

October to December 2022 was an eventful quarter. Thus, we bring you highlights of these activities ahead of the originally planned highlights of Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) and Poh Ming Tse Temple. In this issue, the following activities are featured:

- Snapshots of orientation for 2022/23 Diploma classes, examinations for the 2021/22 Diploma, Degree and Master's classes as well as participation of BPC students and alumni in Mangala Vihara's spring cleaning
- Temple Tour for the 2022/23 Diploma Classes
- Bonding Trip to Laos

With a heavy heart, BPC Alumni Committee organised a Maranasati service for our late Teacher Brother Ananda Ang in Oct 2022. He is missed by the BPC community.

In a flash, 2022 had ended and it is the start of a new year again. Thank you for staying in tune with us. If you have any feedback or articles which you would like to contribute, please feel free to drop Sister Tyy Yn an email at tyyynquek@gmail.com. May all be well, happy and peaceful!

The Editorial Team

In Memory of Lecturer Brother Ananda Ang



By Brother Bryan Law

On 16 Oct 2022, we received the sad news of the passing of our Buddhist and Pali College (BPC) Lecturer Brother Ananda Ang Hock Ann. A Maranasati service was organized at his wake, led by BPC senior lecturers, Bhante Udita and Bhante Anoma, attended by more than 20 BPC Alumni members.

Brother Ananda had been a BPC volunteer Lecturer for more than 20 years, contributing meritorious work in Dhamma education and propagation. Among the various subjects, he had taught Buddhist Social Institutions for BA classes and Early Buddhism & Ancient Indian Thought for MA classes.

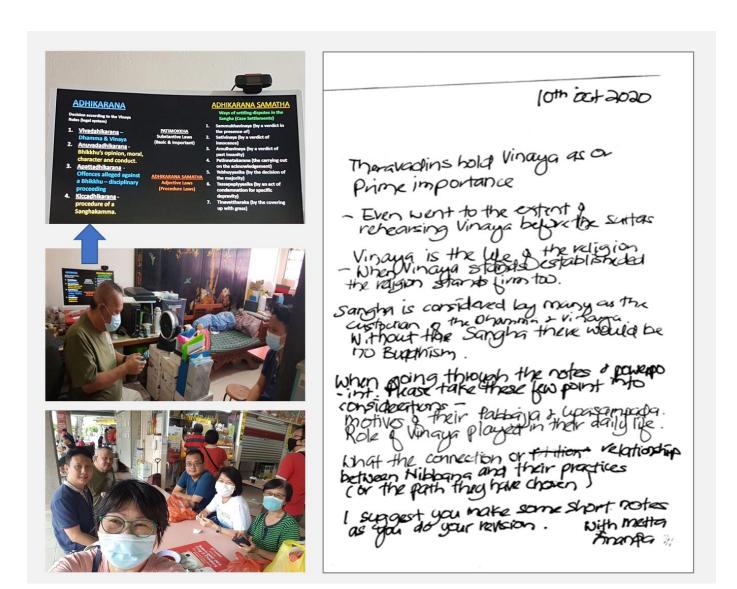
Here are memories of Brother Ananda from his past students of BA1 (2020) - The Buddhist Social Institutions Class.



"I remember Brother Ananda to be very passionate on the topics that he lectured. He was so familiar with the topics of Vinaya, Sangha and the Dhamma even as a lay person that I wondered if he was a monk in his previous life.

He put lots of effort into the presentation slides to help us visualise the topics more effectively. He continued to share his knowledge of the Dhamma even at his bedside when we visited him at the hospital. We will always remember him when we study the Vinaya, Sangha and the Dhamma.

I came across a note from him to help us with our revision and would like to share it with those taking examinations in future."



Sister Rosalind Lim



"Late Brother Ananda was a devoted Buddhist who was always passionate about sharing the Buddha Dhamma with us (the students) whenever he had the opportunity, even when he was very sick. We have learnt much from his sharing, and his departure also taught us life is impermanent - "sabbe sankhārā aniccā" as taught by Buddha.

Late Brother Ananda will be remembered by all of us."

Brother Andy Foo



A BPC Family Portrait, 17 February 2019

The loss of Brother Ananda is deeply felt by the BPC community.

