The Sacred Garden, the Birthplace of Lord Buddha, as a Living Heritage

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The Birthplace of Lord Buddha in Lumbini, Nepal



Lumbini, Rupandehi District in Nepal, is one of the 3 sites of the **Buddhist Heritage Route for Sustainable Tourism Development** in South Asia—a project currently being implemented by UNESCO

World Heritage Journeys of Buddhist Heritage Sites

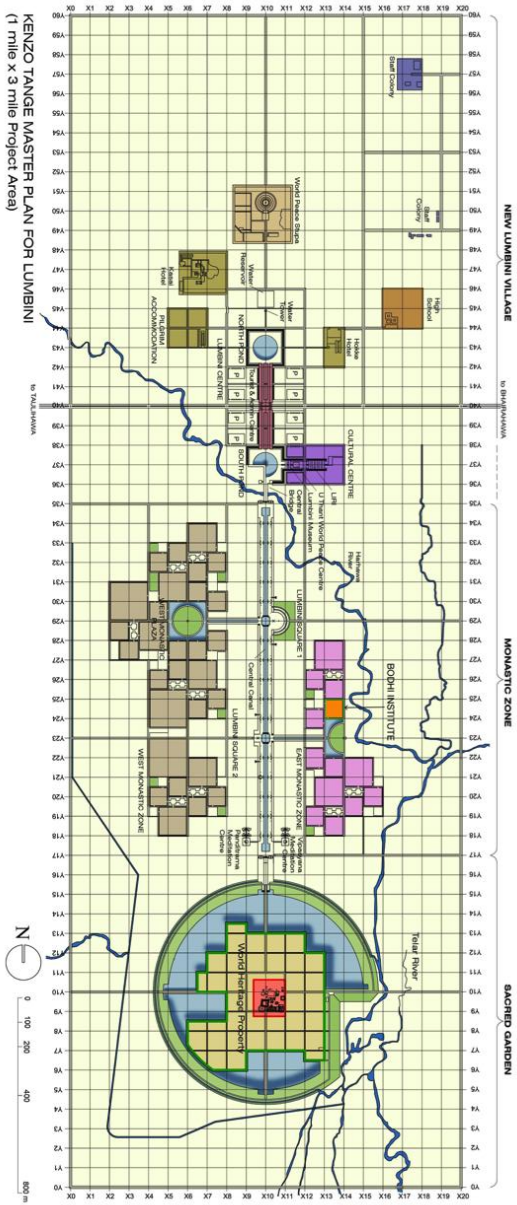
https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/955/

Kenzo Tange (1913-2005): Master Plan for the development of Lumbini (1978)

Principle 3 (Attention to Setting and Cultural Context) of the 2008 ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites

Sacred Garden + Monastic Zone + New Lumbini Village





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The Sacred Garden is one of the holiest and most significant places in Buddhism



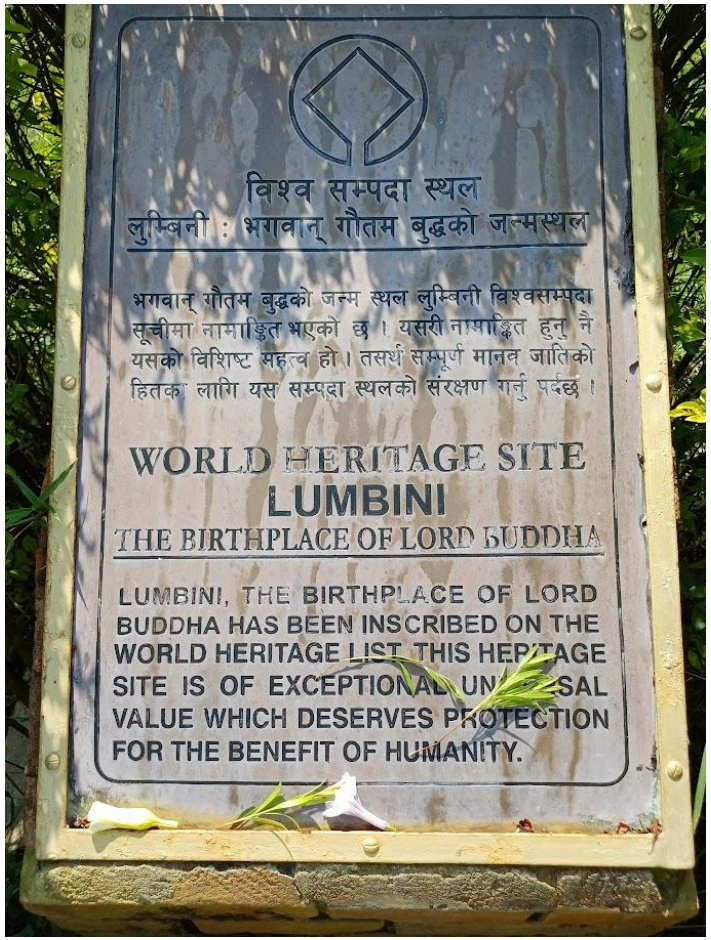
„Respect for the sacred, spiritual, and symbolic links to a site is paramount."

