

Jade Buddha for Universal Peace

Fact Sheet

The Jade Buddha for Universal Peace

The Jade Buddha for Universal Peace is the largest Buddha carved from gemstone quality jade. The Jade Buddha is 2.5 metres (8 feet) high and sits on an alabaster throne of 1.4 high. The Jade Buddha itself weighs around 4 tonne (4.5 ton) and has been valued at \$5 million. Its size and beauty make it a wonder of the world. The Buddha has been carved from a rare boulder of translucent jade ("Polar Pride") which was discovered in Canada in the year 2000.

Modelled on the most famous Buddha in the world

The Buddha inside the Mahabodhi Stupa in Bodh Gaya (India) is the model for the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace. This Buddha was chosen because it is recognised by Buddhists as being the closest to the Buddha himself. The Mahabodhi Society at Bodh Gaya gave special permission for a detailed photographic study of the statue. These photographs became the reference upon which the sculptors and carvers created the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace.

Polar Jade – the highest quality Nephrite

In late 1990s a remarkable new find of jade was discovered just south of the Yukon border in Canada. It contained stone so green, clear and vibrant that it was unlike any other jade ever found. Inspired by its surroundings it became known as "Polar Jade".

Under scientific investigation Polar Jade has been found to be harder than any other variety of Nephrite jade. It shines to a brilliant polish which is one reason why there is an increasing demand for Polar Jade as a gem for precious jewelry and for carving fine art. Polar Jade was always in very limited supply and is now considered to be unavailable.

Polar Pride - the find of the millennium

In the year 2000 the gem world was amazed with the discovery of the largest boulder ever found of gem quality polar jade. This 18 tonne boulder was named Polar Pride. It was immediately dubbed "the find of the millennium".

Internationally known author and gemologist, Fred Ward writes about Polar Pride in his book "Jade": "Without doubt, this is the largest piece of gem grade jade found in my lifetime and perhaps the millennium. Without going into too much in the geological formation, it is a very, very rare occurrence."

Five years in the making

The Jade Buddha project began in early 2003 when Ian Green received a phone call from Cheyenne Sun Hill, a jade jewelry designer in California. Mr Sun Hill explained he was a Buddhist and had been looking for a temple to create a jade Buddha from Polar Pride.

A few months later Ian Green met with Cheyenne and Mr Kirk Makepeace, The President of the jade mining company in Vancouver for his first look at Polar Pride. Ian then spoke to his spiritual master Lama Zopa Rinpoche who divined that this jade boulder would illuminate the world.

Rinpoche told Ian Green “you must turn this jade boulder into a Jade Buddha as a holy object to be offered to the world”.

The next 5 years were devoted to raising the funds to make a deposit on the “Polar Pride”, selecting the best jade master carvers, shipping the boulder to Thailand, preparing a total of 4 prototypes, carving and polishing the Jade Buddha. The Jade Buddha was completed in December 2008 and is now valued at \$5 million.

The Jade Buddha for Universal Peace

Lama Zopa Rinpoche named the Buddha the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace in the belief that this Buddha will inspire all beings to follow the peaceful path. Rinpoche said of the Jade Buddha “It will illuminate the world and bring inconceivable peace and happiness and help prevent the destruction that is happening so much in the world, including war.”

Blessings of the Jade Buddha

The project was first blessed in Northern Thailand before the carving process began. Phra Chuwit Thammavichitdet led a group of five monks who blessed the boulder of jade, the carvers and everyone who would work on the project.

When the Jade Buddha was completed it was blessed by Venerable Krubar Boon Choon Yamsunkhvaro in an event attended by 100,000 people on the Thai – Cambodian border. Finally the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace was consecrated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on December 1 2009 at the Sydney Entertainment Centre, Sydney Australia.

An international achievement

The Jade Buddha is a great international achievement; it commenced with the discovery of a rare 18 tonne boulder of translucent jade in Canada in the year 2000; it is based on the famous Buddha from Bodh Gaya, India; the Buddha prototype was designed by an Australian and a Thai sculptor, it was carved by skilled craftsmen in Thailand. The face was painted by a master painter from Nepal. And it is currently on a world tour which will take it to Asia, Australia, North America and Europe.

World tour

Lama Zopa Rinpoche said if you leave the Buddha in one place, then only a few can see it - but if take the Buddha around the world “it makes it so easy for billions of beings to receive the blessings of the Jade Buddha”.

The tour of the Jade Buddha is dedicated to universal peace. Our aim is that this world tour will inspire everyone who sees it to find peace in their home, their schools, their work and most importantly peace in their heart and mind.

The world tour of the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace is being taken is expected to last for several years. The tour commenced in Danang, Vietnam in March 2009. After three months in Vietnam it toured the capital cities of Australia during the second half of 2009. In February 2010 it commenced its tour of USA and Canada where it is booked out until May 2011.

In the first year of its world tour (concluding March 2010) it was recorded that over 4.5 million visitors had seen the Jade Buddha.