May Lecturer Brother Ananda be reborn in a good existence based on his Dhammadutawork. By virtue of his good deeds, may he attain final Nibbāna





Highlights of Oct – Dec 2022 BPC Events



Orientation for 2022/23 Diploma Classes







2021/22 Diploma Class Exams







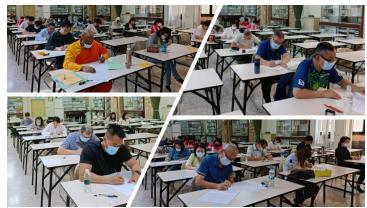
Bonding Trip to Laos: See pages 11 to 27



Temple Tour for 2022/23 Diploma Classes: See pages 7 to 10



Degree Levels and MA Exams





BPC Students and Alumni participating in MV's Spring Cleaning



27 Nov 2022

For 2022/2023 diploma students



Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery





2

Wat Ananda Metyarama Thai Buddhist Temple







3

Amitabha Buddhist Centre





Temple Tour

By Brother Yeh Geng

On 27 Nov 2022, the Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore Alumni Committee organized a temple tour for students of the 2022/2023 Diploma classes, in both Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) and Poh Ming Tse Temple, to better understand the practices of three Buddhist traditions.

In the morning, upon registering and marking our attendance, we were arranged in groups randomly with other classmates. I felt that this was an excellent initiative which enabled students of the same course but held in different locations to get to know one another better and forge stronger spiritual friendships, Kalyāṇa-mitta.

We set out on our temple tour in the comfort of the bus ride. The organizers briefed us regarding the three temples that we would be visiting: on the brief history of each temple as well as the meaning of certain terms used by temples of the three different traditions.



Our first stop was Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery. It is oldest Mahayana the monastery in Singapore and is located in Toa Payoh. The tour guide there was verv despite knowledgeable being such a huge monastery. She was very detailed in her explanations and even highlighted to us the correct

way to enter through the door via the right door using the right leg first. It was a pity that we could not see some parts of the temple due to restoration works but her description enabled us to visualize them well.



Next, we went to the oldest Thai Buddhist temple in Singapore, **Wat Ananda Metyarama**, located at Jalan Bukit Merah.

We had a very interesting talk by one of the Ajahns. He was very knowledgeable and humorous. He started explaining some stories of the Buddha as well as the

situations encountered during the Buddha's time. With the vibrant coloured pictures painted all over the walls, it aided us in the visual aspect, allowing us to have a better understanding.

Finally, we reached Amitabha Buddhist Centre which is located in Geylang. It is a building of seven storeys with air conditioning and a very comfortable main shrine. The guide explained the different drawings that were displayed on the walls. Examples include the difference between Green Tara and White Tara and the



variety of manifestations that appeal to different people in need.

She also highlighted to us that the prayer wheel consists of 156 billion "Om Mani Padme Hum", and that each turning of the wheel symbolizes the purification of the negative karma.



After returning to Mangala Vihara, Bhante Seelananda gave us a short debrief, explaining that although there are different Buddhist traditions, the core and fundamental teachings are the same. He also urged us to always strike a balance between wisdom and compassion. He ended the debrief with a round of blessings for all of us.

In conclusion, I really learnt a lot regarding the variety of traditions in Buddhism. I am grateful for this opportunity to have such a wonderful exposure, together with my newly forged Kalyāṇa-mitta. Oh, and not forgetting the delicious snacks, muffins and curry puffs prepared by some of our Kalyāṇa-mitta. Looking forward to learning and doing good with all. May all be well and happy.



Laos Trip Briefing cum Birthday Celebration







Alumni members on Loas Trip celebrating
Bhante Seelananda's birthday

Bonding Trip to Laos

By Brother Jaryl Lim



From 3 to 8 November 2022, 31 alumni members, together with Bhante Sumana and Bhante Suneetha, flew to Laos for a six days bonding trip.

We assembled bright and early at Changi Airport with a buzz of excitement – for some of us, it was our first time travelling out of Singapore or Malaysia since the COVID-19 measures were lifted.

Laos is not an oft-heard travel destination, so as our plane began its descent upon its capital, excitement gave way to a sense of curiosity: How is Laos like as a country? What kind of temples and sights would we get to see? How do Laos people practise Buddhism? And what is Laos' food like – can we get accustomed to it?

If these questions interest you, please join me as I reminisce and share highlights from our bonding trip!

Day 1: Vientiane, Laos' Capital

Upon arrival at Wattay International Airport, we were greeted with warm smiles by Phet and Pao, our 2 trusty local guides for this trip. They introduced us to Laos, a landlocked country bordered by China, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam with the Mekong River flowing through it.



