

BUDDHIST CIRCUIT – ECONOMY

NEWS: The **Ministry of Tourism** is actively promoting Buddhist Tourism in India through the **Swadesh Darshan (SD) Scheme** and **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) Scheme**.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

- The **Buddhist Circuit** consists of sacred sites associated with **Lord Buddha's life**, including places where he was **born, taught, preached, attained Enlightenment, and achieved Nirvana**.
- It is recognized as a **thematic circuit** under the **Swadesh Darshan Scheme** to promote **Buddhist heritage tourism** across India.
- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** is responsible for the **conservation, maintenance, and development of public amenities** at these Buddhist sites to enhance visitor experience.

Key Buddhist Sites in the Buddhist Circuit

1. Lumbini (Nepal)

- Recognized as the **birthplace of Lord Buddha** and a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- Closely linked to Buddhist heritage sites in **India**, contributing to transnational Buddhist tourism.

2. Bodh Gaya (Bihar)

- The place where Lord Buddha attained **Enlightenment** under the **Bodhi tree**.
- Home to the **Mahabodhi Temple**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and an important center for Buddhist learning and meditation.

3. Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh)

- The location where Lord Buddha delivered his **first sermon**, known as the **Dharmachakra Pravartan (Turning of the Wheel of Dharma)**.
- Houses the **Dhamek Stupa**, which marks the spot of Buddha's sermon, and the **Ashoka Pillar**, inscribed with Emperor Ashoka's edicts.

4. Kushinagar (Uttar Pradesh)

- The place where Lord Buddha attained **Mahaparinirvana (final passing away)**.

- Home to the **Mahaparinirvana Temple**, which houses a **reclining Buddha statue**, and the **Ramabhar Stupa**, marking Buddha's cremation site.

5. Rajgir and Nalanda (Bihar)

- Rajgir was an important place where Buddha **preached several sermons** and where the **first Buddhist council** was held after his passing.
- Nalanda, an **ancient Buddhist university**, was a center of learning for Buddhist monks and scholars across Asia.

6. Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh)

- Home to **ancient stupas, monasteries, and Buddhist monuments** showcasing the evolution of **Buddhist architecture and heritage**.
- The **Great Stupa at Sanchi**, built by **Emperor Ashoka**, is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** and a major Buddhist pilgrimage destination.

Projects Under the Thematic Buddhist Circuit

The Indian government, under the **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**, has sanctioned various projects to **develop and promote Buddhist heritage sites** across different states.

S. No.	State/UT	Circuit	Sanction Year	Name of the Project
1	Andhra Pradesh	Buddhist Circuit	2017-18	Development of Buddhist Circuit: Shalihundam-Bavikonda-Bojjanakonda-Amravati-Anupu
2	Bihar	Buddhist Circuit	2016-17	Development of Buddhist Circuit – Construction of Convention Centre at Bodhgaya
3	Gujarat	Buddhist Circuit	2017-18	Development of Junagadh-Gir Somnath-Bharuch-Kutch-Bhavnagar-Rajkot-Mehsana
4	Madhya Pradesh	Buddhist Circuit	2016-17	Development of Sanchi-Satna-Rewa-Mandsaur-Dhar
5	Uttar Pradesh	Buddhist Circuit	2016-17	Development of Srawasti, Kushinagar, & Kapilwastu

Swadesh Darshan Scheme (SD): Overview

- The **Swadesh Darshan Scheme** was launched in **2014-15** to develop **integrated thematic tourist circuits** across India.
- The scheme aims to **enhance infrastructure, connectivity, and visitor amenities** at important tourist destinations.
- The scheme includes **various theme-based tourist circuits**, such as:
 - **Buddhist Circuit** (Buddhist pilgrimage sites)
 - **Coastal Circuit** (beach tourism)
 - **Desert Circuit** (desert landscapes)
 - **Eco Circuit** (nature-based tourism)
 - **Heritage Circuit** (historical and cultural sites)
 - **Northeast Circuit** (tourism in the Northeast states)
 - **Himalayan Circuit** (mountain tourism)
 - **Sufi Circuit** (Sufi shrines and heritage sites)
 - **Krishna Circuit** (places associated with Lord Krishna)
 - **Ramayana Circuit** (sites linked to Lord Rama's journey)
 - **Tribal Circuit** (tribal heritage and culture)
 - **Wildlife Circuit** (national parks and wildlife sanctuaries)
- The scheme is **100% centrally funded**, meaning the **Central Government provides full financial support** for these projects.
- The **Operation & Maintenance (O&M)** of the developed projects is the **responsibility of the respective State Governments or Union Territory Administrations**.

PRASHAD Scheme (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive)

- The **PRASHAD Scheme** was launched in **2014-15** to promote **religious and spiritual tourism** through the development of **pilgrimage and heritage destinations**.
- It aims to **enhance infrastructure, connectivity, and tourism facilities** at key religious sites, including **Buddhist pilgrimage sites**.

- The scheme focuses on:
 - **Improving access and visitor amenities** (better roads, lighting, sanitation, and accommodations).
 - **Preserving cultural and religious heritage.**
 - **Boosting local economies** through increased tourism and employment opportunities.

This detailed framework under the **Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD Schemes** ensures the **conservation, promotion, and development** of India's **rich Buddhist heritage** while making these sacred sites more **accessible and visitor-friendly**.

Source:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2111822#:~:text=Ministry%20of%20Tourism%20through%20its,for%20development%20of%20Buddhist%20Tourism.>