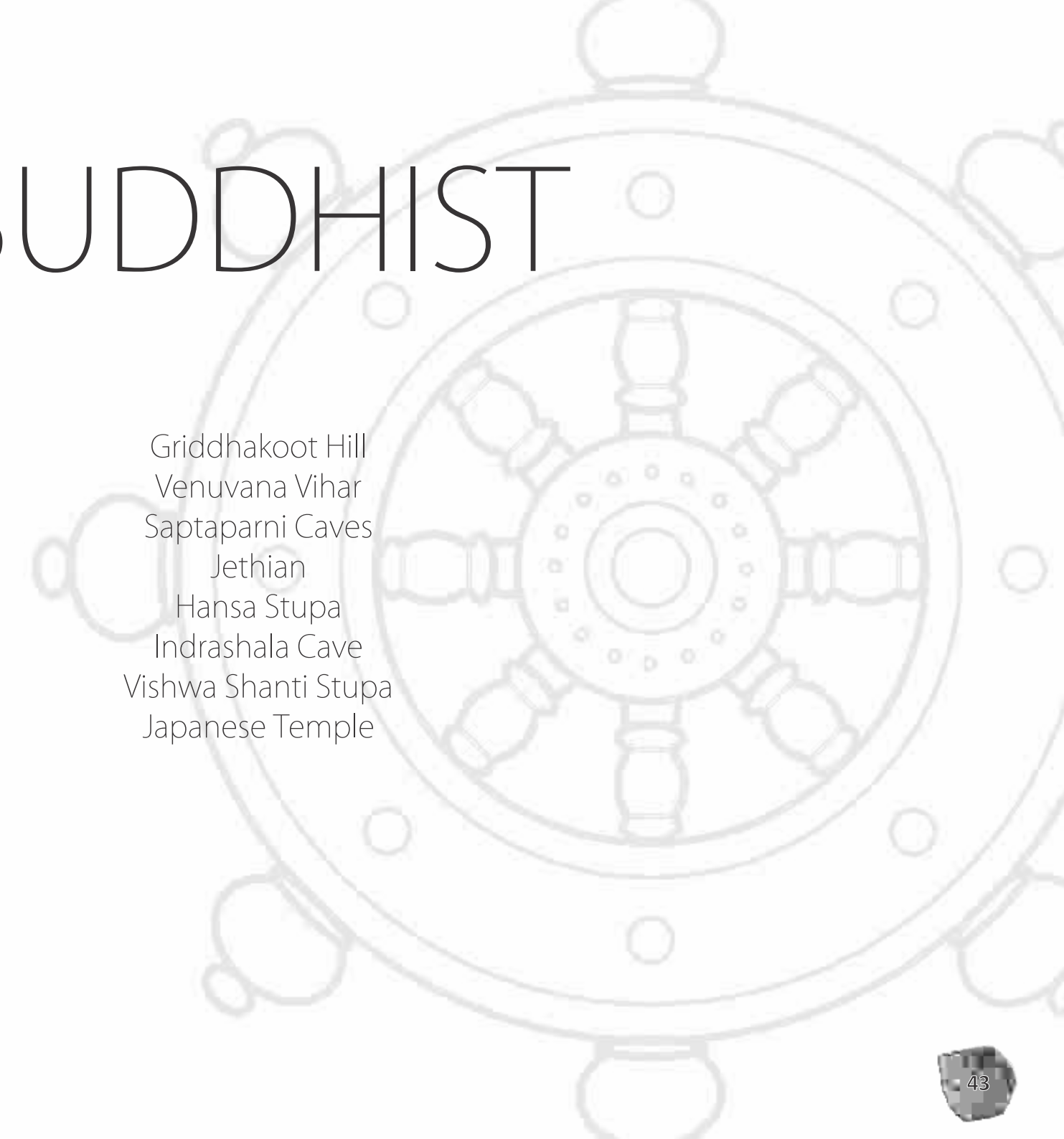




## PILGRIMAGE SITES

The five hill ranges that surround the valley of Rajgir had been the recluse of innumerable ascetics and mendicants from different religions. The numerous natural caves were their favorite places for meditation. The Buddha, Mahavira and many Hindu and Muslim ascetics have spent their spiritual time of life in the hills and valley of Rajgir. Thus today Rajgir has become one of the important destinations of Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Muslim and Sikh devotees.

