

A PRICELESS PEACE OF MIND : GARDEN OF ONE THOUSAND BUDDHAS

Created To Bring Positivity And Peace To Anyone Who Enters Its Gardens

[A Vast Array Of Buddha Statues \[Photo Credit: Donnie Sexton\]](#)

Peace of mind is considered by some people the most valuable, yet elusive, commodity. In western Montana's Jocko Valley, north of the picturesque town of Arlee, peace of mind is being offered year round from sunrise to sunset—free of charge.

The *Garden of One Thousand Buddhas* is situated on the Flathead Reservation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes believed by the creators to “align positive properties of the physical world in a architectural arrangement based on the eight-spoked Dharma wheel symbolizing the turning or awaking of the enlightened qualities of altruism and wisdom.” Their mission is that “the *Garden* provides visitors of all faiths an opportunity to generate profound merit, to reduce global negatives, and to bring about lasting peace.” The *Garden* is a dedicated [International Peace Center](#) committed to preserving the ancient culture of Tibet.

According to Robin Reed, visiting the *Garden* compels one to be contemplative. Robin lives at the 60-acre garden of Ewam Sang-ngag Ling and works in the small gift shop as a volunteer. She is a self-proclaimed nomad, with ties to Colorado, Texas and New Mexico and plans to pursue her wanderlust via RV after her term of service at the *Garden*. For now, however, she's not thinking of the future but content to focus on the daily peace she finds in the nature and structure of the *Garden*.

Robin came to the *Garden* at invitation of the founding family. For over ten years she has known the Tibetan Buddhist lama, Gochen Tulku Sang-ngag Rinpoche, after meeting at a Buddhist retreat in the Four Corners area of southwestern Colorado and interacting while she was a cook at a Santa Fe Buddhist retreat.

When asked what kind of people visit the *Gardens* she says, “It's a huge slice of all sorts of people. Some live in Montana. A lot come from all over the world.”

Montana snowbird, Kristie Peressini, frequents the *Garden* when she's summering in her Montana lakeside home. Though the *Garden* originated in 2000, she first learned about it in 2008. She recalls that “I went to visit and the only thing there was the Yum Chenmo. She was without the pagoda and unpainted.”

Yum Chenmo, or the Great Mother, represents the perfection of wisdom and stands twenty-feet tall at the center of the *Garden*. The statue symbolizes the marriage of elemental wisdom and the skillful means of kindness. This is Robin's favorite garden feature which she calls a "remarkable representation of peace and compassion."

One thousand Montana-made, hand-cast Buddhas encircle the Yum Chenmo, symbolizing the enlightened mind. Another thousand figures, called "stupas" stand atop the two outer throne walls creating the exterior rim of the Dharma wheel. Volunteers can join the effort in growing this garden at the appropriately named Buddha Barn, in nearby Missoula, Mont., on Saturdays at 10 a.m., where they'll be instructed in statue casting and finishing as they make more buddhas. According to *Garden* founders, "this meaningful ancient symbol from India has come to be associated with the Buddha's teachings (dharma) when he 'turned the wheel,' setting in motion the teaching on the path to liberation and enlightenment. Native trees and flowers throughout the garden create an inspiring picture of tranquility. Volunteers also gather to help in landscape planting and maintenance.

[Buddha Statue Near Mountains \[Photo Credit: Donnie Sexton\]](#)

Kristie has experienced the *Garden's* peaceful instruction and solace recalling, "There is one of the eight quadrants in which I like to sit on the bench and meditate. During the time that my mother-in-law lay dying after a stroke and was taken off life support, my daughter and I went to help plant that section of the garden. She was on our minds and in our hearts as we planted. It is said that by planting flowers and other things it helps everything—from the bees and insects all the way up, benefiting everyone."

As some visitors enjoy taking a memento of their experience at the *Garden* home with them, they visit the gift shop Robin mans. Robin says that popular items in the shop are postcards, greeting cards, incense, Buddhist statues, and Tibetan prayer flags. But, according to Robin, the most popular item with visitors remains the paper peace cranes made by local artist, Karen Christie, of Kalispell, Montana. But even without spending a dime, travelers to the *Garden of One Thousand Buddhas* report feeling like they leave with something: a greater hope for the future and a renewed energy to pass what they've felt in the *Garden* forward.

Nanette Hilton

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Make Sure To Stay At:

[Whitefish KOA](#), sprawling across 33 acres of a secluded, forested valley, it's a mere 24 miles from Glacier National Park and a

worldwide with her writing in publications spanning two decades on diverse subjects. This mother of five calls the splendid Mojave Desert home."

short drive from Whitefish and Kalispell. This KOA is renowned for its huge playground.