

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 in the world. The Jade Buddha is 2.7 metres high and sits on an alabaster throne of 1.4 high. The Jade Buddha itself weighs around 4 tonne 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.

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 has 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.”

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 universally recognised by all Buddhists. 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. 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. 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 selected by the Chinese authorities for the medals at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. As the highest quality Nephrite jade in the world the arrival of Polar Jade has changed the way the world looks at Nephrite.

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.”

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Five years in the making

The Jade Buddha project began in 2003 when Ian Green received a phone call from a Jade designer in the USA. Following a trip to see the Jade boulder in Vancouver, Ian spoke to his spiritual master Lama Zopa Rinpoche who divined that this jade boulder “must be made into a Jade Buddha as a holy object to be offered to the world”. The next five years were devoted to raising the funds to make a deposit on the “Polar Pride”, finding 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 is now valued at \$5 million.

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. The Buddha prototype was designed by Australian and Thai sculptors, it was carved by skilled craftsmen in Thailand. And it is currently on a world tour which will take it to Asia, Australia, North America and Europe.

World tour

After completion in December 2008, the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace embarked on a tour which is expected to last for several years. The tour commenced in Vietnam in March 2009 where over a three month period an estimated 4 million people paid homage to the Buddha. It is currently in Australia where it will travel to Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne in 2009 prior to moving to USA and Canada in 2010. In 2011 the Jade Buddha will travel to Germany, England and other European destinations before going back to Asia in 2012. Eventually the Jade Buddha will go to its home at the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion in Bendigo, Victoria where it will be a symbol of peace to inspire the world for millennia to come.

The tour of the Jade Buddha is dedicated to universal peace. It is hoped that the Buddha’s presence will inspire everyone who sees it to find peace in their home, their schools and work, their family, and in their own heart.

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The tour so far:

March 2009: Quan Am Temple, Danang, Vietnam. Attendance 150,000
April 2009: Dai Tong Lam Temple, Ba Ria Vung Tau Vietnam. Attendance 300,000
April 2009: Pho Quang Temple, Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam. Attendance 350,000
April 2009: Hoang Phap Temple, Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam. Attendance 500,000
May 2009: Van An Temple, Dong Thap Vietnam. Attendance 500,000
May 2009: Phat Tich Temple, Bach Ninh Vietnam. Attendance 1,750,000
June 2009: Brisbane Square, Brisbane Australia. Attendance 2,000
June 2009: Wat Thai Buddharam. Attendance 2,000
July 2009 Darling Harbour, Sydney Attendance 60,000
August 2009 Van An Temple, Sydney Attendance 9,000
August 2009 Minh Quang Temple, Sydney Attendance 15,000
October 2009 Phap Hoa Temple, Adelaide Attendance 10,000
October 2009 Museum of Western Australia, Perth Attendance 25,000
November 2009 Minh Quang Temple, Sydney Attendance 5,000
December 2009 Sydney Entertainment Centre, Sydney Attendance 5,000
December 2009 Quang Duc Temple, Melbourne Attendance (TBA)

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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 Bodhi 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 Nepali artist.

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.

Sculpting the prototype

Before the carving process began large scale prototypes of the Jade Buddha were produced out of clay and fiberglass. All together four prototypes for the Buddha were created before the final one was approved. Each prototype design 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 nearly two years for Jade Thongtavee to design, cut and carve the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace.

Every chip has been collected for mementos of the Jade Buddha

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.

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Nephrite Jade – The Stone of Heaven

Nephrite or “true” jade has influenced civilisations 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.

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

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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

The Great Stupa is based on the famous Gyantse Kumbum that was built in Tibet in the 15th century. The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion 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.

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A project of
The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion Ltd
43 View Street Bendigo VIC 3550 Australia
E-mail: info@stupa.org.au
Phone: +613 5444 2440. Mobile: +613 0417 398877
Fax: +613 5444 2422
Web: www.stupa.org.au www.jadebuddha.org.au