# BUDDHIST



Griddhakoot Hill  
Venuvana Vihar  
Saptaparni Caves  
Jethian  
Hansa Stupa  
Indrashala Cave  
Vishwa Shanti Stupa  
Japanese Temple

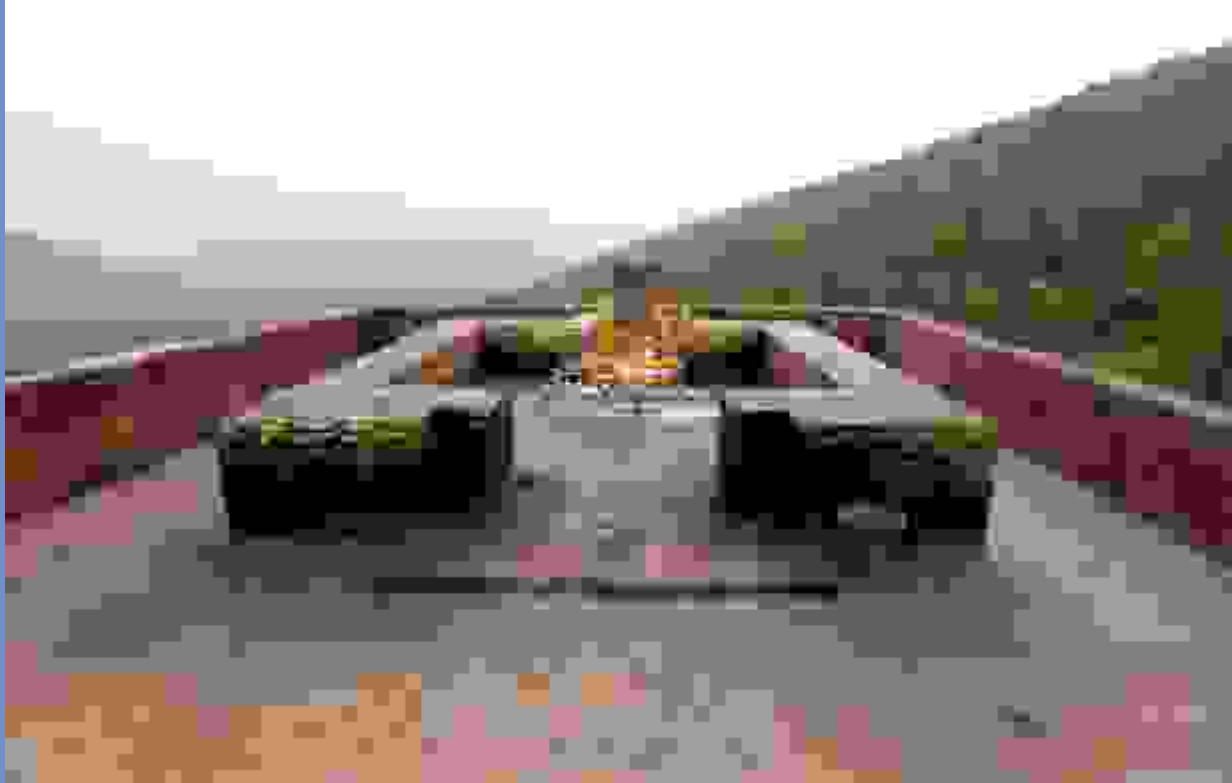
# Griddhakoot Hill

Quite true to the meaning of its name as Vulture Peak, indeed the peak appears as a shape of a vulture head with a natural stone formation. This place is also referred as Gujjhakut in the Buddhist texts.

One of the most ancient sites where the Buddha is said to have preached his 'Lotus sermon' was amongst the favourite meditating place of the Buddha. Even today one is able to feel the deep sense of spiritual power at the peak that is devoid of any man-made grandeur.

