

2024 - 2026

Sacred Earth *and* Healing Arts *of*

Tibetan Buddhist Monks
of the Historic
Gaden Shartse Monastery

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Gaden Shartse Monastery U.S. Tour 2024-2026



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GADEN SHARTSE MONASTIC COLLEGE, Mundgod India



Gaden Shartse Monastic College is situated amid lush green hills and jungle in the remote countryside of southern India. It was founded in 1969 as an effort to re-establish one of the great monastic traditions of Tibet.

A small group of elder monks and fifteen young boys, all of whom had managed to escape the destruction in Tibet, settled on land given to them by the Indian government in Mundgod, Karnataka.

Today the college is at the forefront of the revival of Tibetan Monastic education, with more than 1600 resident students, teachers, scholars, and spiritual practitioners. More than 70% of the members are between the ages of 10 and 25 and 80% of these were born in Tibet. To this day, young monks arrive at the Monastery weekly from Tibet, seeking shelter and education.



Due to the success of the academic program and the quality of the teachers at the monastery, Gaden Shartse has established a reputation as being the leader in the field of Buddhist and Tibetan studies.

Brief History of Buddhism in Tibet and the Effect of the Chinese Cultural Revolution

By the beginning of the 7th century Tibet was filled with fragmented tribal, war-loving people. When Tsong Tsen Gampo (617-693AD) became the ruler of Tibet, he imported the philosophical tradition of Buddhism, which had been flourishing in India for centuries. His successor, Trisung Detsen, then made it the official religion.

The once-violent nation of Tibet became transformed by this new appreciation for the depth and true worth of human life. It was evolutionary. Tibet became one of the finest civilizations the world has ever seen. It became a nation of people filled with patience, tolerance, generosity, love for learning, and loving-kindness. Monasteries and learning centers sprang up across the country, and the Buddhist values of compassion and wisdom infused the people of Tibet.

Sadly, this unique, one-of-a-kind, beautiful civilization was destroyed in 1959 by the invasion of China. The Chinese Cultural Revolution took the lives of more than 1.2 million Tibetans between the years of 1959 and 1972. 6000 centers of Tibetan culture and religion were destroyed. As a result, Tibetans continue to this day to seek-refuge across the globe.

An entire generation has now passed, and sadly the difficulties continue for the people of Tibet. Religious freedom is restrained under Chinese rule, and most of the sacred institutions have been destroyed or shut down. Families are separated as many seek refuge from the repression and occupation of Chinese rule. China uses Tibet's high altitude for the storage and stockpiling of sensitive armaments, putting the lives of the Tibetan people (who do not believe in the weapons of war) at the highest risk, as well as that of the whole of the Asian continent .

There continues to be a massive population transfer into Tibet from mainland China, and even the Chinese are resentful as they are unable to acclimatize to the thin air at 15,000 feet. Bigotry and tension are tangible. The suffering thus continues -- only this time, it is rarely heard about. As Tibetan elders, the last to remember the beauty and harmony of a civilization governed by wisdom and ruled by compassion, pass away, younger Tibetans watch their dreams of a revival of this culture slip away. The democratic exiled Tibetan government is located in Dharamsala, India. Maintaining their commitment of non-violence, the government has trouble negotiating with the Chinese, who refuse to meet with the Dalai Lama.

Recently, however, envoys have been received in China, and this is a positive step forward. Still **Tibet has had no formal recognition from any government in the world.** Tibet's host, the Indian government, concerned about the reaction of their Chinese neighbors, discourages and dampens the effect of any political action taken by the exile community.

In order to support the exiled government's efforts to preserve the cultural legacy of Tibet and its people, the last surviving members of Tibet's former centers of learning have re-established themselves in India. Focusing upon the survival of a culture and people who face extermination, these monasteries and institutions are the only hope for assuring the continuation of the teachings of this rare and valuable way of existence. One of the first such voluntary centers is the Gaden Shartse Monastic College, which was founded in a Tibetan agricultural settlement in South India.

HISTORY OF GADEN SHARTSE MONASTIC COLLEGE

Gaden Shartse Monastic College (popularly known as "Shartse") was originally founded in Tibet in the 15th century.



