



Honouring our Teachers & Elders

Louisa Booth finds similarities between her homeland and a place of spiritual pilgrimage. With Reiki (and a little guidebook) she has tuned into the wisdom held within sacred sites.

In Hong Kong, early in January, I found a place that felt like Dartmoor. Hong Kong, vibrant, glittering, cosmopolitan city, stacked high with skyscrapers and focused on trading, and Dartmoor, bleak, lonely and desolate, where an icy wind whistles over low grass. And yet on Lantau Island I felt a connection. Partly it was the weather. Hong Kong that day was biting cold, and a low mist descended which prevented us from seeing much further than our fingertips. Wanja Twan would know what I mean. I took her sightseeing on Dartmoor in very similar conditions.

Buddha sat in meditation for 11 years before he attained spiritual enlightenment. Our handy Chinese Guidebook promised we would attain enlightenment in a day, simply by visiting the Tian Tan Buddha, otherwise known as the Big Buddha, and walking the Wisdom Path. Enlightenment in a day was an offer not to be missed.

We slipped across to Lantau Island by super modern subway train, and then caught a cable car up to the Big Buddha. Beneath us as we went we glimpsed wild camellia, the tea plant, flowering gamely despite the rain. From time to time the clouds parted, and we could see the Big Buddha, serene on his mountaintop, 250 tonnes of bronze that had been transported across wild countryside. Occasionally, beneath the cable car we caught sight of the real way of pilgrimage, a narrow path snaking up and down the mountains, used for years by the monks of Po Lin monastery.

It was those monks who, relatively recently, conceived the plan of creating the Buddha. He was to be the tallest Buddha the world had ever seen, and putting him together was a technological feat that required the help of space age engineers from the Chinese Aeronautical Group. The monks elicited donations from all over the world to help pay for him, and by 1993 he was complete. The Buddha was to house ancient stone carvings and also copies of the sutras, some of them written in blood. There is a sacred relic of Gautama Buddha himself, some 2,500 years old, donated by the monks of Sri Lanka.

So now, in a very modern state famed the world over for trading and commerce, we have a place of immense spiritual endeavour. There are the relics, the ancient writings, the nearby monastery and the Big Buddha

himself. People flock to see him. Many come as tourists, but it is a respectful tourism that very often involves a prayer and an offering. The Buddha is seated on a Lotus throne, surrounded by statues of Devas, and his hand is raised in blessing over the crowds that climb the steps towards him. That blessing is potent.

When we had walked around the Buddha, joined the people offering prayers at the nearby temple and had a simple lunch at the monastery refectory, we set off for the Wisdom Path. The guidebook explained that somewhere ahead there was a path made of 'sticks', inscribed with the Heart Sutra. By now the mist was swirling around us and the rain was lashing against our faces. Out of the mist loomed the Wisdom Path, made not so much of sticks as of great vast tree trunks, each one sliced in half, with the lettering carved into them. They are set on the mountain in an infinity pattern so that you can walk an endless loop while you ponder their meaning.

Again, this is a very recent monument, completed in 2005 and, again, it is a place of spiritual power. As I walked, glimpsing the grey tree-trunks through the mist, I was inexorably reminded of Merrivale on Dartmoor, where long ago someone planted standing stones in a pattern of spiritual significance, which today we don't understand. But we can still feel it, especially in the mist and the cold when the rain lashes down. We don't know what those stones were for or why they were placed there, but we do know that it took intention, and belief, and the best of modern technology. If we walk around those stones in the inevitable shifting mists of Dartmoor, we can still feel that power, reverberating through the centuries and linking us to that place inside ourselves which was recognised by the people of Hong Kong when they built their very modern monuments to ancient wisdom.

As Reiki Practitioners, we have another way to reach that place. We can honour our teachers, and respect the wisdom handed down from master to master, by placing our hands on ourselves and self-treating in the way we have been taught. Using Reiki, we can release the clamour of the outside world and the demands of everyday life, and make our own direct connection with spiritual power and ancient wisdom. What it requires from us is practice. □

Left:
Wisdom
Path