A statue of the Buddha (600 CE) was found here and currently housed at the Archaeological Museum of Nalanda.

The view of the surrounding forest land and the path leading to Ghoda Katora Lake adds to the divine experience.



# Venuvana Vihar

(Veluvana)

## Wisdom In The Lap of Nature

Although the name suggests as Bamboo Grove Resort, presently there are not many of the plant at the site. This place is regarded as the first gifted- place to the Buddha by Bimbisara, the king of Magadha at that time. Bimbisara once got delayed while taking bath at the nearby Saraswati River and the gate of the Rajgir city was closed even to the King. An exemplary security system indeed! The King spent the night in the company of the Buddha at this Bamboo Garden and that is how the place is significant to the devotees.

There is a large artificial lake and a Buddha recently built sculpture by Japanese devotees next to the lake where one can bask in the peaceful atmosphere.



# Saptaparni Caves

(Sattapanni )

After a long climb one reaches to this sacred Buddhist pilgrimage. There are large natural caves and an extended rock platform at this place where the Buddha is said to have meditated. After six months of the Buddha's Mahaparinirvana, his chief disciple Mahakashyapa called for the first Buddhist Council at this place where a large number of followers congregated and started to formally record the teachings of the Buddha. This is the place where the compilation of the Buddhist core philosophy, Tripitaka was transformed in text. The convention of organising councils in order to spread and strengthen the holistic experience of Buddhism, started from this very point.

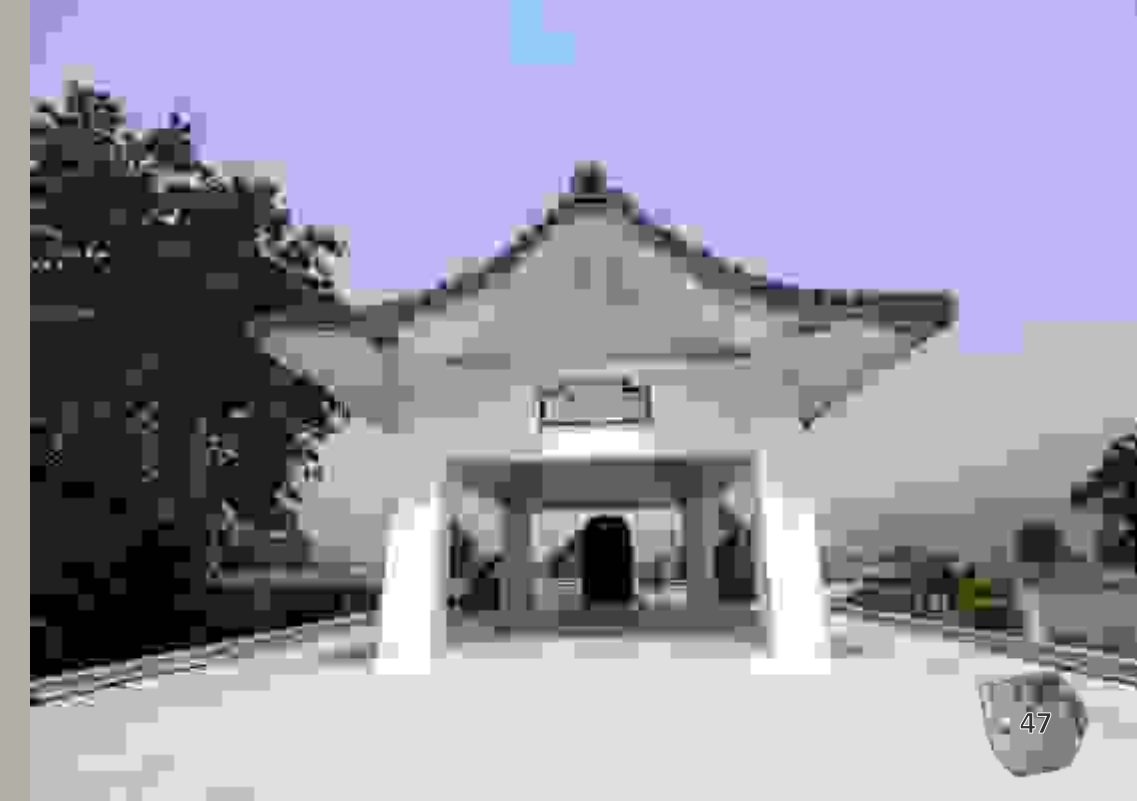
The place offers a splendid view of the forest of the hill side and the Rajgir city below.