(Photo credit: Sis Irene Goh)

The guides taught us some simple Lao greetings such as 'Sabaidee' and how to say thank you ('khop jai lai lai!'). They also shared that the Laos's currency is Kip, jokingly adding that just USD 100 would make us a millionaire in Laos!



A local handweaver in action! (Photo credit: Sis Ellen Song)

Our first stop was the **Lao Textile Museum**. Upon arrival, many of us marvelled at the rustic 2-storey wooden buildings where the museum was housed. In one building, two local women hand-weaved fabric, and in the other building a third woman showed us how she hand-dyed fabric using natural plant ingredients stored in large clay pots. Some of us even had the opportunity to try our hands at handweaving!

The traditional craft of handwoven fabric, we were told, has all but become virtually extinct owing to the efficiencies of factory production. However, it was evident to us that no machine could replicate the incomparable beauty of handmade fabrics that were expertly woven right in front of our eyes.

We ended our day with a dinner at **Kualao** Restaurant. Signature dishes included red and green curries reminiscent of Thaistyled curry, as well as a tasty, deep-fried riverweed. Yes, that's right, 'riverweed', not seaweed, presumably harvested straight from the Mekong river!



Satisfied smiles from our first Laos meal! (Photo credit: Sis Jean Lau)

Days 2 to 4: Luang Prabang, a UNESCO marvel

The next day, our group took the high-speed rail at the newly-constructed **Lao-China Railway**, which opened on 3 December 2021 and runs from Vientiane to Boten town near Yunnan, China.



Here's the view out of the window while travelling on the Lao-China Railway. What a sight to behold! (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

Our destination? Luang Prabang, a

town located in the mountainous region of northern Laos designated as a UNESCO world heritage site owing to its rich architectural, artistic and cultural heritage.

On the way to Luang Prabang, we were treated to magnificent views of luscious green fields, rice paddies, flowing streams and rolling mountains. Words could not adequately describe the wondrous sights before us – just look at the photo above!



A serene, golden Buddha statue in the Sim of Wat Xieng Tong Temple. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

Following the 2-hour journey to Luang Prabang, we visited **Wat Xieng Tong Temple**, or "Temple of the Golden City". Built in the 1500s by King Setthathirath, Wat Xieng Thong was the royal family's temple and epicentre for Buddhist activity back when Luang Prabang was still Laos' capital. The temple's central shrine hall, or "Sim", is decorated with beautiful gold stencilling on the outside and filled with shining golden Buddha statues within. At the back of the Sim, there was also a stunning glass mosaic of a Tree of Life depicting various Laos folklore.

One of the temple's distinguishing architectural features is the green Nagas that protrude out of its roofs. Animism, we were told, is still very much alive in certain segments of Laos, and the **Naga motif** is the perfect symbol that bridges the animistic and Buddhist beliefs of Laotians. The Naga, a half-snake water spirit, resembles the snake-like being which was believed to shelter the Buddha for 7 days while he was deep in meditation. Laotians today worship the Naga as a guardian and protector of the Buddha.

Having been blessed with clear blue skies, our group could not possibly resist a photo opportunity. Can you spot the green Nagas atop the Sim?



Perfect weather for a group photo at the historic Wat Xieng Tong Temple. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

Our next stop was a **Special Needs School**, which was specially chosen for those who went on the trip to sponsor its students as a form of dana.

As our mini-buses arrived at the school, we saw the students lined up on

the field, some as young as five and others in their teens. In front of them was a table filled with food, drinks, study materials and toys of various kinds sponsored by our group. When we alighted, the students and staff waved at us with excitement and beaming smiles. One could not help but be touched by their display of warmth and joy.



Our sponsored items for the school. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)



The school representative giving an address while students listened attentively behind. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

During his address, the school's head shared with us the difficulties they had in obtaining sufficient resources and trained staff for their school. As such, he graciously thanked BPC alumni for its generous sponsorship as it would go a long way to keep the school running.

At the end of the visit, the school presented a token of appreciation, which was received by Bhante Suneetha and Bhante Sumana on our behalf.



Token of appreciation from the beneficiary school to BPC. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)



Group photo with the beneficiary school. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

Our final stop for the day was **Pak Ou Caves**, but there was only one way to get there: by boat. Happily, our tour group boarded the boat that was chartered for us and travelled along the Mekong River with hills rolling on ceaselessly on both ends. It was a relaxing and leisurely ride as we enjoyed the countryside views and rich biodiversity that the Mekong River had to offer from the comfort of our deck.





