

NGONG PING 360

Walking with Buddha

Walking with Buddha is an immersive, multimedia experience that explores and explains the life of Siddhartha Gautama [the man who became Buddha] and his path to enlightenment. Guests follow Siddhartha's story through seven scenes, which have been themed to correspond with each stage of Siddhartha's path to enlightenment.

The story begins with a unique Bodhi Tree experience in the courtyard, where special effects draw attention to an ancient stone bust of Buddha. Through the mist descending from the tree and smoke escaping from the incense burner, the voice of the Spirit of the Bodhi Tree introduces the story of a man who asked himself 'Who am I and why am I here?' - the story of how a boy named Siddhartha became the Buddha.

The Spirit tells how, over 2,500 years ago, in what is now Nepal, Siddhartha Gautama was born as a prince, heir to the Kingdom. Concerned when fortune-tellers revealed that Siddhartha would either become a prophet or a King, Siddhartha's father [the King] decided to guide his fate, sheltering Siddhartha from the real world with a luxurious upbringing.

Decorative pendent lanterns hanging from the branches of the Bodhi Tree then light-up, to guide the guests passing through traditional prayer flags and the Buddhist shrine, towards the second scene of the tale: The Palace. Upon entry to the Palace, the guests are surrounded by the grand architecture of an ancient Indian palace. Determined to keep Siddhartha's focus on material wealth rather than spiritual pursuits, the King had transformed his palace into a gilded cage, walled and gated to shield the Prince from the troubled world outside.

Lighting transitions and directional sound emphasise the mood of the presentation, depicting Siddhartha's discontent with palace life and his decision to leave his family to become a monk. The guests are then guided towards The Forest [the third scene], representing the harsh world Siddhartha will encounter outside of the Palace. An undulating path meanders between boulders and trees, while wind and mist effects simulate stinging rain. Guests move through the dark, moody environment into the fourth scene: The Cave.

Guests enter the Cave theatre and watch the second part of the animated movie, with lighting effects on the cave walls illustrating the obstacles Siddhartha encounters on his path to enlightenment. The guests follow into his dream under the Bodhi Tree, where Siddhartha Gautama makes the transition to supreme awareness - becoming Buddha.

Guests are now taken forward through time from ancient Nepal, to the bright lights and neon signs of Nathan Road in modern day Hong Kong [the fifth scene]. Guests are left with one simple message: time changes the thoughts of the world and the thoughts of men, but it cannot change this story's truth.

Guests then pass through open doors to find themselves in the sixth scene: The Temple. Soft lighting and the minimalist contemporary temple design greets the guests as they enter The Temple: the serene atmosphere is in stark contrast to the visually noisy scene of Nathan Road.

The guests are then invited to pick a leaf from the basket, inscribed with a simple message containing words of wisdom for their contemplation. After choosing a leaf, guests proceed through a stone archway into the main hall, where hanging votive candles cast sparkling light over traditional offering tables and motifs, leading guests down the hall to the semi-transparent statue of Buddha, into which they release their leaves as an offering.

The final scene completes the 'Walking with Buddha' story, casting light upon the evolution of Buddhism from Buddha's time to the present day. Aerial Bodhi Tree roots descend from the tree canopy to the floor, combining with an abstract graphic of the tree to remind guests of their first Bodhi Tree experience.

A Zen-style path guides the guests along the 'Path of Enlightenment', as they 'walk' the spread of Buddhism from its roots across the globe, learning from timelines and informative signage about Buddhism. Depicted on the walls along the 'Path of Enlightenment' are the heart and essence of Buddha's teachings: The Four Noble Truths. These teachings are the key to becoming a Buddha, or an 'awakened one'.

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