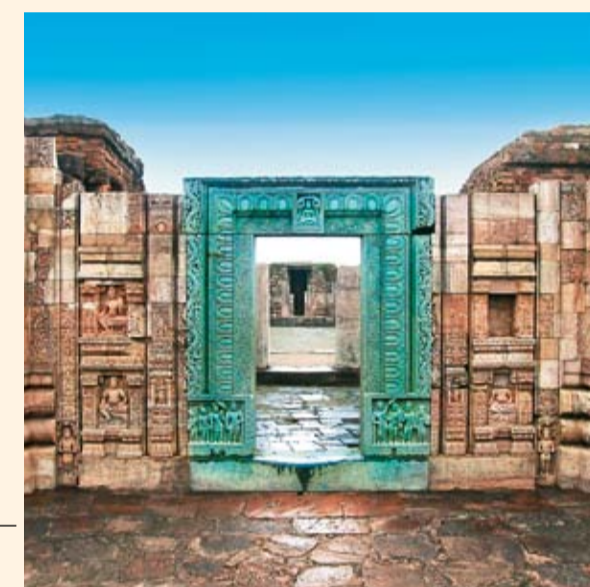


**DIAMOND TRIANGLE BUDDHIST CIRCUIT:
RATNAGIRI, UDAYGIRI, & LALITGIRI**

Odisha's classic Buddhist sites of Ratnagiri and Udaygiri in Jajpur District, and Lalitgiri in Cuttack District make up the popular Diamond Triangle Buddhist Circuit. Belonging to the Vajjarajyan sect of Buddhism, which is also known as the Diamond Vehicle, these sites form the Diamond Triangle Buddhist Circuit. You will get an excellent opportunity to delve deep into the Buddhist monastic lifestyle, the artisanship of the stupas, prayer halls, sculptures and inscriptions which document this spiritual legacy from ancient times.

Ratnagiri

Located 100 km away from the state capital Bhubaneswar Ratnagiri, which nestles on the banks of the Keluo River, has a superb concentration of Buddhist antiquities. Extensive excavations had unearthed the Ratnagiri Mahavihara. The site also revealed a huge stupa (Stupa 1), two monasteries (Monastery No 1 & 2), another monastery, a cluster of votive stupas, eight



temples and lots of sculptures in stone and bronze. Ratnagiri is also the only monastery in India to have a curvilinear roof. The excavation laid bare the importance of the site as a Buddhist centre, dating back to the times of Gupta king Narasimha Gupta Baladitya in the early 6th century CE. As revealed by ancient inscriptions, Ratnagiri's Mahavihara was a great centre of learning in Buddhist Philosophy as also for yoga and Tantra. Vajrayana is a tantric version of Buddhist practices. As ascertained in his *History of Buddhism in India*, Taranatha mentions that teachings of both Hinayana and Mahayana schools of Buddhism were propelled at the Ratnagiri-vihara in its early days during Gupta



Buddhist Circuit

Set aside some quality time to explore Odisha's rich Buddhist heritage. A prominent proponent of the faith was no less a personage than the Emperor Ashoka. Having converted to Buddhism after the bloodbath of the Kalinga War, he propagated it with great vigour as the principle faith across his vast kingdom. While his edicts at Dhauli are the first indicator which marks this landmark change, across Odisha are a scattering of sites that chronicle the spread of Buddhism. Many such discoveries are still being unearthed

rule. As revealed by the *Pag Sam Jon Zang*, a Tibetan treatise Ratnagiri was an important center in the development of the *Kalachakratantra*. Lending credence to this is the plethora of kalachakra imagery you will discover on the votive stupas, plaques, and artifacts. Under the patronage of the ruling kings, Buddhism continued to flourish here well into the 12th century CE.

In 1949, P Acharya in *The Orissa Review*, suggested that the remains of the Pushpagiri monastery, visited by Xuanzang, comprised the present remains at Naltigiri (Lalitgiri), Udayagiri and Ratnagiri. Puspagiri rubbed shoulders with the likes of Nalanda, Takshila and Vikramshila universities as one of the premier institutions of higher learning in ancient India. Pop into the ASI

Museum to browse through its rich collection of finds from the site.

Udayagiri

Located 90 km from Bhubaneswar this is one of the largest Buddhist complex sites in Odisha. A considerable part of the site still needs discovery but, this spot assumed further importance after excavation work revealed the ancient name of the monastery as *Madhavapura Mahavihara* and brought to light a sprawling complex of Buddhist remains comprising brick monasteries, a brick stupa, and rock-cut sculptures and stepped well with an inscription. The monastery is divided into two parts—the Madhavapura Mahavihar and the Simhaprastha Mahavihar. The Madhavapura



Mahavihar has a maha stupa along with a chaitya (prayer hall), votive stupas and a commemorative stupa. Remnants of monasteries, meditation chambers and carved statues are in the Simhaprastha Mahavihar complex. Of note here is the stone-carved lion, and the statue of Avalokitesvara. Unlike at Ratnagiri and Lalitgiri, no sculptures or scriptures have been recovered as yet to link the site to the Vajrayana tantric cult. Chronologically, the Udayagiri Buddhist complex dates later than Ratnagiri and Lalitgiri and the monasteries were probably flourishing between 7th to 12th centuries CE.