Sis Lay Kieng, Sis Siew Hua and the 2 William Brothers enjoying scenic views on the boat. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

After the hour-plus boat ride, we reached **Pak Ou Caves**. Our guides shared there were some 4,000 Buddha statues in these caves, and the number continues to increase every year as more statues are added during annual pilgrimages by visitors. The caves were cool and dimly lit, with natural sunlight streaming through the entrances and cracks of the caves.

Some of us explored the Lower Caves, while others braved the steep steps up to the Higher Caves where even more Buddha statues could be found. The tranquil atmosphere provided the perfect opportunity for prayers. Some of us knelt down and prayed before the myriad of Buddha statues in the caves.





Various Buddha statues in Pak Ou Caves. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

Finally, we ended the day with a delicious **dinner by the Mekong River**. I recalled fondly that we had Thai-styled mango sticky rice that was far better than what anyone could get in Singapore. The mango flesh was a rich golden yellow and incredibly sweet, the coconut cream thick and fragrant, and the sticky rice still warm and soft when it arrived at our tables. One couldn't help but wolf down the rich and fragrant dessert within minutes after it was served – at least I did!

On Day 3, we set off from our hotel at 5am to participate in alms-giving (piṇdapāta), a typical activity for Buddhist tourists who are in Laos. Armed

with snacks and drinks bought from a local supermarket the previous night, we sat on stools, prepared and waited in anticipation: each of us had one hand in a bamboo container of sticky rice, and the other carrying sweets or snacks.



All lined up and ready for the pindapata!

As the first light of the day peered through the horizon, we saw a long line of monks, clad in bright orange robes, sauntering down the street in a single file with their alms bowl tipped slightly in our direction. As they approached us one-by-one, each of us placed a dollop of sticky rice and a snack into their alms bowl mindfully.





As there were more than 40 monks, some of us ran out of food quite quickly, but that didn't stop us: there were locals waiting just across the street to supply us with additional sweets and sticky rice so that we could dana to all of them. By the time we were done, the monks slowly disappeared behind the gates of the temple, leaving us to pick up our now-emptied plastic bags. What a novel experience it was!



(Photo credit: Bro Jebsons Chia, Bro Kelvin Tan, Bro Chew Peng Cheong)

Later that morning, we visited a family-run business called **The Bamboo Experience**. Upon reaching the destination, we were split into two groups. Those of us who could cook whipped up a hearty bamboo-themed lunch...



... while the rest of us made drink coasters using – you guessed it – bamboo! Many of us muttered "2 UP, 2 DOWN, 1 UP, 1 DOWN..." under our breaths as we weaved our own coasters. Here are some of us hard at work and showing off our final products!



(Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha, Sis Jean Lau, Bro Chew Peng Cheong, Sis Tan Siew Kwang)

During the presentation, the owner of the Bamboo Experience shared with us that he knows over 50 kinds of bamboo to date! He also believed that bamboo is the key to a sustainable future due to its flexible, yet durable nature. Music instruments, textiles, toys and furniture – these are just some of the items that can be made with bamboo.



Even the swing that Sis Cassandra Koh sat on is made from bamboo!

(Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

Lunch was also bamboo-inspired. The cutlery and dining ware were made from bamboo, and there were also dishes such as steamed bamboo and stir-fried bamboo, some of which were prepared by our group members!



Music & dance performance. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

After lunch, we were treated to a musical performance by a 18-year old who played and danced with an instrument known as the *Khaen*. The song and dance, we were told, is traditionally used to woo members of the opposite sex!

At the end of the performance, our very own Bro. Jebsons took up the challenge to try out the *Khaen*. He played the instrument and even danced along, to uproarious laughter and cheer from the rest of us!



Bro Jebsons taking up the challenge to play the *Khaen*! (Photo credit: Sis Ellen Song)

Our next stop was the **Royal Palace Museum**. Built in 1904, the architecture of the Royal Palace featured a blend of traditional Lao and French style. It was later converted into a museum after the monarchy ended in 1975.

We explored the sprawling grounds of the palace and its chambers within, which displayed a myriad of household items and weaponry used by the royal family previously.