Principle 2 of the 2024 ICOMOS International Charter and Guidance on Sites with Intangible Cultural Heritage

A complex religious heritage site requires specific interpretation and presentation.

The Sacred Garden of Lumbini (130 x 150 m) World Heritage Site since 1997

- **The birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama**, the Lord Buddha (born 623 BCE): **UNESCO WHS since 1997**
- **Maya Devi Temple** (3rd-5th century BCE)
  - **Marker Stone:** The exact birth spot of the Buddha
  - **Nativity Sculpture:** The image of Maya Devi (4th CE)
- **Ashoka Pillar** (3rd century BCE): The inscription provides evidence of the birthplace's authenticity.
- **Sacred Pond** (Pushkarini): Maya Devi bathed before giving birth to Prince Siddhartha.
- **Archaeological remains:** stupas, monasteries, shrines (3rd century BCE–8th century CE)



A visit and guided tour to the Sacred Garden

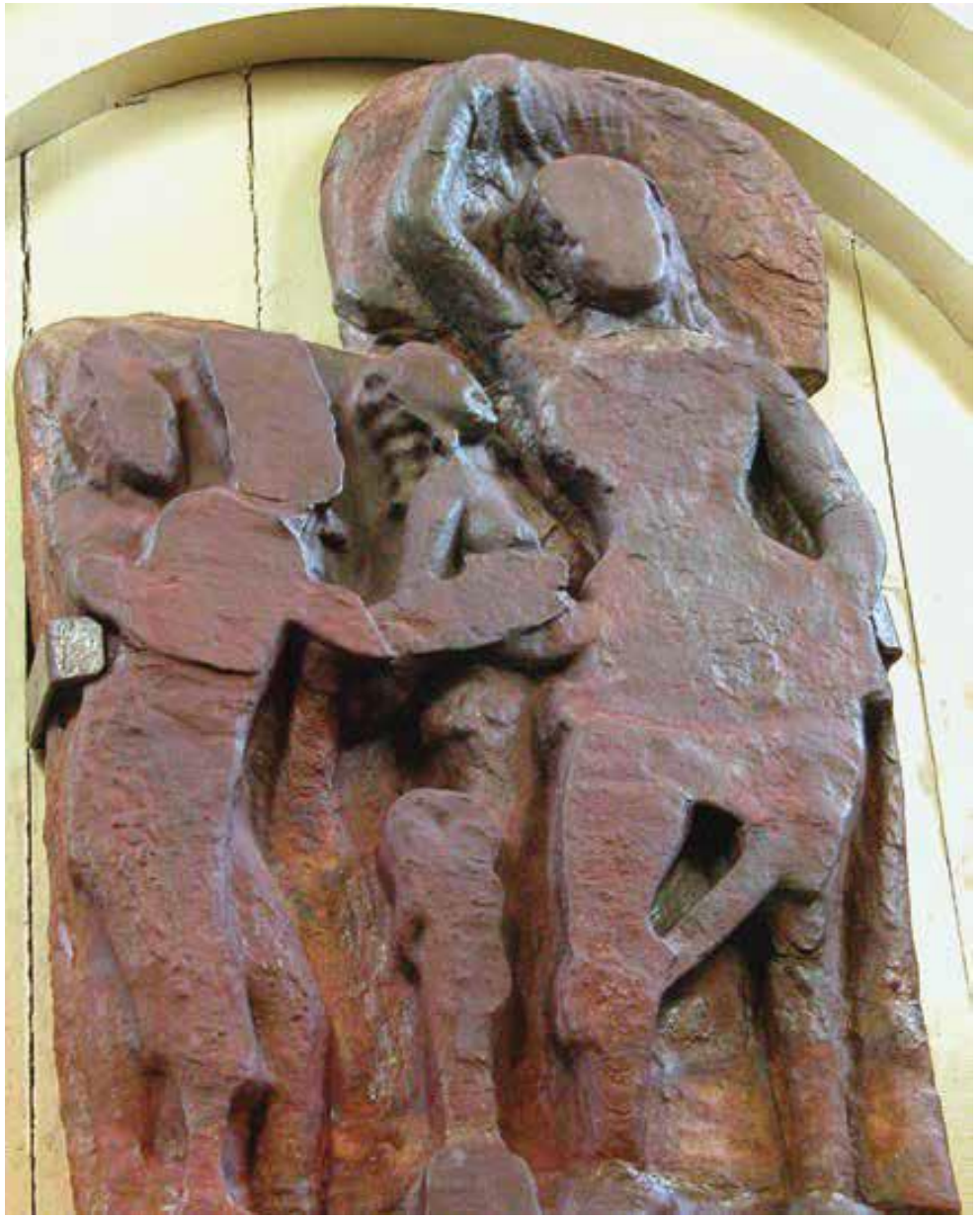
„Responsible tourism promotes and creates cultural heritage awareness, provides opportunities for personal and community well-being and resilience, and **builds respect for the diversity of other cultures.** It can therefore contribute to intercultural dialogue and cooperation, **mutual understanding**, and **peace-building**."