Gaden Monastery Prior to the Communist Invasion of 1959



*Gaden Monastery After
the Communist Invasion of 1959*

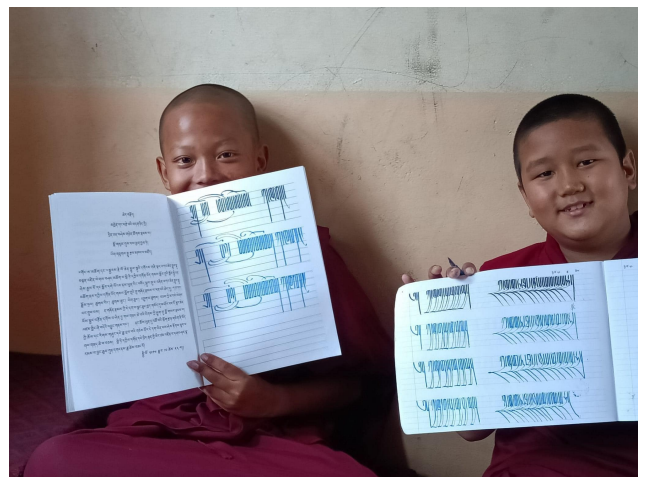
After the invasion of Tibet by the Chinese in 1949, 48 surviving members of the College fled south across the border into India. There they settled in army tents in a remote jungle area that was about a night's journey from the city of Mysore. Slowly they built a mud and bamboo thatched dwelling in which the monks ate, slept, studied, debated, and prayed together. Many died from sickness and exhaustion; others survived but remained ill and bedridden. Those who survived became very resourceful, teaching themselves how to farm the land by means of trial and error. In 1972, three years after settling, their fields were green with their first successful crops. Fifteen Tibetan children from the local Tibetan refugee camp enrolled in the newly founded monastery, funded by the selling of the produce. A simple everyday routine was set up, combining education with physical labor. A rudimentary teaching staff of Tibetans, well-versed in history and Buddhist teachings, was established.



“Shartse” Today

In-depth education in all aspects of Buddhist philosophy and practice is the focal point of the academic program at Shartse. The duration of the monastic program is 24 years. The students interact with their teachers on a daily basis. Accommodation, food, and instruction are all free and are provided by the monastic administration. Shartse offers complete basic courses in Tibetan History, Literature, Poetry, Grammar, English, and Mathematics, which are studied as prerequisites for the more advanced courses of Elementary Dialectics, Buddhist Logic, the Prajnaparamita (the study of Wisdom/ the Heart Sutra), Madhyamika Philosophy, Vinaya (Ethics), and Abidharma (Epistemology). All sand mandala takes 4-6 days to complete. Under certain circumstances a shorter version may be offered.

Unique to Shartse is the compulsory study of Buddhist Tantra. Additionally, there are optional subjects such as Painting, Calligraphy, Tailoring, Tibetan Butter Sculpture formation, and Sand mandala creation. The training program also encourages its students to independently pursue and practice profound Buddhist rituals and to complete extensive solitary retreats. The Monastery hosts multiple festivals, seminars and inter-monastic philosophical meetings.



The Monastery also encourages active fieldwork. All members sixteen and older are given fieldwork assignments for four months of every year, during which time they are required to contribute to the day-to-day running of the monastery. Such co-operative jobs include secretarial office work, cooking, milking the cows, clinic management, and general maintenance. The Monastery also hires some of the local Indian residents to assist with construction and farm work, thus contributing financially to the local economy,



Shartse has a staff of twenty, sixteen of whom are teachers and four of whom oversee the proper administration of the programs. Aside from the two English language and mathematics teachers who are recruited from outside the Monastery, every member of the staff has graduated from the Monastery.



They teach an average of seven hours a day and offer private instruction from their own living quarters. For more than twenty years they have provided this service free of charge. Only recently did the New Educational Development Project begin to offer them a token remuneration of the equivalent of US \$4.00 each month.



Teachers play a very special role in the lives of their students. As is the Tibetan tradition, and also due to the early age at which many youths leave their families to join the Monastery, students admire and respect their teachers as they would their parents. Teachers are considered to be the source of both the academic and the spiritual development of their students.

