

THE BLACK CRANE FESTIVAL

Ex Paro 3rd November 2018



BHUTAN

Nestled in the Himalayas is the idyllic nation of Bhutan - the world's only democratic monarchy. Bhutan cautiously emerged from isolation in the 1970's and has since embraced a policy of strictly controlled tourism and development.

Bhutan is a rare gem. In 2006 approximately only 12,000 tourists were permitted to enter and taste the delights of Bhutan's wonderful Buddhist culture, marvel at her magnificent scenery, trek through a stunning array of mountains and valleys and to view some of the world's rarest flora and fauna in a totally unspoiled environment. Bhutan offers sensational opportunities for Eco-friendly visitors and will continue to refrain from indulging in mass-market tourism, although a small increase in visitor numbers has been approved. Bhutan has resisted globalization and therefore has protected its strong Buddhist culture and way of life. There is little crime, a stable government and exceptionally friendly people. Whether you are a bird-watcher, trekker, weaver, culture seeker or scenery lover... Bhutan is a must see destination, unlike no other.

The country boasts a glorious mosaic of botanical treasures and with its pristine environment these remain largely untouched and in some cases undiscovered. Bhutan is home to an enormous diversity of flora with over 50 species of rhododendrons alone and over 600 species of orchids. Bhutan is famous for the legendary Blue Poppy which blooms only once and then dies. With few people in the world ever setting eyes on it, a mystique surrounds this beautiful species and it is now the national flower of Bhutan.

Join this tour as it winds through breathtaking forests, lush valleys and alpine terrains for a unique journey into the countryside to witness stunning rhododendroms and alpine flowers. Visit monasteries along the way and marvel in the outstanding art and architecture in remote regions.

As your aircraft approach Bhutan's Paro International Airport sets the scene for what is in

store for those lucky tourists in one of the last great frontiers of world travel. Flying into Bhutan is an experience, from the aircraft it is hard to take in the sheer beauty of the scene below. The snow-clad slopes give way to beautiful forests of pine and rhododendron, and just below the tree line, verdant valleys and white-water rivers give way to fields of green. There is a sense of timelessness as the plane makes a perfect landing. This is a medieval land, a Kingdom of dreams, dragons, legends and landscapes: of myth and legend: and people so fiercely proud of their history they wear their national dress as a symbol of their loyalty to the land they love. In this fascinating tour you see some of the remains of the Advent of Buddhism in Bhutan and the scenic hills around the valleys.

After the awesome Drukair flight into Paro you will be amazed by the color and spectacle of the famous Black Crane Festival Tshechu (festival). This small group tour, catering to a maximum of 8 persons, also features a hike to Taktsang Monastery, the remote beauty of the Phobjikha Valley, the most important temples of the central Bumthang region and the splendour of the magnificent Punakha Dzong. The architectural style is like non-other on earth and would have to be one of the most popular destinations of tourist today. With it is a land full of warm-hearted proud friendly people who go to unusual lengths to preserve each element of Bhutanese life. Bhutan follows the same principle of integrating traditional Bhutanese hospitality with the most up to date facilities. The hotels, houses and lodges across the country are built and decorated in traditional style and are the best that Bhutan has to offer. Traveler's today can experience Bhutan by means of the most exciting in-depth group travel programs the travel industry has to offer. There are relatively few visitors to this remarkable land making it a unique and moving experience for the privileged few who venture into this hidden paradise.



Day 01 PARO BHUTAN

Early morning departure from your hotel to the airport to board your Druk Air flight which is Bhutan's National Air Carrier. The green wall of hills known as dooars, or gateways into Bhutan from the plains climbs continuously higher as the plane flies north towards the Tibet border. Silver rivers thread the valleys, waterfalls plunge down the forested mountain side, and to the north, the great snowcapped peaks of the inner Himalayas rise up into the sky. As the aircraft enters the Paro valley, look down and you will see the Paro Dzong overlooking Paro Chu (river) with Ta Dzong, watch tower, now the national museum, above it. On arrival at Paro airport and after completion of airport formalities, you will transfer to our comfortable private vehicle, drive to the small town of Paro situated 10 minutes from the airport. Here you will enjoy a buffet lunch before driving 2 hours to the capital of Thimpu. Check into your hotel and after a short rest your guide will take you on a tour of the Paper Factory. Time before dinner to stroll around the very safe streets of Thimpu. **November 3 (BLD) Overnight Hotel**

Day 02 THIMPU

After breakfast our Bhutanese host will join you and you will drive through beautiful scenery to the start of your hike to the Cheri Monastery one of the most popular monastery's in Bhutan. On the return journey you will be taken to see Bhutan's National animal the Tarkin. Return to Thimpu for lunch, and in the afternoon you will visit the **Cultural Museum, and the School of Fine Arts. O/N Hotel (BLD) November 4**

