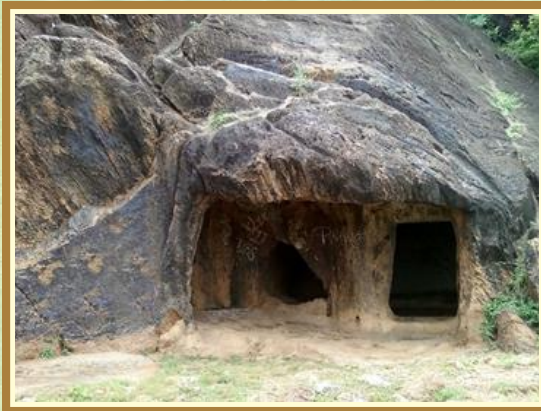


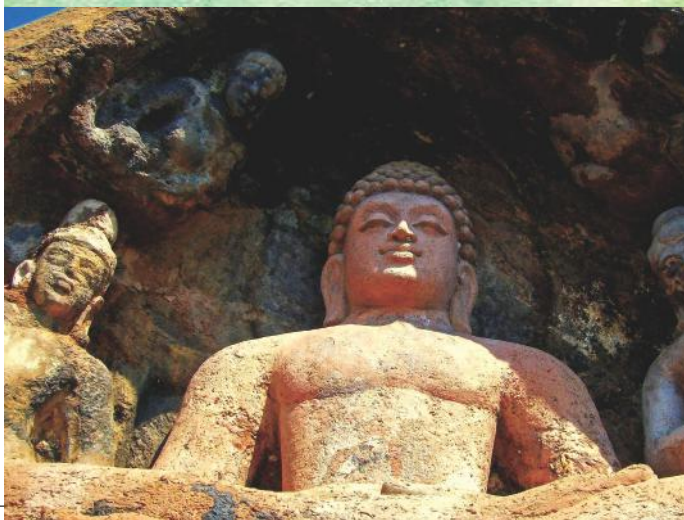
Kotturu

Just over 52 km from Visakhapatnam and on the banks of river Sarada lies Kotturu where one of the most prominent Buddhist excavations were unearthed. A vihara complex and a stupa were the two big structures found here but the beauty of the site is in the detail work here. The khondalite made repository found here has an outer covering that contained a green stone reliquary, a small crystal phial, three gold foils, twenty silver flowers embedded in it. Make sure to look out for a chocolate and red colour head engraved with a rampant lion which is considered an important find on the site. A Brahmi label inscription found dates back on 2nd century BC.



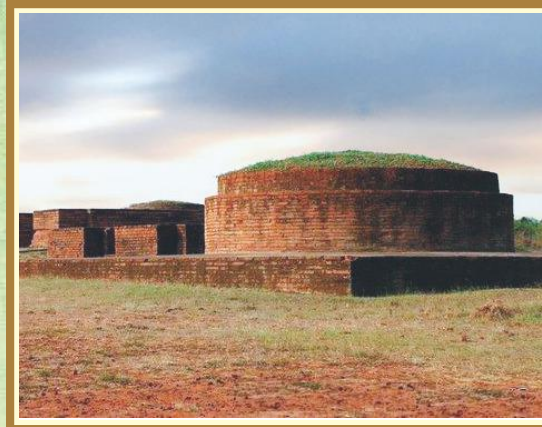
Sankaram

A hillock dotted with 2nd century BC rock stupas is the main attraction of this special buddhist site found 40 km from Visakhapatnam at Sankaram village.



Baavikonda

A few kilometres from the Bheemli beach lies one of the most prolific Buddhist excavations. The site unearthed an urn with a bone which many believe belonged to Buddha. Today one can find at least 26 imposing structures at the site.