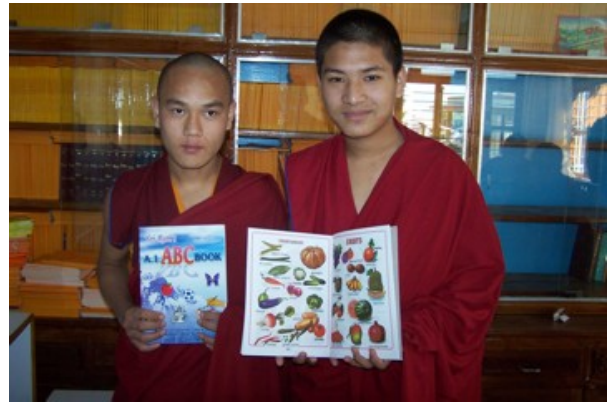
A world tour by members of Shartse in 1989 enabled the administration to begin the new Education Development Project. This interagency body now monitors all educational development and makes suggestions regarding the necessity of improvements and modernization.



Additionally, a few senior students are elected to oversee a library at the Monastery that is open to both students and non-students.

With a modest collection of important Tibetan works and Western works of philosophy, the library is accessible, free of charge.

Following the democratic constitution promulgated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1964, all Tibetan institutions now function as parts of a democratic government. Although privately administered, the university is also administered on an election basis. There are eight board members who are elected as directors every three years. The Abbot of the university, however, is appointed directly by the Office of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, as was done in pre-invasion Tibet.



Purpose of the Tours

The purpose of the tour is to share with all people the monks' culture, as well as practices and paths to inner peace and compassion. Accomplishments of previous tours have provided funds for construction of new buildings at Gaden Shartse, including the new debate hall. Additional funds raised by past tours have supported medical needs, teachers' salaries and the day to day expenses of supporting the monastery. This success is due to the help and generosity of those who support the tours. The monks of Gaden Shartse feel deeply indebted to their friends in the West who have given their time, effort, and homes to make the tours possible. It is hoped that the upcoming tour will be a success.

The GSCF is grateful for donations which may come from any source: private entities, businesses, institutions, or government grants. All donations must be paid to the order of Gaden Shartse Cultural Foundation which is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that is subject to audit by the US internal Revenue Service. For that reason, donations to any hosting entity (sponsors, organizers, or others) on behalf of the GSCF must be declared, publicly disclosed, and are subject to audit by the IRS.

Tour Programs

DIALECTIC DEBATE

Liberation, in the highest sense, is attained through the fusion of the intellect and intuition. The path to freedom requires wisdom, which can only be achieved through the deep questioning of one's beliefs by both oneself and others. Tibetan Monastic Colleges employ the system of dialectical debate as part of the routine of study for the monks. It is used to dispel doubt and to acquire deep understanding of the subjects being studied.



The student is encouraged to question everything related to the topic being discussed (as was also done by Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece). This is invaluable for sharpening one's reason and logic and testing one's wisdom.

EMPOWERMENTS

Four-Armed Chenrezig (Buddha of Compassion)

The Buddha of Compassion is known as Chenrezig (Tibetan) or Avalokiteshvara (Sanskrit), meaning 'liberator from the unfortunate lower rebirths.' Chenrezig pledged in front of all the Buddhas not to attain Buddhahood until all sentient beings were free from the sufferings of samsara. Receiving the empowerment of this Buddha, therefore, provides one with protection from an unfortunate lower rebirth. Chenrezig has many aspects and embodies the Universal Compassion of all the Buddhas of the three times and ten directions.

The purpose of the empowerment is to establish a close relationship with Chenrezig and to benefit from his almighty power of compassion. In this era of violence and mental instability, the blessing of Chenrezig is highly sought after, as it helps one to become more peaceful and compassionate, even with the state of current events. The empowerment will also initiate one into the mantra of Avalokiteshvara: OM MANI PADME HUM, which contains the essence of all 84,000 volumes of Buddha's teaching.

Buddha Maitreya (Buddha of Boundless Love) Buddha Maitreya is the 5th Buddha out of 1000 who will appear in 2500 years from now. This empowerment plants the ripening seed of boundless love in one's heart.