Day 03 THIMPU - WANGDUEPHONG

After breakfast we will depart for Wangdeuphong and en route we will stop at Dochula Pass (3050 m) where we will have a fascinating view of the snowcapped eastern Himalayan mountain peaks. After lunch you will do an easy walk through villages to visit Chimi Lhakdang, the divine mad monk's temple. The temple can be visited and there is a tree outside which is supposed to have sprouted up after Drukpa Kunley sent a thunderbolt from an adjoining valley to kill some evil spirits who had gathered at the site. Return to your hotel late afternoon. **O/N Guest House (BLD) November 5**

Day 04 WANGDEUPHONG – PUNAKHA - WANGDEUPHONG

After breakfast you will be accompanied by your guide on a 45 minute drive to a local village, where you will have spectacular views over the Punakha, You will visit to a local farm house for morning tea, before taking a 2-1/2 hour hike downhill hike to the Punakha Dzong. After lunch at a local restaurant your guide will take you on a tour of the Dzong. Which is a superb example of Bhutanese architecture. Fire, earthquake and floods have inflicted their devastating influence on this Dzong which under the direction of the king has been restored completely. Return to your hotel late afternoon **Overnight Hotel November 6 (BLD)**



Day 05 WANGDEUPHON - TONGZA 6 hours drive

Today is an easy drive to Tongza on arrival you will lunch and then visit the magnificent Tongza Dzong. For those who are feeling energetic there is a great walk down to the river and a hike up to a fabulous viewpoint. **Overnight hotel November 7 (BLD)**

Day 06 TRONGZA - BUMTANG 4 hours

Bumthang, the religious heartland of the nation, with lush valleys and hilly forests. Along the way you will stop at a yethra (textile weaving) factory, where the yethras are designed with patterns unique to Bumthang, and you can even watch some of the weavers at their looms.

You can spend the evening relaxing or strolling through Bumthang town **Overnight hotel (BLD) November 8**

Day 07 BUMTHANG SIGHTSEEING

After breakfast you will have the morning sightseeing om Bumtang, the afternoon you will have an optional **3 hour hike along the river. Overnight in Bumthang Guest house. (BLD) November 9**

Day 08 BUMTHANG - GANTEY Gantey 4 hour drive

The drive to Gantey will take approximately 4 hours. You will pass through dense forests of oak trees and rhododendrons and on arrival in Gantey village where you will visit Gantey Gompa, the only Nyingmapa monastery in western Bhutan. From Gantey, you can see the picturesque Black Mountain range as well as Phobjika Valley, the winter habitat of the black-necked cranes. **In the afternoon we will take a 2 hour hike in this beautiful valley.** From your hotel you can see the picturesque Black Mountain range as well as Phobjika Valley, the winter habitat of the black-necked cranes **Overnight in a hotel in Gangtey. (BLD) November 10**

Day 09 GANTEY BLACK CRANE FESTIVAL

Today you will witness the Gantey Black Crane Festival The Black necked crane is one of the endangered species of crane. About 500 - 600 cranes migrate to Bhutan in winter from the Tibetan plateau. After realizing the crane's plight the Royal Society for The Protection of Nature set up a crane centre in Phobjikha. This crane festival is celebrated to raise awareness among the locals and to celebrate the arrival of a magnificent bird which has beautified the valley for centuries. The festival is celebrated with crane dance and local folk dances. **November 11 (BLD)**

Day 10 GANTEY WANGDEUPHONRANG –5 hour drive

Today your drive will pass through dense forests of oak and rhododendrons trees, you will have time to visit Gantey Gompa, the only Nyingmapa monastery in western Bhutan . **Overnight in a hotel in Wangduephodrang (BLD) November 12**

Day 11 WANGDUEPHODRANG – THIMPU PARO

This morning you will return to Paro via Thimpu. Plenty of time to have lunch in Thimpu, and maybe do some shopping. On your arrival in Paro you will be taken to the old Watchtower which is now a Museum. . **Overnight Hotel Paro. (BLD) November 13**

Day 12 PARO

After breakfast you will hike to the famous **Taktsang Monastery also known as the Tiger's Nest Monastery**. It is a good half day hike, with several rest stops along the way, you may even prefer to take a pony ride to the Restaurant view point. We have special permission to enter the monastery, and the full tour including the hike should take between 5-6 hours. The remainder of the day is free you may wish to take a hot stone bath please suggest this to your

guide. There will also be time to stroll around the town of Paro. *Overnight Hotel*
Paro November 14

Day 13 End Paro – Transfer to the airport for your onward journey to Bangkok November 15

Cost AUD\$4160 Single Supplement AUD\$900

Inclusions: *All Airport Transfers *Excellent ground transport in Bhutan, *clean comfortable traditional hotels and guest houses twin share accom. *3 first class meals per day whilst in Bhutan *Bottled Mineral Water *Bhutan Visa *All Sightseeing *Entry into all Monasteries *English speaking Bhutanese Guide. *Comprehensive Trip Notes: Entry permit



Not Included:

International Airfare Brisbane/Bangkok return, Druk Air flight Bangkok/Paro/Bangkok, Soft and Hard Drinks, Gratuities allow approx. US\$50.



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www.tayloradventure.com

Tel: 9997 7442 Mobile: 0418917342 Email: enquiries@tayloradventure.com

PO Box 947 Mona Vale NSW 1660