Lalitgiri

Also known by locals as Naltigiri, Lalitgiri is the site of Odisha's oldest monastery dating to the 1st century CE. It's also held in deep veneration by Buddhists as in 1985 a discovery yielded by a stupa, of the stone casket that was a repository for the sacred bone relics, probably of the Tathagata himself, and contents of silver and gold. Dominating the site, spread over 325.49 acres, are four monasteries and remains of a Chaityagriha encircled by a cavalcade of votive



stupas. Noteworthy are the massive rock-cut Buddhist images atop the hill, which represent Avalokitesvara, standing Buddha, Tantric Buddhist goddess Kurukulla etc., dating to circa 9th-10th CE. A renovated stone stupa stands atop the apex of a small rugged sand stone hill. The site has revealed findings showing that the Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhist schools of teachings were propagated here. Explore the rich wonderful collection of artefacts in the museum, which includes the casket with Buddha's relic, recovered during the excavation of the site. Look out for the superb statues of Buddha, Bodhisattva and statues of Tara, Jambhala amongst others. Inscriptions dating to the 2nd century CE show possible linkages to the Mathura School of Kushan Buddhist art.

DHAULI

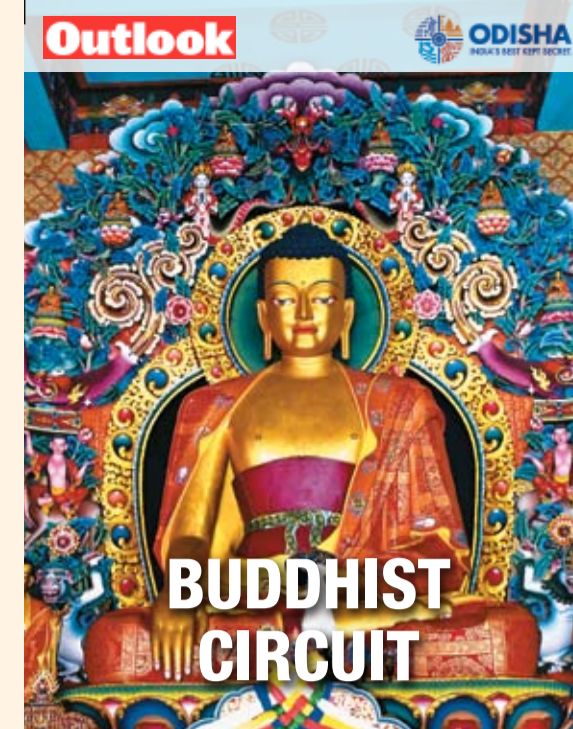
An 8km drive south of Bhubaneswar brings you to Dhauli, the site of the Kalinga War in 261 BCE unleashed on the kingdom of Kalinga to subjugate it by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka. The killing fields of Dhauli have witnessed some biggest horror stories of blood and gore in the annals of ancient Indian history. But Dhauli also marks the astonishing transformation of an anguished Chanda (war-mongering) Ashoka to Dharma (peace-loving) Ashoka, when he embraced the Buddhist path of peace and non-



violence after this great bloodshed. To drive home this historic change of heart one of ancient India's most ambitious monarchs, the emperor raised the first of his edicts at the site. These two Ashoka rock edicts (written in the Prakrit language in Brahmi script), unlike other edicts erected by the great king in his kingdom, cast the framework of the new agenda of his administration — all his subjects were to be treated with compassion and justice. In 1972, the Japan Buddha Sangha and the Kalinga Nippon Buddha Sangha established the Dhauli Shanti Stupa or the Peace Pagoda to commemorate the mission of peace that the Kalinga War achieved. The beautifully mounted Sound & Light show at Dhauli recaptures the life of the monarch and the poignant moments of this war-torn history. Be there during the 3-day Kalinga Dhauli Mahotsav an exuberant showcase of Indian classical music and dance and martial art dance forms organized by the Odisha Tourism.

CHANDRAGIRI-JIRANG MONASTRY

Come and explore an important slice of contemporary Buddhist links in Odisha at the Chandragiri settlement, which received the first Ti-



betan refugees in 1963. It is situated 80 km away from Berhampur.

Inaugurated by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama in 2010, Jirang Buddhist monastery is the largest such in Eastern India. Known as the Padmasambhava Mahavihara Monastery, it also goes by the name of Sri Padmapada Vihara. In the temple's sanctum, stands a massive image of Dhyani Buddha, flanked on either side by the deities Padmapada and Manjushree. The monastery also serves as a residence-cum-college for novice Buddhist monks who come from all over India here to study.

Over time, the complex has seen the development of the adjoining camps at Labarasingh, Mahendragadh, Tankilipadar, within a radius of 4-5 km around Chandragiri. Of note is the seated Avalokiteswara statue at the Mahendragadh camp. The Monastery at Labarasingh is also worthy of a visit. A Peace Pagoda marks the entrance of Camp No. 4.

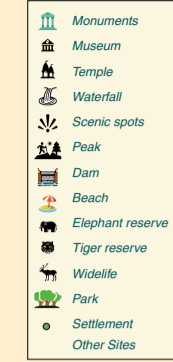
The Tibetan inhabitants have named this place "Phuntsokling"—or 'the land of plenty and happiness.' Visitors can get deep insights into Tibetan culture and the rich influences of Tibetan Buddhism propagated by Guru Padmasambhava.

Do take the opportunity to visit the nearby Khasadah Waterfalls, hot spring of Taptapani where there is a private hotel, earlier the OTDC-run Taptapani Panthivas, where you can spend the night.



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