In second half 2011 the Jade Buddha will travel to Germany, England and other European destinations before going back to Asia in 2012. The Jade Buddha is scheduled to make return visits to USA, Vietnam and Australia. Eventually the Jade Buddha will go to its home at the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion in Bendigo, Australia where it will be a symbol of peace to inspire the world for millennia to come.

Mandala Lights around the Jade Buddha

Very unusual lights have regularly appeared in photographs taken of the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace. These lights first appeared at Quán Thế Âm temple in Đà Nẵng. They have since appeared at every showing of the Jade Buddha in Vietnam, Australia and USA. These lights appear in a wide range of conditions and even appear inside buildings such as the Museum of Western Australia in Perth and the Sydney Entertainment Centre. But not all people seem to be able to take these photographs. The lights have been called “Mandala Lights” because of the symmetrical design which has a similarity to a Buddhist mandala. The lights appear to be semi-transparent and while they appear to be largely white when enlarged they are seen to be made up of many colours. Enlargements of the lights have also shown wonderful and colourful patterns within the lights.

Milestones

- January 2003 Ian Green receives phone call from Cheyenne Sun Hill regarding “Polar Pride”.
- April 2003 Ian Green meets Mr Kirk Makepeace, President of jade mine and sees “Polar Pride”.
- April 2003 Lama Zopa Rinpoche has a vision of a giant Jade Buddha and requests Ian Green to make this Buddha “as a holy object to offer to the world”.
- 2004 negotiations concluded with mining company for purchase of “Polar Pride” in a series of installments.
- 2005 Negotiations concluded with Mr Vanit Yotharvut at jade carvers in Northern Thailand.
- 2005 Photographic study of Buddha in Bodh Gaya completed.
- 2005 Shipping of “Polar Pride” from Vancouver to Bangkok.
- 2006 “Polar Pride” arrives at Thai carvers.
- 2006 first prototype complete and Vanit Yotharvut meets Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Singapore to discuss prototype.
- 2007 Blessing ceremony held by Thai monks as project commences. Ian and Judy Green in attendance.
- 2007 Australian Sculptor, Jonathon Partridge makes first of 5 trips to carving factory.
- 2007 Second and third prototype completed.
- 2007 Cutting of “Polar Pride” commences.
- 2008 Fourth prototype completed and approved by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.
- 2008 (first half) Sculpting complete
- 2008 (second half) Polishing complete
- December 2008 Final blessing ceremony in Thailand to conclude carving process.
- January 2009 face of Jade Buddha painted
- March 2009 tour of Vietnam commences in Danang
- June 2009 tour of Australia commences
- December 1 2009 His Holiness the Dalai Lama consecrates the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace.
- February 2010 tour of USA commences
- March 2010 4.5 million visitors to the Jade Buddha in the first year of its world tour

The tour so far:

VIETNAM MARCH – MAY 2009

- Quan Am Temple, Danang
- Dai Tong Lam Temple, Ba Ria Vung Tau
- Pho Quang Temple, Ho Chi Minh City
- Hoang Phap Temple, Ho Chi Minh City
- Van An Temple, Dong Thap

- Phat Tich Temple, Bach Ninh (Hanoi)

AUSTRALIA JUNE – DECEMBER 2009

- Brisbane Square, Brisbane Australia.
- Wat Thai Buddharam.
- Darling Harbour, Sydney
- Van An Temple, Sydney
- Minh Quang Temple, Sydney
- Phap Hoa Temple, Adelaide
- Museum of Western Australia, Perth
- Minh Quang Temple, Sydney
- Sydney Entertainment Centre
- Quang Duc Temple, Melbourne
- Quang Minh Temple, Melbourne

USA / CANADA FEBRUARY 2010 – MAY 2011

- Phap Vuong Temple, Escondido (San Diego)
- Bao An Temple, Orlando Florida
- Minh Dinh Quang Temple, Tampa Florida
- Viet Nam Temple, Houston Texas
- Wat Buddharangsi, Miami Florida
- Quan Am Monastery, Memphis Tennessee
- Lien Hoa Temple, Charlotte N Carolina
- Linh Son Temple, Worcester Massachusetts
- Phap Van Temple, Toronto Canada

Sculpting the prototype

Before the carving process began large scale prototypes of the Jade Buddha were produced out of clay and fiberglass. All together full-size four prototypes of the Buddha were created before the final one was approved. Each prototype was personally reviewed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Classically trained, Australian sculptor Jonathon Partridge worked alongside the Thai sculptors at Jade Thongtavee to create the final prototype for the carving of the Jade Buddha.

Skilled cutting and carving of the Jade Buddha

Once the prototype for the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace was approved, the cutting and carving of the Polar Pride boulder began. Cutting jade is a very slow process as diamond saws grind their way through the boulder. Once the boulder was roughly cut it went through a process of refinement as the Buddha and lotus base gradually took shape.

