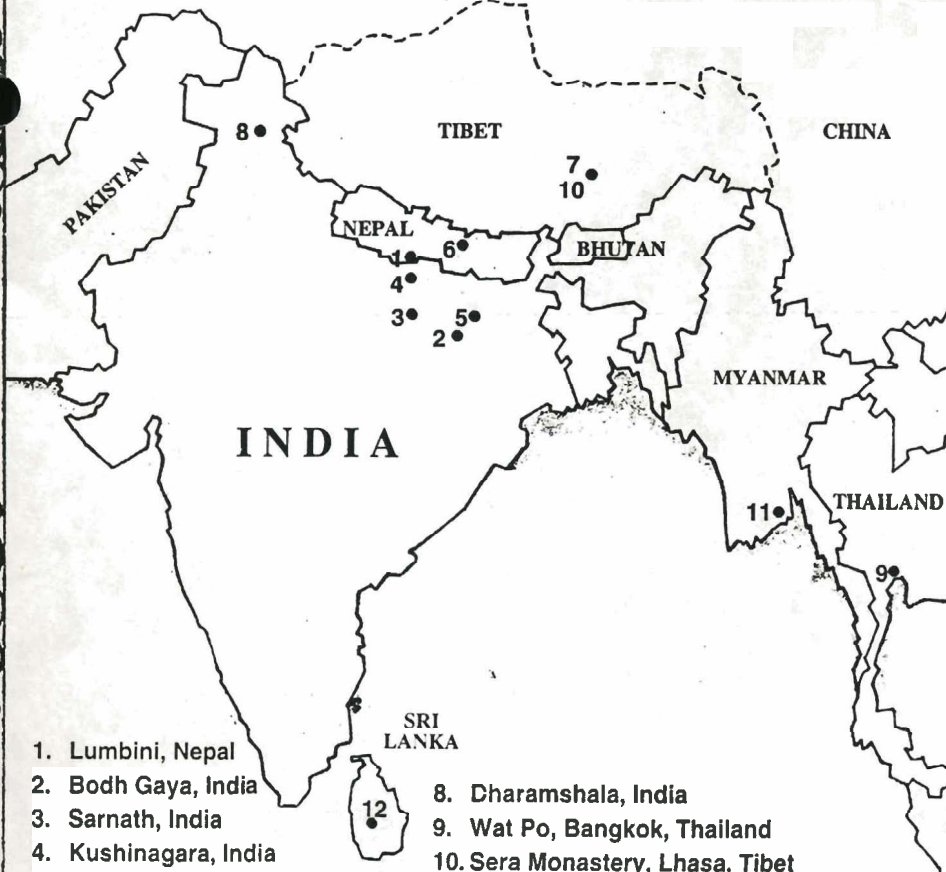
This map shows some of the holiest places for Buddhists. They include places connected with the life of the Buddha himself and other sacred places mentioned throughout this book.



THE BUDDHA'S BIRTH



Many legends have been told about the birth of the Buddha in Lumbini, Nepal. The most famous tells how the Buddha's mother, Queen Maya, had a dream about a white elephant, the sign of great good fortune. The sign proved to be true. Some time later, on the night of the full moon in May, Siddhartha Gautama was born in a woodland grove in Lumbini, as his mother was on her way to visit her parents. As the baby was born, from his mother's side, many unusual and magical events took place. Legend says that the earth shook and was flooded with light. The trees in the grove burst into bloom and two streams of water, one hot, one cold, flowed down from the sky. Blind people were able to see again, lame people could walk and prisoners were freed from their chains. Seven days after her son's birth, Queen Maya died. The young Gautama was brought up by his aunt in his father's luxurious palace.



- 1. Lumbini, Nepal
- 2. Bodh Gaya, India
- 3. Sarnath, India
- 4. Kushinagara, India
- 5. Nalanda University, India
- 6. Bodhnath Stupa, Kathmandu, Nepal
- 7. Jokhang Temple, Lhasa, Tibet
- 8. Dharamshala, India
- 9. Wat Po, Bangkok, Thailand
- 10. Sera Monastery, Lhasa, Tibet
- 11. Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon (Rangoon), Myanmar
- 12. Temple of the Sacred Tooth, Kandy, Sri Lanka

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