Entrance of the Royal Palace Museum. (Photo credit: Bro Jaryl Lim)



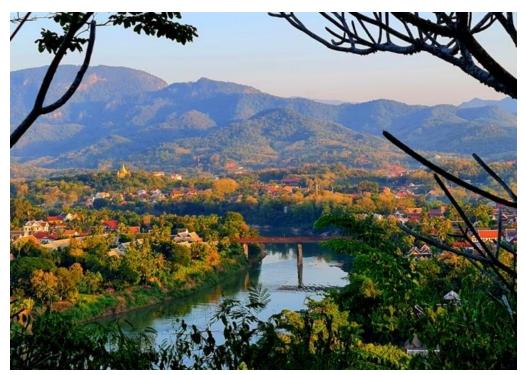
Bhantes paying their respects to the Buddha at Wat May Souvannapoumaram. (Photo credit: Bro Chew Peng Cheong)

Following the palace visit, we visited two temples in the vicinity: **Wat May Souvannapoumaram**, Luang Prabang's largest temple, and **Wat Visounnarath**, one of the oldest temples in Luang Prabang.

Upon our arrival at Wat May Souvannapoumaram, we could immediately feel an air of reverence wafting through its hallowed corridors with its beautifully-adorned pillars, soft red carpets and larger-than-life golden Buddha statues. Our Bhantes led the group in a pūja session inside the sacred temple, followed by a meditation on loving-kindness (mettā).

After the pūja and meditation, some members of the group offered devotional flowers at the altar, while others made donations to the temple. The various temple visits in Laos provided us with an opportunity to give dāna and gain merits, for which we were humbled and grateful.

The final itinerary for the day was Mount Phousi, or 'sacred hill'.



A picturesque view of Luang Prabang halfway up Mt. Phousi. (Photo credit: Sis Jean Lau)

Standing at 100 metres high in the of Luang heart Prabang, Mount Phousi provides visitors with majestic 360degree view of the town of Luang Prabang from atop.



Saturday Buddha, 1 of 7 Buddha postures along Mount Phousi. (Photo credit: Bro Jaryl Lim)

On the way up, we saw a Buddha's footprint and statues depicting the 7 different postures of the Buddha – one for each day of the week.

Although there were more than 300 steps up Mount Phousi, many senior folks in our group were unfazed by the challenge. One could only marvel at their determination to ascend the hill just to catch a glimpse of what's in store at the very top! By the time we reached the summit, it was already close to sunset. There was already a crowd forming to capture the best views. There was also a mini temple at the summit.

Watching the sunset atop Mount Phousi was an almost surreal experience. As the warm glow of the orange-red sun gently receded behind the mountains, one could not help but contemplate the countless sentient beings that were touched by its rays, and the vastness of nature that it breathed life into.



Sunset view atop Mount Phousi. Simply breathtaking! (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

On our final day in Luang Prabang, we woke up early to visit a **local** morning market.

Some of us grabbed last-minute snacks and souvenirs at the market, while the rest of us were treated to an unexpected sight: a **Kathina procession**, Laos-style.

Beginning from one end of the street, locals draped in a beautifully-woven fabric lined up the street carrying 'money-trees', banners and the like, and they began marching down the street towards



Lining up the streets to begin the Kathina procession. (Photo credit: Sis Jean Lau)

a nearby temple while banging on drums and cheering to their hearts' content.

Some of them even threw candy and cash into the air to the delight of surrounding children and adults, who quickly swooped them up in a flash!

The atmosphere of the festivities was electrifying as throngs of people circumambulated the temple a few times to the sounds of beating drums before they assembled inside the temple to begin the Kathina ceremony. What an unexpected but delightful way to end our visit to the morning market!





Street photography of the Kathina procession during our visit to a morning market. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)



Having lunch right beside a waterfall – how often can one say that?! (Photo credit: Sis Ellen Song)

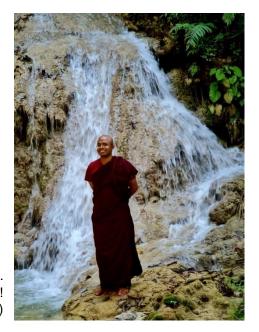
Our next destination was a must-see waterfall attraction, but first we stopped en route at a local restaurant which... had lunch tables set up right beside a mini-waterfall!

After a pūja session led by the Bhantes, we proceeded to have lunch while being serenaded by the melodious cascading waters all around us.



Magnificent waterfalls Kuangsi Waterfall Park. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

When we finally got to **Kuangsi Waterfall Park**, we were stunned by the magnificence of its waterfalls: white water streams crashed against the turquoise pools and beige rocks down below, creating a most beautiful symphony of sights and sounds.



Bhante Suneetha posing in front of a waterfall.

The waters were very cool and crystal clear!

(Photo credit: Sis Grace Seow)

Inside the park, there was also a **Sunbear Reserve** where we caught glimpses of endangered sunbears. We spent the rest of the day roaming in the park, admiring the trail of waterfalls, inhaling fresh air from the surrounding trees, and marvelling at what nature offers to this land called Laos.