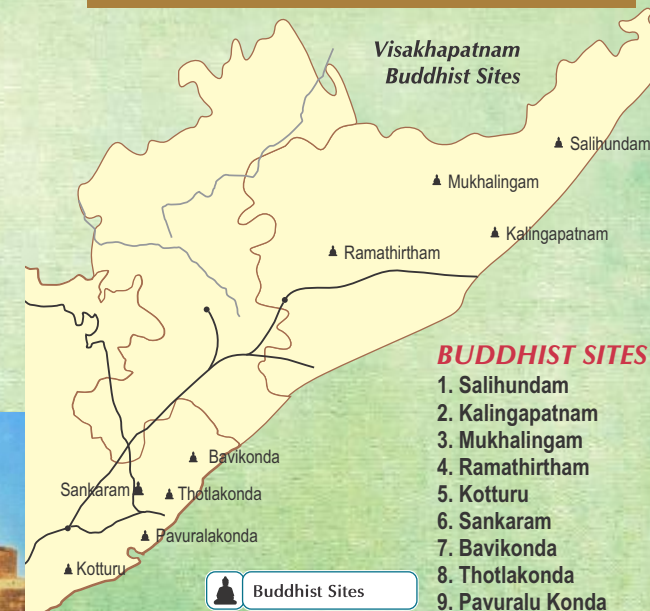
Thotlakonda

With its proximity to Bheemli beach thotlakonda proved to be an ideal home for a Buddhist monastery which seems to have existed there over 2000 years ago. Though far from receiving any royal patronage, the site seems to have flourished with the dwelling of travelling monks who took Buddhist teachings from Indian coasts to far off lands.



Pavuralakonda

The hill of pigeons or pavuralakonda lies 32 km from Bheemli beach. At 168 metres above sea level it offers one of the most spectacular views of the curved coastline. The Buddhist site excavated here show signs of many stupas, chaityas and viharas. The special attraction here are the rock cisterns that seem to have flourished as rainwater harvesting pits for settlements here between 1 century BC and 2nd century AD.



BUDDHIST SITES

1. Salihundam
2. Kalingapatnam
3. Mukhalingam
4. Ramathirtham
5. Kotturu
6. Sankaram
7. Bavikonda
8. Thotlakonda
9. Pavuralakonda



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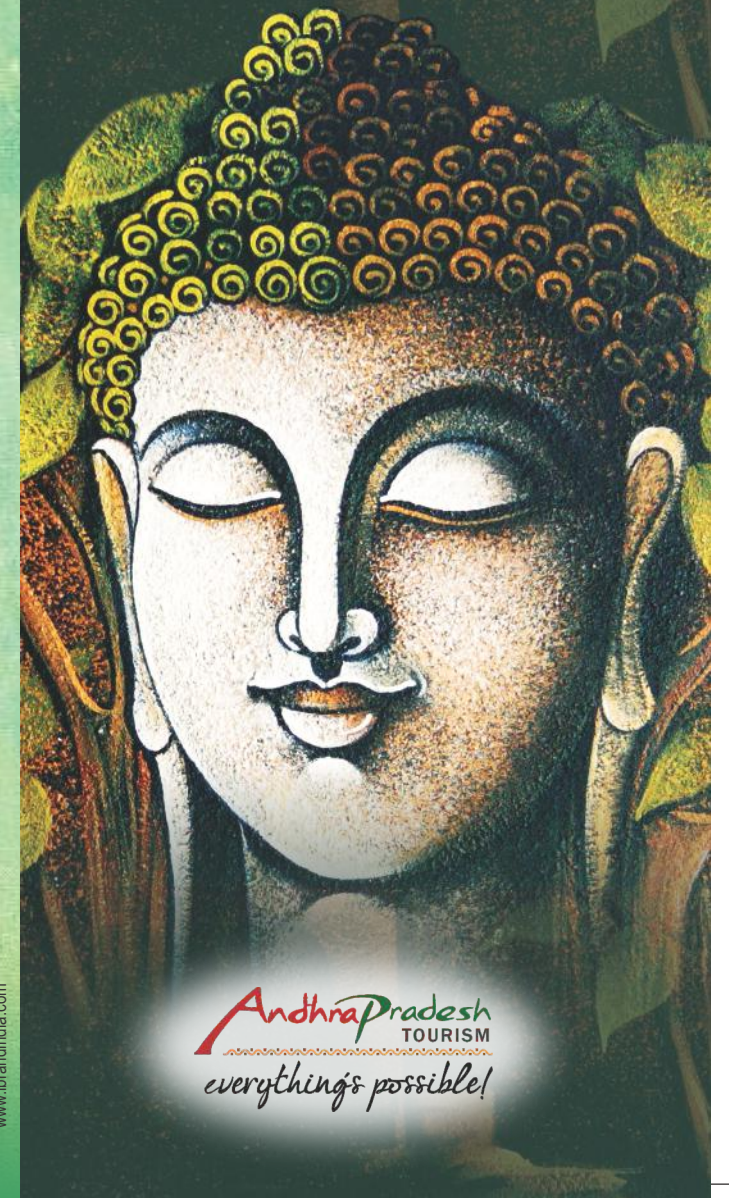
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Buddhist SOJOURNS in Visakhapatnam