Preamble of the ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2022): Reinforcing cultural heritage protection and community resilience through responsible and sustainable tourism management)



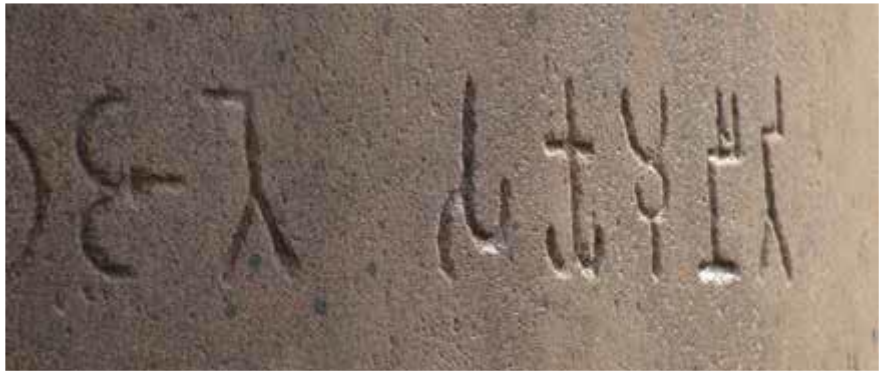
Marker Stone (70x40x10cm) and Nativity Sculpture (life-size)

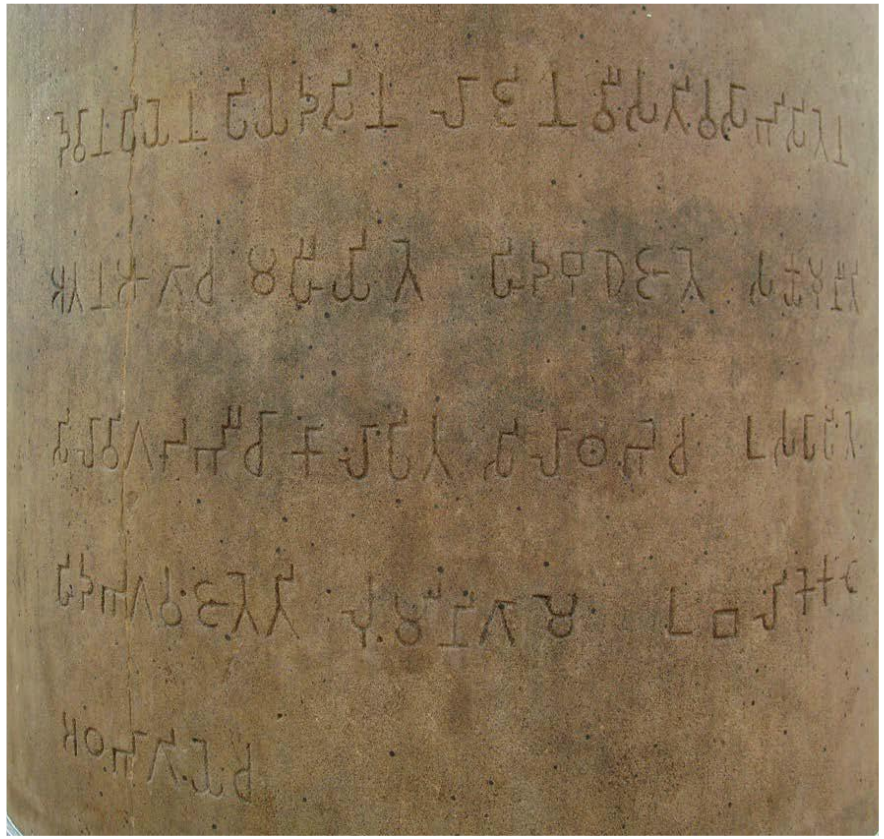




Ashoka Pillar – inscription in Brahmi script and Pali language







The Sacred Pond (Pushkarini)



Archaeological remains: stupas, monasteries, shrines



Lighting ritual incense in front of the Sacred Tree to show **respect** and **symbolize the qualities of the Buddha**





Buddhist prayer flags represent **peace, compassion, strength**, and **wisdom.**

Experiencing a group meditation for heritage professionals





Visitors: Buddhist nuns, monks, students, pilgrims, and tourists







Conclusions

- Interpreting and presenting living religious heritage sites **requires a special approach**—one that respects their spirituality and conveys the sacred messages, rituals, and emotional resonance of the space.
- An innovative yet **respectful approach** includes various forms of engagement: **walking barefoot, quiet activities, meditation, spiritual involvement, contemplation**, and **the self-interpretation** of both the built and natural environments and their **direct effects on the senses**.
- In line with Principle 3 of the 2022 ICOMOS Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism—Enhance public awareness and visitor experience through **sensitive interpretation** and presentation of cultural heritage—and Tilden's message:

"Through interpretation, understanding;
through understanding, appreciation;
through appreciation, protection."

A message from the Sacred Garden of Lumbini



Through sensitive interpretation, **sacred places can contribute to mutual understanding, respect**, and **peacebuilding**. They help us experience and feel that we all belong to the greater community of humanity while **encouraging visitors to respect and understand the spirituality of these religious heritage sites**.