Group photo at the entrance of Kuangsi Waterfall Park. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

On the penultimate day of our trip, we took a 2-hour train ride back to Vientiane. Our last stop for the trip was the **Buddha Park** (*Xieng Khuan*). A beautifully-curated park that looks like a labyrinth from above, the Buddha Park is decorated with numerous statues influenced by Buddhism and Hinduism.



A 40-metre reclining Buddha bathing in the glow of the evening sun. (Photo credit: Sis Ellen Song)

highlights Some included 40a metre reclining Buddha, as well as several statues depicting Hindu god figures such as Hanuman and Garuda.



Sis Mary Anne Loo at the entrance of 'hell'. (Photo credit: Sis Grace Seow)

Those of us who were more adventurous trod up a pumpkin-looking sculpture, which we were told represented the 3 realms – hell, earth and heaven.

At the top, we were treated to panoramic views of the Mekong river on one side and sunset on the other, while overlooking the whole of the Buddha Park. Those of us who climbed up to 'heaven' basked in the golden glow of the evening sun as our Laos trip slowly came to a close.



A scenic view of the Buddha Park from the vantage point of 'heaven' atop the sculpture.
(Photo credit: Bro. Jaryl Lim)



Live music on the *khim* as we indulged in our final meal. (Photo credit: Bro Jaryl Lim)

On our final evening, we partook in a scrumptious farewell meal at Tamnak Lao Restaurant. Our dinner was accompanied by live music from the khim, a stringed music instrument played with 2 flexible bamboo sticks akin to the Chinese yangqin (扬琴). Halfway through dinner, the khim musician began playing popular Mandarin classics such as 月亮代表我的心 and 上海滩, much to our surprise! Many in our group began happily clapping and singing along to his repertoire of nostalgic tunes.

We completed our dinner with a rapturous applause for the musician. It was truly a befitting farewell performance to mark the end of our trip.

Conclusion and a Note of Gratitude

A travel log such as this can only, at best, capture a snapshot and not the full travel experience, but hopefully it has given you, the reader, a little taste of Laos – its people, culture, food, Buddhist tradition and practices.

Our group was particularly blessed with a smooth and comfortable journey throughout the trip, and it was in no small part due to the following people who made it all possible:

First, a special shout out to our Singapore tour guide, Sis. Judith from Ik Chin Travel, our Laos tour guides, Phet and Pao, and our drivers. Their care, courtesy, thoughtfulness and warm-heartedness created such a pleasant and hospitable environment for all of us.

Second, we are grateful to Bhante Sumana and Bhante Suneetha for accompanying us on the trip, guiding us in the daily pūjas, and blessing us with a safe journey.

Third, we thank the BPC Alumni committee members who organised this trip, and in particular Bro. Adrian who coordinated the registrations and logistics prior to the trip despite not being able to travel with us in the end.

Next, to those who went on the trip, whether young or young-at-heart: thank you for being so gracious, for taking care of each other and for making everyone feel welcome.

And finally to you, *khop* jai lai lai – thank you for reading!



Our final group shot at the Buddha Park. (Photo credit: Bhante Suneetha)

Current Activities

Buddhist and Pali College Courses

Ongoing course:

- Diploma in Buddhism 2022/2023

Upcoming Activities

Buddhist and Pali College Courses

Course	Course Date
Bachelor of Arts in	Starting on 29 January 2023
Buddhist Studies	
Master of Arts in Buddhist	TBC
Studies	
Introduction to Buddhism	3 May to 5 Jul 2023
(in Chinese)	(every Wednesday, 10 sessions)
Introduction to Buddhism	July to September 2023
(in English)	(every Wednesday, 10 sessions)
Certificate in Buddhist	6 to 15 October 2023 (TBC)
Counselling	(total about 30 hours)
Diploma in Buddhism	Preview: September 2023
2023/2024	Start Date: 17 October 2023

- Chinese New Year Bonding Activities
 - 5 February 2023
- Bhante P Gnanarama Anunayaka Mahāthera Memorial Day
 - 10 June 2023
- Buddhist and Pali College 30th Anniversary Symposium
 - 9 September 2023

For more information, please contact:

Address 30 Jalan Eunos Singapore 419495

Tel 8288-9888

Email bpca2017sg@gmail.com

BPC website https://bpc.edu.sg

BPC Facebook https://www.facebook.com/bpcsin