Buddhism in Visakhapatnam

Unending and peaceful coastline; thickly forested tranquil hillocks make Visakhapatnam a spiritual haven. This is probably why centuries ago Buddhist priests flocked to the region and set up some of the most prominent Aaramas and Viharas and made Visakhapatnam a significant stopover in any Buddhist pilgrimage.

Between 1st century BC and 7th century AD several places in the region became schools of Buddhist learnings and the natural harbours on the coasts provides the perfect platform to launch and spread Buddhism to Srilanka, Indonesia and beyond.

The sites excavated here are not just exceptional relics but give a great insight into how far and wide Buddhism flourished here. All three phases of Buddhism have been imbibed along this eastern coast of India.



THERAVADA

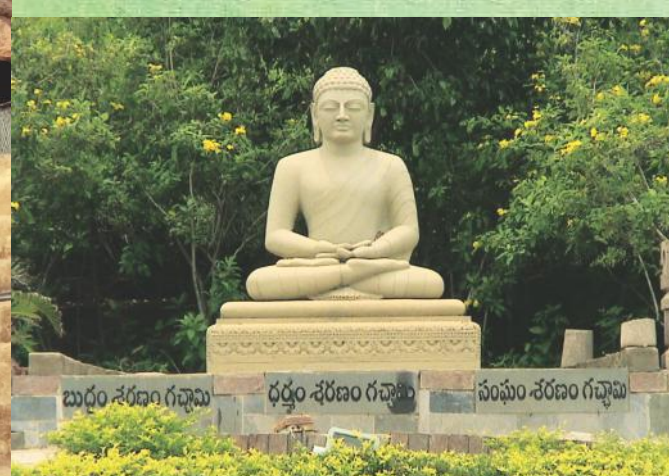
This phase of Buddhism was known as the belief of the elders. Almost 500 years after the Dharma was proclaimed this belief flourished. The stupas, Dharma chakra and Bodhi tree were its symbols and several relics of these are found in Andhra Pradesh. The famous Acharya Budhaghosha who consolidated the theory of Theravada and practised it in Srilanka hails from Andhra Pradesh.

MAHAYANA

There cannot be a mention of Buddhism in India without talking of Acharya Nagarjuna. This great proponent of this Mahayana phase of Buddhism is even called the second Buddha in Mahayana countries. Acharya Nagarjuna propounded many of his theories of Heart Surtra and Diamond sutra on the banks of river Krishna in Andhra Pradesh. The Nagarjuna Konda is a must see for not just its historic importance but for sheer spiritual delight. Infact the Telugu community embraced Buddhism during this phase as is evident from the several Buddha statues and images found in excavations here.