Menla (Medicine Buddha) Menla is the embodiment of the power of healing of all the Buddhas. While most of us are used to taking some form of medication on a daily basis, whether that be in the form of prescription drugs, vitamins, or herbal concoctions, rarely do we find that we feel any better. As has been confirmed by both Western and Eastern scientific research, strength of the mind and will has a major role in the process of healing. For millennia our ancestors have been aware of the effect of spiritual practice upon healing, and have used it as a necessary supplement to medication. The Medicine Buddha empowerment is meant to establish a special connection between the participant and the deity. Once this relationship has been developed and strengthened through the empowerment, the participant will become more open to receiving the benefits of the healing powers of all the Buddhas.

Manjushri (Buddha of Wisdom). Manjushri is the embodiment of the wisdom of all the Buddhas. Wisdom is crucial for enlightenment, in that it is both the antidote of ignorance, and at the same time is itself the true meaning of selflessness/ emptiness. Performing the practice of the deity Manjushri accelerates the attainment of the knowledge that eliminates suffering. By "sipping the nectar" of the profound teachings delivered by Lord Manjushri, one has access to the heart of liberating wisdom. This empowerment will include the transmission of the mantra OM AH RA PA TSA NADHI.

White and Green Tara (Buddha of Long Life) White Tara is the goddess of Long Life. She is one of the main deities used by both Tibetan Yogis/ Yoginis and lay practitioners in the practice of requesting a long and healthy life. Known particularly for her swiftness in fulfilling the long-life wishes of the practitioner, White Tara is looked to for happiness and inspiration through the mantra OM TARE TUTARE TORE SOHA. The White Tara empowerment is meant to establish a close relationship between the recipient and the deity. Green Tara is invoked to bring success in one's activities in building a new temple, house, business, etc.

Vajrasattva (Buddha of Purification) Vajrasattva is the Buddhist deity of Purification. The practice of the Vajrasattva deity purifies all negative actions committed by our body, through our speech, and in our minds. All that has been contaminated through our own negativities will be cleansed, and we will be able to begin afresh. The Vajrasattva practice is also capable of uprooting and purifying the negative imprints that we have carried over from our previous lives. This empowerment will include the transmission of the 100 Syllable Mantra.

HEALING RITUALS

Vajravidarin Healing Ritual The Tantric ritual of Vajravidarin will be the primary focus of private and group healing; the Lama pours multi colored rays of blissful light down thru the crowns of the participants filling them with luminous Bliss removing their gross negative imprints, He sweeps them with Multicolored laser like rays of light to remove the subtle negative imprints, both of these are stored in a dough image. Thru ritual He transforms the negative imprints into inexhaustible bliss, then gathers the negative forces, feeds them the negativity's now in the form bliss they are subdued then evicts and binds them away from the site. Diamond like layers light are generated under skin and around one for protection. Instructions on the practice and the oral transmission of the Mantra are given to participants removing subtle negative imprints by the Lama sweeping one with laser like rays from his peacock feather. Dispersing and binding negative forces. Generating diamond like layers of light under the skin and around one for protection. The vajra master will take the form of this Buddha of Purification and use his power to cleanse participants. Vajravidarin purifies sickness, mental disturbances, infectious diseases, disputes, enmities, defilements, misfortunes, bad omens, victimization by others, premature death, negative influences of the stars, harm from rulers and thieves, influence of demons, the agents of death, obstacles, misguidance, and factors against congenial life. The Lama then gives the transmission of the mantra and instructions on how to do the practice.

HOUSE BUSINESS and LAND BLESSINGS

Conditions often ripen in our homes or businesses and communities which call for powerful rituals to eliminate their effects. The monks can do rituals to transform negative conditions into positive conditions such as eliminating negative forces, increase positive forces, long life, healing, protection, blessing of children, transformation of forces in the environment, self initiation into deities mandala and wealth. These need to be discussed personally with the monks so they can decide the appropriate rituals.



