

I didn't know the Relic Tour would be of such great benefit to the world, create such devotion. Devotion is the source. From devotion you get blessings, from blessings you get realizations, the strength to engage in the path.

"The Relic Tour is one way to bring world peace, through people changing their mind. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama says: outer peace through inner peace. So the relics take a very important role in world peace.

"That's the purpose for the Buddha leaving relics."

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE, FPMT BOARD MEETING IN PORTLAND, USA, OCTOBER 2007

Maitreya Project Heart Shrine Relic Tour

Victoria Ewart reports:

As the Relic Tour enters its seventh year of bringing blessings and Rinpoche's message of loving-kindness to people all around the world, there seems to be no end in sight.

During 2007, the holy relics were displayed almost every weekend in cities throughout Mexico, Colombia, the Caribbean, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, USA, Canada, France, Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Russia, Latvia, Germany, England, and Lithuania.

Many temples and centers ask for the holy relics to return again and again because of the inspiration they bring. Those who have already seen the relics once want to experience the blessings again, and they want their family and friends to share in that experience.

"... the relics are shining, giving us this wonderful energy and hopefully raising our spirits to go on in the world and do what we need to do to help the world at this time. Because the world needs a lot of help." – Olga Osbourne, a visitor at the San Francisco Relic Show, California, 2005

An inter-active event

During events, visitors frequently become emotionally overwhelmed by being in the presence of the holy relics. Some people seem to be in a daze or an altered state. Rinpoche has addressed this by offering visitors some very practical methods for creating good karma in the presence of the holy relics.

So now, visitors may offer water to bathe the Buddha while reciting a prayer of purification and visualizing their surroundings as pure. They can choose to write a few lines of the Sanghata Sutra in gold ink. Or they can read some pages of the Sutra of Golden Light.

"Many non-Buddhists were walking around the statue and being blessed and coming into contact with these rare, powerful, holy objects. It was overwhelming to observe. Young girls were spending time writing out the Sanghata Sutra, dogs were being blessed ... people were coming off the street without prior knowledge of the event and were emotionally overcome. The range of nationalities, gender, age, and race was extensive. It was wonderful."

– Bob Charlton, organizer of FPMT Leeds Relic Show, England, November 2007

Messages of gratitude & stories of healing

Tour staff often receive messages from visitors whose lives have been changed by being in the presence of the holy relics.



“Personally I want to express my thanks to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, to you and all members of the big Maitreya Project Family. I feel an incredible gratefulness to all holy masters. I cannot express it in words, only in tears. Please let me know whenever I can do anything for the Maitreya Project.” - Martin Schaurhofer, organizer of the FPMT Vienna Relic Show, Austria, June 2007

In Leeds, a young man prayed all day for his missing sister and brought her photograph to be blessed by the holy relics. In California, a visitor brought his sick mother to the event.

“On Saturday upon arriving I was asked how I was. I broke into tears and was barely able to mouth the words, ‘I have brought my mother.’ The gratitude for this experience cannot be put into words. So I enclose a picture of my 82-year-old mother, who has a cancer tumor on her liver, receiving a blessing. Her name is Bobbie Rothchild. Thank you so much for all that you do.” – Jesse Gillam, visitor at the Auburn Relic Show, California, August 2007



PHOTOS: Andy Melnic

Top: The Relics on display in Wiesbaden, Germany, September 27-30, 2007.

Below: In Fellingsbro, Sweden, August 3-5, 2007.

The Relic Tour Collection

The Relic Tour collection includes many relics of Shakyamuni Buddha and of the Buddha's well-known disciples, Maudgalyayana, Ananda, and Sariputra. There are also relics of spiritual masters from the Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

Many living Buddhist masters from a number of traditions and countries, including Burma, Indonesia, France, Thailand, Tibet, Korea, and Taiwan, have offered sacred relics

to the collection. His Holiness the Dalai Lama offered eight relics of Shakyamuni Buddha from his personal collection.

These precious relics are found among the cremation ashes of spiritual masters. The sacred relics manifest as a result of the master's spiritual practices and attainments during his lifetime. So the relics are a reminder of our own essential nature of purity and our inner potential to make that manifest.

Off the beaten track

Some years ago, we asked Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche what advice he had for the Tour. Rinpoche said:

"It is very good to rinse the case of the relics with water and then collect this blessed water. Then carry the water in various locations in the countries you will visit, such as the ocean, the mountains, the rivers, and so forth. Bless the land with this water and make prayers that peace and prosperity prevails in that land, that AIDS and cancer become non-existent, that the crops grow in abundance, and that inner and outer peace is actualized."

Venerable Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche passed away in December 2006 and his holy relics are now part of the Relic Tour collection.

On Lama Zopa Rinpoche's instructions, we bless the water in the water bowls with a stupa containing the holy relics of the Buddha, and then at the end of each day we offer this water to visitors so that they can take it home to offer to their pets or children, or for sick or elderly people to drink.

In November, the European Tour team journeyed with the holy relics to Auschwitz, Germany (the site of a former Nazi concentration camp) to bring blessings and healing there. The relics also make stops between public events to visit schools, hospitals, and even prisons.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche's generosity

None of these activities of the Tour would be possible without the incredible generosity and vision of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

"[The Relic Tour makes these relics] so easily accessible; so many relics that you can meet and see and receive the blessing from for as long as you want, at leisure. And this is only exclusively because of the kindness of Lama Zopa Rinpoche – because of his Maitreya Project and because Rinpoche is really quite out of the ordinary. He is exceptional in his activities in that he was

able to collect such a great number of different relics from all over the world. And they are here. They are taken into a Tour in relation with the building of the Maitreya statue ...

"So do not make any mistake. Lama Zopa Rinpoche is going through a great deal of difficulties and hardships in order to be able to have, for the benefit of all sentient beings, this Maitreya statue. The amount of activities and projects that he undertakes in relation with this very Project and the amount of responsibility that he carries around is not to be underestimated." – Venerable Ribur Rinpoche, Land of Medicine Buddha Relic Show, September 2001.

Venerable Ribur Rinpoche passed away in January 2006 and his holy relics are now part of the Relic Tour collection.

So what's next?

Because of the sheer volume of invitations, the Relic Tour now holds simultaneous events in different parts of the world.

Last year, the Tour Manager met with Rinpoche and explained that for the first time ever there would be two tours running simultaneously for the entire year during 2007. Rinpoche leaned back, cocked his head to one side and said:

"But what about three tours?"

For details of the 2008 schedule, please contact relic-tour@maitreya-project.org or visit www.maitreya-project.org

Victoria Ewart is the manager of the Maitreya Project Heart Shrine Relic Tour.

The Relics on display in (1) Helsinki, Finland August 17, 18 and 19. (2) Stockholm, Sweden August 10, 11 and 12. (3) Grenoble, France May 25, 26 and 27. (4) St Petersburg, Russia August 23 to 27. (5) Riga, Latvia September 21, 22 and 23. (6) Colmar, France May 4, 5 and 6.

PHOTOS : Andy Melnic

