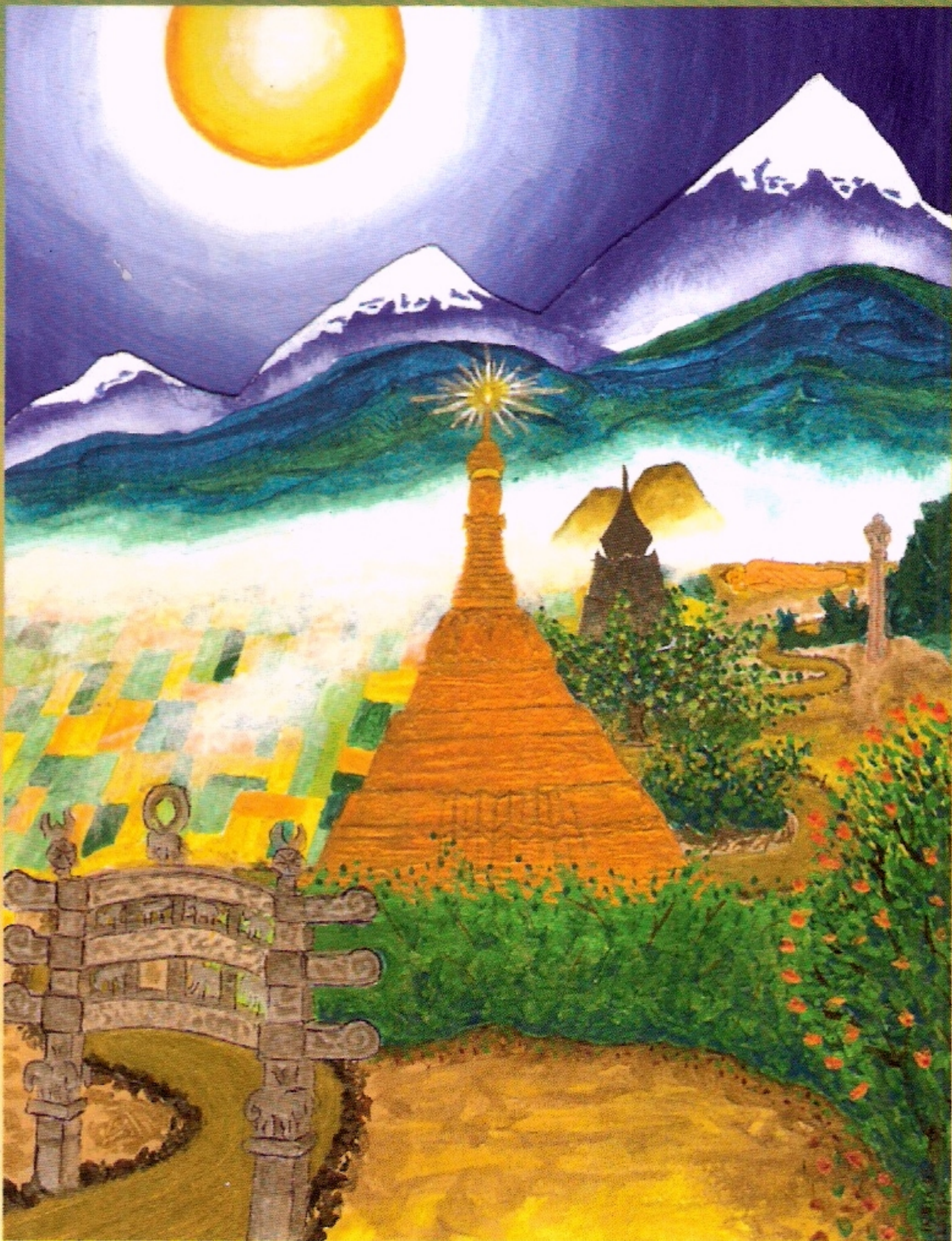


Along the Path

*The Meditator's Companion
to the Buddha's Land*



Kory Goldberg & Michelle Décary

Suggested Itineraries for a Dhamma Yatra

If you are considering going on a pilgrimage (*yatra*) to the sacred Dhamma places in the Middle Land, we suggest one of two itineraries, both round-trip routes from Delhi. The first route is for those of you who want to go only to the main destinations, while the second is for the more enthusiastic *yatri* (pilgrim) wanting to meditate off the beaten track.

The **first route** for a *yatra*, which will require a minimum of two weeks by private vehicle and three weeks by public transport, looks something like this: Delhi to Vārāṇasī & Sārnāth, to Bodhgayā, to Rajgir & Nalanda, to Patna, to Vaishali, to Kushinagar, to Lumbinī, to Kapilavatthu, to Shravasti, and back to Delhi.

The **second route** includes all the places mentioned in the Middle Land section, and requires at least 6 weeks by private vehicle and 8 weeks by public transport.

The suggested durations will enable you to explore and meditate in these places for a few days, without the frustrating rush of trying to see too much in too little time. You can, of course, leave out any of the places according to your interest or time constraints.

There are also several tour operators who offer pilgrimage packages, taking care of all your travel, food and accommodation needs. While it can be argued that this sort of packaged tour reduces the opportunities for spontaneity and adventure, this method of travel enables pilgrims to focus on experience and Dhamma practice without all the logistical headaches, and may be best for those with limited time to plan or travel.

As always, word-of-mouth is the best way to go about deciding what's best for you. Some travellers have recommended tours from www.buddhapath.com, www.buddhapilgrimage.com and www.buddhist-pilgrimage.com. Visit their websites for prices and dates. The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (www.irctc.co.in) offers a luxurious, all-inclusive 8-day pilgrimage to the main holy sites (Lumbinī, Bodhgayā, Sārnāth, Shravasti, Rajgir and Kushinagar). Pilgrims travel on the *Mahaparinirvana Express*—an air-conditioned train specially reserved for the pilgrimage—access the sites by road in air-conditioned jeeps and buses, and stay in high-end hotels (www.railtourismindia.com/buddha).

I have to admit I was very sceptical of the 'merit' of visiting a place. I thought, "What is all this hokey-pokey talk about vibrations that are 2500 years old?" I am very grateful that in spite of my stubbornness and doubt, I signed up for the yatra with Goenka-ji and experienced it for myself. It was so wonderful, filling me with so much inspiration to keep walking the path.

– American Pilgrim