PESONAL HEALINGS AND ASTROLOGICAL CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

SAND MANDALAS

Mandala means literally "that which extracts the essence." There are many different types of mandalas used by Tibetan Buddhists. They can be created in either two or three dimensions. The ones on the monks' tour will be two-dimensional sand mandalas. These are without doubt the most creative, labor and concentration-intensive of all mandalas created. The ones provided on the tour will require between 75 and 125 hours of effort, completed by several monks at a time.

Each sand mandala represents the architectural layout of the entire celestial palace of a specific deity. The Menla mandala, for example, represents the dwelling of the Medicine Buddha, who embodies the perfection of the physical and mental health of all beings. There are multi-layered symbolic images throughout the "palace," where iconography, placement, and color all have significance. Additionally, to the learned Tibetan Buddhist monk, the mandala represents his vision of the entire universe.

The mandala is normally used during the initiation of a monk into a high form of meditation. This sacred initiation is referred to as an empowerment ceremony. After the initiation, it requires years or possibly an entire lifetime of intense study and meditation under an experienced Lama to expose the depth and intricacy of the mandala.



In the past, sand mandalas were made with the powdered results of the grinding of precious stones, such as turquoise, lapis lazuli, coral, powdered gold and silver, and many other cherished and priceless materials. Today, this is only done on very special and/or auspicious occasions. More commonly, the colors are made of powdered and dyed stone, sand, dust, flowers, and charcoal. The colors are chosen to match the color of one of the Buddhas of the five Buddha families.

The sand is applied very precisely by the gentle rubbing of a sand-filled metal cone that has had its tip removed. The Master must be the first to initiate the mandala, and does so by placing the first drops of sand. The outline of the mandala is defined with a



compass and scale ruler and must have exact measurements.

Upon completion of the mandala, the monks will purposely dissolve the magnificent work of art. The Buddha's last words were "All things are impermanent, work out your salvation with diligence." In upholding the principle that all phenomena is transient, the monks sweep up the mandala and place the sand in a river, lake, or ocean to purify the surrounding environment.



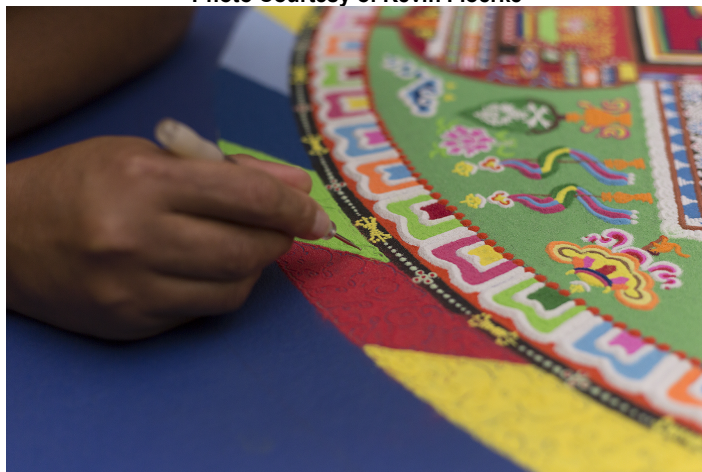
All sand mandala takes 4-6 days to complete. Under certain circumstances a shorter version may be offered.



Sand Mandalas Offered:
Buddha of Medicine (Menla)
Buddha of Wisdom (Manjushri)
Buddha of Compassion (Green Tara Female)
Buddha of Compassion (Avalokiteshvara Male)
Buddha of Long Life (White Tara Female)
Buddha of Purification (Vajrasattva)
Solitary Yamantaka (Wrathful)
Fire Puja Mandala 4 types:
(Peace, Expansion, Magnifying or Wrathful)
8 Auspicious Symbols
Wheel of Life (sand painting)



Photo Courtesy of Kevin Floerke



LECTURE TOPICS

Each lecture is given by a Lama and a monk and can last between 1.5 to 2 hours, including a question and answer session. One of the monks (or a tour organizer) will introduce the Lama and his interpreter, give the details of the Monastery, and offer a brief description of the beliefs of the Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism. It is asked that a couple of chairs and some water or tea be provided for the monks. Please speak to the national organizer regarding the suggested donation for the lecture.