# Jethian

Originally referred as Yeshtivana or Latthivana is spread over a long valley- path and hills where the Buddha travelled and stayed while he returned to Rajgir from Gaya after his enlightenment. During his quest for the Truth he arrived at Rajgir and Bimbisara was impressed by the travelling ascetic's wisdom. The King requested Gautama Buddha to come back to his kingdom when the Seeker finds His answers. The Buddha kept his promise and spent many years after He attained enlightenment and shared his wisdom with the people of Rajgir. Bimbisara welcomed his return to Rajgir from the valley which is now known as Jethian. There are numerous stupas around this valley to mark the Buddha's presence and subsequent popularity of the area.

The tale behind the name of the place as Yeshtivana or Latthivana which means bamboo grove is found in the narration of the great Chinese scholar Xuanzang. It says that a man once tried to measure the Buddha's height with a bamboo stick and failed to do so. In his frustration he threw the bamboo and that bamboo grew to be a large bamboo grove. The story reveals a subtle philosophy of the common man's narrow idea of measuring the ever-growing divinity.





# Hansa Stupa

There are different opinions about the location of Hansa Stupa. Some referred it to Parwati and some pointing it to at Giriya. There is an unexcavated stupa mound visible on the top which is referred to as Hansa Stupa in the Xuanzang narration. Although Hansa Stupa is belived to be the distinction of being the most complete stupa in India, till date.

The tale goes as once a monk was looking at the flying geese and lamented that there was no food for the day and one goose dropped dead from the sky. The monks built a stupa over the buried goose thus the name Hansa (Goose) Stupa.



# Indrashala Cave

Where Sakka came to ask the Buddha his 42 questions



Another fabled cave which is also referred as Indashala in the Buddhist texts was once a very popular pilgrimage for the Buddhist devotees. The myth about the cave says that Indra (Sakka) the King of the gods himself ascended here to meet the Buddha to test His wisdom. The Buddha delivered here the Sakkaphana Sutta while answering the famous 42 questions asked by Indra. He also uttered verses 206, 207 and 208 of the Dhammapada while staying here. Followers of Tibetan Buddhism will be interested to know that Buddhasrijnana, the famous commentator on the Guhyasamaja Tantra also once lived in this cave.

In the narration of the Chinese devotee traveller Xuanzang it is mentioned that the 42 questions were inscribed on the cave wall although there is no sign of such inscription now. Xuanzang recorded the interesting story behind its construction. 'The Long Discourses of the Buddha' by Walshe is a lucid translation of Sakkapanha Sutta.

The visitor must keep in mind the long walk and climb involved for this site. It is a half day's trip from Rajgir and and one should leave the site well before dark.

# Vishwa Shanti Stupa

Spreading Peace

The 7 minutes' ropeway- ride to reach the Stupa at the peak makes the journey a memorable experience. In 1969, Nochidatsu Fuji a Buddhist devotee from Japan built this Shanti Stupa to spread the message of peace. The beautiful white stupa made of marble and concrete, shines from the hilltop like a half moon caught at the hilltop. There are four golden Buddha statues in different postures on the four sides of the dome. There is also a meditation temple behind the Stupa.

The view of the Rajgir city and the forest land spread around the hill makes this Stupa a 'must visit' in any tourists' itinerary.

**Important Information:** The Rope-way remains closed on Thursdays.

# The Japanese Temple

Art in Devotion

This is the most recently built religious point of Rajgir. Situated at the very heart of the city it has become a popular destination for the Buddhist devotees as well as other tourists. The architecture and the well-crafted artistic decoration offer an exclusive ambience in the temple.