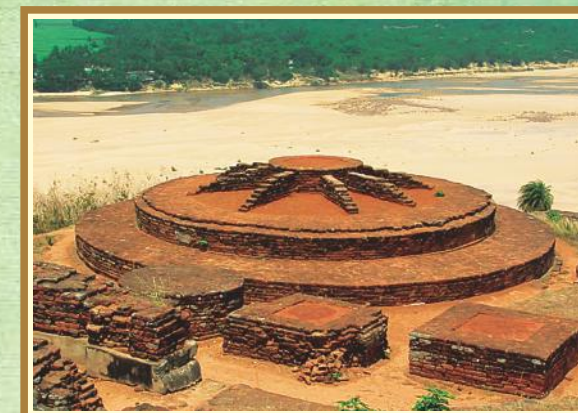
VAJRAYANA

The current capital area of Andhra Pradesh , Amaravati is where, legend has it, that the Kalachakra was set in motion by the Enlightened One. Vajrayana Buddhism flourished in Amaravati and other parts of Guntur district before travelling far north to Tibet. Traces of Vajrayana like the images of Goddess Harita can be found in sites like Sankaram near Visakhapatnam.



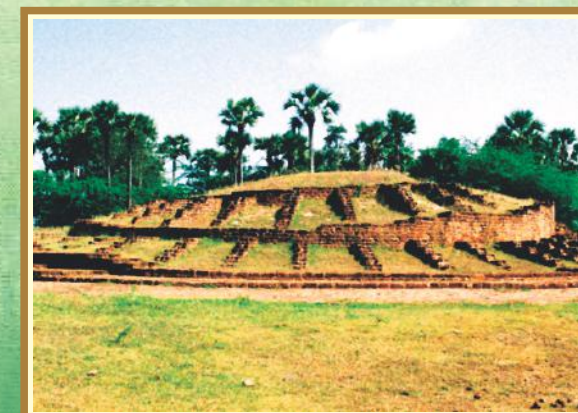
Salihundam

For a quintessential spiritual lesson from Buddha, head 118 km out of Vizag city to Salihundam in Srikakulam. Once a busy Buddhist centre this site attracted monks from all over the world. The giant monastic complex on the hill side is a wheel pattern with concentric circles that will take the beholder back in time. Also spend time exploring the stupas and relics that talk of the rich teachings of Buddha.



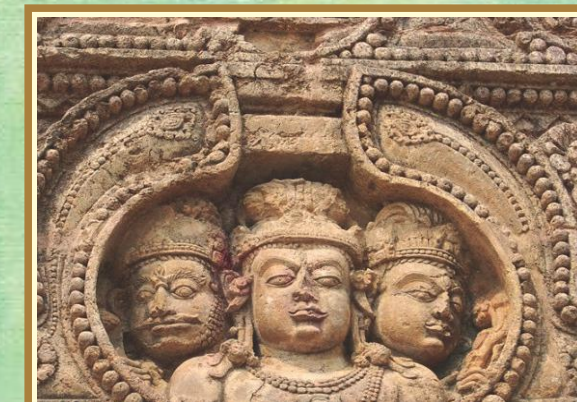
Kalingapatnam

It was from this port of Kalingapatnam that the teachings of Buddha spread to South Asia. King Ashoka who gained the path of ahimsa from Buddhism played a vital role in its spread. Ashoka's daughter Sangamitra and son Mahindra went to Srilanka from the beaches of Kalingapatnam with the Teachings of Buddha that then went on to reach as far as Java and Sumatra.



Mukhalingam

On the banks of river Vamshadhara lies the Mukhalingam temple complex where you can find some of the unique relics of the Buddhist settlement in the region. Loose sculptures of Akshyobyta, Buddha as Amitabha and a figure of Usnishavijaya belonging to the Vajrayana phase can be found here in Srikakulam district north of Visakhapatnam,.



Ramathirtham

Buddhist monks once up on a time choose this 500 feet high rocky cliff 16 km from Vizianagaram town for an Arama. On excavation the site proved to be a treasure trove of Buddhist relics like stupas, chaityas, silamandapas, monolithic pillars, and votive stupas. Two monasteries, antiques like stone idols of Buddha depicted in flowing robes, lead coins from Satavahana period and inscriptions from eastern Chalukya period tell the story of an ancient Buddhist Settlement here.