Topics include:

- **Death, Bardo, and Rebirth:** A lecture on the Three Stages of Life
- **Lam Rim:** Review of the Graduated Path with a focus on Renunciation, Bodhicitta (altruistic motivation), and Emptiness.
- **The Four Noble Truths** (The Teaching of Buddha): Truth of Suffering, Truth of the Cause, Truth of Cessation, Truth of the Path
- **Meditations on Patience and Compassion**
- **Tantra Vehicle:** the esoteric path of Mahayana Buddhism that accelerates the evolutionary path to Buddhahood
- **Lojong** (Tib. ལོ་ཇོང་) is a **mind training** formulated in Tibet in the 12th century. The practice involves refining and purifying one's motivations and attitudes. The mind training practice are designed as a set of antidotes to undesired mental habits that cause suffering. They contain both methods to expand one's viewpoint towards conventional bodhicitta; loving kindness and compassion and the wish to obtain enlightenment. Ultimate bodhicitta the realization of emptiness.
- **8 Point Mind Training**
- **The 6 Delusions:** There are really 84,000 delusions, but they can be condensed into 6 (a delusion is a state of mind that causes suffering for oneself and others and causes suffering in the next moment or next life.
- **World Peace and the Unity of all Religions**
- **Other subjects (Refuge, Guru Devotion, etc.)** available by request.



Lectures can be organized for high school or college classes. Public lectures can also be scheduled in auditoriums, bookstores, churches, health food stores, and alternative and healing businesses.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Grades K-12

Chant and Discussion with the Monks
One deep chant with musical instruments .
Question and Answer Session
Length: One Hour

University of Colleges

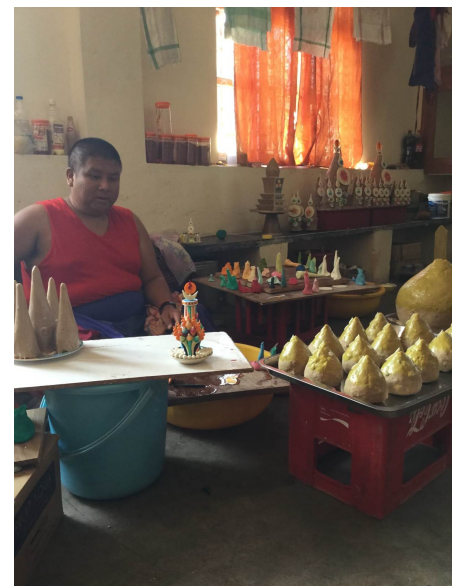
5 Day Visit Includes:
Creation of the Sand Mandala
Performance of Ritual Music and Dance
Two Public Lectures
Discussions, Questions and Answers from Classes or Departments



BUTTER SCULPTURE AND WORKSHOP DEMONSTRATION

The monks will work with children and adults to create traditional sculptures made from butter, as has been done in Tibet for over 800 years.

Due to both its plentitude and highly elastic qualities, Tibetans have found butter to be very conducive to sculpture. The butter has been shaped into Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, flowers, animals, and auspicious symbols. These sculptures are then used to decorate ritual offering cakes made from barley flour. In Tibet, especially during Monlam (the Great Prayer Festival), butter sculpture contests were held among the major monasteries, and were often over 12 feet high! This workshop will begin with a demonstration by the monks and will be followed by the opportunity for each participant to make his/her own butter sculpture. Length: 1 to 1.5 hour



TIBETAN CALIGRAPHY WORKSHOP DEMONSTRATION

The monks will work with children and adults to demonstrate beautiful Tibetan calligraphy butter, as has been done in Tibet for over 800 years.

ཨོ་མ་ཐི་པ་རྒྱལ་ལྷོ།



MOMO Dinner

Enjoy Traditional Tibetan dumpling “MOMO” with the monks. Please ask the monks regarding hosting a Momo Dinner



Photo Courtesy of Tripp MiKich

Organizer's Guide

On behalf of all the monks at Gaden Shartse Monastery we would to express our deep gratitude to you for your great kindness helping to organize events for the monastery's Sacred Earth and Healing Arts of Tibet Tour. We are here to help and support you as you prepare for the tour. The information below will provide you with many helpful tips and guidance for hosting the tour. The very first thing we suggest is finding volunteers. This will help you while engaging others to participate in the process while adding more resources and creative ideas. Essential elements for hosting the tour:

1. Venues for the events.
2. Promotion of the events.
3. Housing and food for the monks.
4. Scheduling additional offerings such as house blessings, personal healings, and astrology

Venues: Ideally it is best to try to find space that is offered for free or for a minimal cost. Often you will find many organizations that are more than happy to host the events. These include churches, yoga centers, healing arts centers, museums and art centers, community centers, colleges, and service organizations to name a few. Different events require different types of venues, however they are very resourceful and can adapt to many different types of venues. They have their own video and sound equipment. It is also a great idea to provide a refreshment table at events when possible - something simple like water, tea, coffee, and maybe a snack.

Housing - The monks are very low-maintenance. However there are six monks on the tour. The monks have sleeping bags mats. It is no problem to have monks sleep on the floor. Ideally it is best to have them all stay in the same place for logistical purposes. However, sometimes it may be necessary and they can be divided into two groups as long as they are close to each other.

Parking – Monks travel in a 15 passenger Transit Van.

Food – This tour does not eat dinner. Meals can be worked out in a variety of ways. Most often local residents and volunteers offer meals to the monks. Frequently local restaurants are happy to provide a meal. Often supermarkets will offer gift cards. Groceries can be purchased and the monks can cook for themselves also. The monks eat most foods and there may be vegetarians The monks do not eat venison, fish, or pork. They prefer simple black tea with milk. All benefactors are acknowledged thru Certificates -, Khatas and sometimes precious pills imbued with the recitation of ten million Mantras.

Setting Up For Events:

Table sizes are approximate. For any questions please contact the tour.

Sand Mandala - the monks have their own sand mandala table which needs to be set up with a 12' x 12' space (protected by 4 stanchions within venue space). 2 Folding tables approximately 3' x 6' and 3 similar tables of this size for handicraft concessions.



Butter Sculpture- one (1) 3' x 6' table

Lectures- two (2) chairs and one (1) 2'x2' table

Empowerments - two (2) chairs and one (1) 2'x2' table and one (1) 3'x6' table

Healing and Astrology - four (4) chairs and one (1) 2'x2' table

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Gaden Shartse Cultural Foundation is a registered 501C3 Non Profit

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Special thanks to:

Kevin Floerke Photography

Tripp Mikich Photography

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Gaden Shartse Monastery Tour 2024-2026

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What's a Sand Mandala?



According to Buddhist history, the purpose, meanings and techniques involved in the spiritual art of sand mandala painting were taught in India by Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, in the sixth century B.C. Over the centuries, his teachings have been transmitted in unbroken lineage from teacher to student. In the eleventh century, the teachings traveled from India to Tibet. The Tibetan word for mandala is *kilkhori*, which means roughly, "centre of the circle with exterior walls and surrounding environment."

Many different materials are used for mandala construction, including precious jewels, flowers, dyed rice and colored stones. But sand, traditionally made from crushed precious stones such as white rock and white marble dust, is considered the best material because of the precious substances involved and the great skill required to create the mandalas' exquisite details. Since each grain of sand is charged with the blessings of the ritual process, the entire sand mandala embodies a vast store of spiritual energy. Often, those working on the mandala will wear masks over their mouth and nose so as not to contaminate the field of the mandala with their breath.

Noted Tibetan scholar, Robert A. F. Thurman, wrote, "The actual mandala itself, underlying all practices and performances, is a complete, three-dimensional environment, an alternative universe, a world centered on a divine mansion that contains buddha archetype-deities with specific types of bodies, surrounded by gardens and charnal grounds, replete with mountains, lakes, trees, and various divine, legendary, and historical beings. The borders of this world are sealed against all negative influences by rings of fire and diamond-thunderbolt energies which, when desirable, can be made permeable to absorb beings from ordinary worlds to bless and transform them."

During the final ceremony the whole magnificent mandala is swept into a pile and generally carried to a body of water to be offered as a blessing to end suffering for all sentient beings. Impermanence, as with all things in this world, no matter how beautiful, how many hours it has taken to complete, no matter the intention behind the creation, it can all be swept away in an instant.

www.sacredartsoftibettour.org