

BODH GAYA LOGISTICS



PHOWA COURSE registration is not required. The course is located behind the main stupa complex. Ask at your hotel or look for signs posted around the Mahabodhi Stupa. It is best to attend the full course, including the Tsok Offering Ceremony on the last day, if at all possible. While the teachings are free, it is customary to make personal offerings for the course and to the teacher when you leave. Texts and CDs are sold for a nominal fee. Bread and tea are served mid-morning and mid-afternoon free of charge. Tea, water, lunch and snacks are sold at the site. A variety of sitting cushions are sold at stalls in town (see below).

WEATHER can be very cold and very damp (10-22C/50-70F), especially mornings and evenings. December can be colder than January or February, when it warms up. Wearing layers is good. Mid-day can be warm. If it rains it can be very muddy. The air can be very bad (polluted). Many people wear masks.

ATTIRE can be Western or Tibetan. Layering is helpful due to the changes in temperature from morning to evening. Warm clothes and rain gear are important. Shoes of any sort are not allowed on the lower levels of the Mahabodhi Stupa. You will need to put them in your bag or check them at the 'shoes house' inside the gate.

GAYA AIRPORT is 7km (4 mi) from Bodh Gaya, about a 30 minute ride. ARRANGE AIRPORT PICKUP IN ADVANCE. A 3-wheeler costs Rs.100-150; a taxi costs several hundred (more at night).

GAYA RAILWAY STATION is 16km (9 mi) from Bodh Gaya, about a 45 min. ride. A 3-wheeler costs Rs.150 (shared auto Rs.15); a taxi costs about Rs.400/500 (night). DO NOT TRAVEL ALONE AFTER DARK.

GETTING AROUND is easy. The terrain is mostly level. Pedestrians DO NOT have the right of way. Always be aware of the traffic and your belongings. It is an easy walk from most accommodations/restaurants to the Phowa site, and across the rice fields to Tergar Monastery (H.H. Karmapa's Monastery). Cycle rickshaws are convenient. Always negotiate the price and destination before getting in. DO NOT TRAVEL ALONE AFTER DARK.

MONEY is the Indian rupee (INR), available in 1,000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2, 1 notes, and coins. The exchange rate is currently around 59 rupees to 1 USD. Cash (especially 100 notes and smaller) is most useful, but many places will not accept old, dirty, ripped or torn bills. Most places want exact change, and may give a piece of hard candy in lieu of Rs.1-2 change. Credit cards and Travelers' Checks are not accepted in most places.

ATMs are on the main road. The closest is at the State Bank of India near the Mahayana Hotel. ATMs are often busy and sometimes out of cash. Om Restaurant, on the main road near the Mahayana Hotel, offers a good exchange rate for converting USD to INR. There also is a small travel agency near the Fujia Green restaurant that has a good exchange rate.

RESTAURANTS are plentiful. All the food and beverages are safe at the following restaurants, which are frequented by foreigners: Be Happy Café, Mahayana Hotel Restaurant, Kirti Guest House Restaurant, Mohammad's Restaurant, Tibet Om Café, Fujia Green Restaurant, Shiva Restaurant (across from the stupa), Om Restaurant (on the Main Road), Vishnu Restaurant (on the Main Road), South Indian Restaurant (off the Main Road between Tergar Monastery and Mahabodhi Stupa).

ACCOMODATION is also plentiful, with a range of prices. Foreigners have stayed in these (and others): Royal Residency rrbodhgaya@gmail.com, Mahayana Hotel mahayanagh@yahoo.com, Kirti Guest House kirtihouse744@yahoo.com, Sai Guest House singh_lai@hotmail.com, Mohammad House yasmd_2002@Rediffmail.com, Sechen Monastery Guest House ngawang@hotmail.com, Taiwanese Temple templetaiwan@gmail.com, Vietnamese Temple thich_hanhtue@yahoo.de.

DRINKING WATER must be bottled (mineral) or boiled. Check the lid of bottled water carefully to be sure it has not been opened before. Tibet Om Café and Be Happy Café sell filtered water for filling water bottles.

You can purchase a 'coil' (an electric appliance) that plugs in, submerges in a bucket of water to make hot water for washing, etc. (in the US there is small size used to heat a cup of water to make coffee, tea, etc.).

SITTING CUSHIONS are available in the stalls on the Main Road, near the Kalachakra grounds, and on the Post Office Road. There are a variety of styles, qualities and prices. Many students buy them and leave them for the beggars. Often recycled mats from bags stuffed with hay are sold at the Phowa site.

GROCERY/GENERAL STORES have fixed prices. Except one, all are located away from the stupa area, either on the Main Road or on the Post Office Road.

FRUIT/VEGETABLES are available from street vendors/stalls, and the daily Tibetan vegetable market on Verma Road. Wash and peel before eating.

YOGURT is available at the Sudha Milk Stalls near the Nyingma monastery/Kalachakra grounds and on the way to Tergar Monastery. Restaurant prices range from Rs.30-50.

MEDICAL SERVICES are available. Allopathic doctor/clinic (at the intersection of Verma Road and the post office road); Men Tse Khang (Tibetan doctor/medicine; 9am-5pm M-Sa; at Nyingma Monastery); Amda Ayurvedic Health Care Center (near the old Japanese Temple). There is a government hospital in Gaya. Make sure that your vaccinations are up-to-date, especially for Hepatitis. Bring extra prescription medicines.

PHARMACIES are across from the Mahabodhi Stupa. They sell allopathic and homeopathic. There is also one (with a good doctor) at Verma Clinic, the intersection of Verma Road and the Post Office Road.

ELECTRICITY is inconsistent all over India. Bring/buy a plug adapter for India (220V adapter). You can buy electric kettles, etc. across from Mahabodhi Stupa.

LOCAL SIM CARD usually must be purchased for you by a local Indian or Tibetan.

INTERNET CAFES are on the main road and opposite Mahabodhi Stupa. OM Shanti Cyber Cafe is at the end of Verma Road, near Verma Clinic.

WI-FI is available at several restaurants. The best is at Om International Restaurant behind the Kalachakra grounds.

LAUNDRY is in the alley between the Vietnamese Temple and Be Happy Café. There is another one on the Post Office Road, between the post office and the tent restaurant road.

TAILORS are located in the stalls on the Main Road and the Post Office Road selling dharma bags and other stitched items.

SHOE REPAIR is located on the street, outside the Nyingma Monastery, near the entrance to Tibet Om Café. There may be others at the 'T' intersection where the Main Road meets the Post Office Road.

POST OFFICE is located at the 'T' intersection, where the Main Road meets the Post Office Road.

PHOTOCOPY SHOPS are opposite Mahabodhi Stupa. OM Shanti Cyber Cafe is used for all Phowa course copying. It is at the end of Verma Clinic Road, near the clinic.

STATIONERY STORE is behind the fruit/veg stands that are next to Mahabodhi Stupa.

BOOK STORES are located opposite the Mahabodhi Stupa (Middle Way Books) and further down the main road.

PRICE BARGAINING is part of the culture, but not mandatory if you want to pay the quoted price. Expect to be quoted the highest price the vendor thinks they can get ('special prices' for foreigners). Starting to bargain at 30% of what is quoted is average. It is OK to refuse the final price and walk away (the vendor may come running after you, accepting your offer). It is best to find out the going rate in advance if possible. Items in general stores/pharmacies are fixed, printed on the item, not negotiable, and the same price in other groceries/pharmacies.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS for Bodhgaya train bookings or room bookings are available from these travel agents in Delhi. Compare both agents to receive better pricing.

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