The carving was overseen by the head carver at the factory. Jonathon Partridge also visited Thailand in the final months to personally oversee the exacting detail that was required to make the statue. In total it took around two years for Jade Thongtavee to design, cut, carve and polish the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace.

Highly regarded jade carvers

The carving of the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace was entrusted to Thailand's oldest and most highly regarded jade factory, Jade Thongtavee Co. Ltd. Jade Thongtavee was founded by Mr. Boonthong Yotharvut who studied jade sculpture techniques in China before setting up Jade Thongtavee in 1973. Jade Thongtavee now employs over 30 skilled craftsmen and women.

Their work exhibits a delicate craftsmanship that is highly sought after by collectors and Buddhist temples. The carving of the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace was overseen by the son of the founder and current factory manager, Mr Vanit Yotharvut.

Why did we paint the face of the Jade Buddha?

The face of the Jade Buddha was painted in gold after advice was received from Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The painting of the face has made the features of the face much clearer and as a result more inspiring.

The original statue in Bodh Gaya is painted and indeed it is a tradition in Tibet and Nepal for statues to have their face painted in non-reflecting gold. It is considered to be inauspicious to see your face reflected in the statue of a Buddha. The face was painted by Rajeesh, a renowned Nepali artist.

Every piece of Polar Pride is used

The workers at Jade Thongtavee were instructed to carefully collect every chip that came from Polar Pride during the carving process. These pieces of jade have been transformed into unique mementos of the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace. Memento items are available for a limited time at each tour venue.

Nephrite Jade – The Stone of Heaven

Nephrite or “true” jade has influenced civilizations in Asia, South America and the Pacific since the beginning of history. Wherever jade has occurred people have found value in it as a tool, a healing stone and as a connection to the gods. The hardness and toughness of jade was first exploited for tools over 5000 years ago.

Jade conjures the magic of legend, especially in China where Nephrite Jade was known as the stone of heaven. Ancient Chinese myths told of jade being plucked from the rainbow and cast down to the earth. With such importance attached to it, the Chinese have traditionally valued jade above other worldly possessions.

Today the healing quality of jade is valued around the world.

Jade from the arctic regions of Canada

Deep in the heart of the Canadian North, under the shadow of rugged British Columbian mountains lie beds of nephrite jade. First discovered in the 1960s the jade deposits of British Columbia are without parallel in the world. However jade mining in British Columbia is a difficult and expensive process. The earth is free of snow only three months of the year and being in a remote area, supplies must be flown in. Removing the jade requires a great deal of care during the long journey through rugged terrain.

One of the world’s great jade Buddhas

There are several large jade Buddhas at Buddhist pilgrimage places around the world. Famous jade Buddhas exist at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Myanmar, Wat Phra Kaeo Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Thailand and at the Jade Buddha temple in Shanghai.

The Jade Buddha for Universal Peace is destined to take its place beside these Buddha statues as one of the most famous and revered in the world.

The value of holy objects

It is explained by the Buddha in the Sutra of the Mudra of Developing the Power of Devotion:

*The minute you see a holy object you create numberless merits,
So no question if you actually make prostrations,*

Offerings and so forth you create far greater merit.

In the White Lotus Sutra it says:

Even just making one sound, or a cymbal offering

Even just offering one single flower

To the form of One who has Gone to Bliss (Buddha) on a stone wall

Even if one makes the offering with the attitude while it is angry

Those living beings will gradually see ten million Buddha's.

Anyone who puts their palms together completely,

Or even with one palm or just one time bows down in respect

To a stupa which contain relics, even with a distracted mind (without virtue)

Verbally saying I prostrate to the Buddha just one time or a few times

All those beings will achieve supreme enlightenment

As Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche explains:

“Just by holy objects such as the Jade Buddha and the Great stupa existing in the world it makes it so unbelievably easy for us sentient beings, whether we are in this world

or will be born in this world or are from other universes, to purify the obstacles for happiness, peace and realisations on the path, and also to achieve liberation and enlightenment.

These holy objects make it so easy for us to create the causes of merit. Only then can one change the distracted negative emotional thoughts, the ignorant nature of the mind that harms you and harms the world.”

The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion

After the world tour the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace will finally be housed inside the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion which is being built in Bendigo, Victoria, Australia.

The Great Stupa is based on the famous Gyantse Kumbum that was built in Tibet in the 15th century. Just like the Gyantse stupa, the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion will be 50 metres (164 feet) wide and 46 metres high. It will be the largest stupa outside Asia. It will be a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists of all traditions as well as a place of worship for the fast growing Australian Buddhist community.

The Great Stupa has a vast collection of sacred Buddhist relics including those of Shakyamuni Buddha, Kasyapa Buddha and the 16 Arhants. These relics have been offered from many Buddhist traditions including Chinese, Tibetan, Thai, Burmese and Mongolia. Some of these holy relics are being taken on the world tour of the Jade Buddha.