



## **The Kingdom of Bhutan... the Land of the Thunder Dragon**

### **Paro Festival tour**

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 rhododendrons and alpine flowers. Visit monasteries along the way

and marvel in the outstanding art and architecture in remote regions.

## **Geography**

The Kingdom of Bhutan, almost exactly the same size as Switzerland, lies east of the Indian state of Sikkim and west of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is south of Tibetan region of China and north of the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal. Located in the heart of the high Himalayan mountain range, Bhutan is a land-locked country surrounded by mountains in the north and west.

Altitudes in the south range from 300 to 1370 mtrs. and in the more populated central region range from 120 mtrs. in the east around Trashigang to a high of 5190 mtrs over the highest pass.

This exciting trip takes us to some of the most fascinating places within the majestic Himalayas renowned as **The Last Shangri-La**

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.

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.

## **Itinerary 13 days / 12 nights**

**Day 1** Arrive Paro with Druk Air Bhutan's National Air Carrier. The green wall of hills known as dooars, or gateways into Bhutan from the plains climb 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 snow-capped 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. On arrival at Paro airport you will be met by your guide and driver who will take you to a restaurant for lunch. After lunch drive to the capital Thimpu. **Overnight Thimpu 10 March 2019 (LD)**

**Day 2 – 3 Thimpu** Your next 2 days will be spent in Thimpu the capital of Bhutan, with a short hike to the Cheri Monastery one of the most popular monastery's in Bhutan. You will be taken to see Bhutan's National animal the Tarkin, a visit to the Textile and Cultural Museum, School of Fine Arts, Queen Mothers Chorten and the **Great Buddha Dordenma which is a gigantic Shakyamuni Buddha statue in the mountains of Bhutan celebrating the 60th anniversary of fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuck.** The statue houses over one hundred thousand smaller Buddha statues, each of which, like the Great Buddha Dordenma itself, are made of bronze and gilded in gold. **O/N Hotel (BLD) 11/12 March (BLD) Overnight Hotel**

**Day 4 Thimpu - Wangduephong** After breakfast we will depart for Wangduephong and en-route you will stop at Dochula Pass (3050 m) where you will have a fascinating view of the snow-capped eastern Himalayan mountain peaks. In the afternoon you will visit Chimi Lhakdang, the divine mad monk's temple. It is a beautiful walk through a lovely village and outside the temple you will see a tree 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. Check in to your hotel overnight **in Wangduephong (BLD) 13 March**

**Day 5 Wangduephong – Punakha Dzong – Wangduephong** After a leisurely breakfast you will depart from your hotel to visit the sacred Punakha Dzong, 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 Wangduephong (BLD) 14 March**

**Day 6 Wangduephodrang – Gantey 4 hour drive** After breakfast you will drive to Gantey which 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 you will have the opportunity to take a hike in this beautiful valley. **Overnight in a hotel in Gantey. 15 March (BLD)**

**Day 7 Gantey - Trongza 3 hours** Today is an easy drive to Trongza, on the way visiting a local home to see how the Bhutanese go about their daily life. On arrival in Trongza you will be taken to a restaurant for lunch before visiting the magnificent Trongza Dzong. If you are feeling energetic there is a great walk down to the river and a hike up to a fabulous viewpoint. **Overnight hotel 16 March (BLD)**

**Day 8: Trongza - Bumthang 4 hours drive** After breakfast drive to Bumthang which is located in the heart of Bhutan, and is one of the Kingdom's most attractive destinations for hiking, visiting interesting places or just relaxing. Along the way you will stop at a yathra (textile weaving) factory, where the yathra are designed with patterns unique to Bumthang, and you can even watch some of the weavers at their looms. **Overnight in Bumthang Guest house 17 March (BLD)**

**Day 9 Bumthang sightseeing** After breakfast you will have the morning sightseeing and the afternoon you will have an optional 3 hour hike along the river. **Overnight in Bumthang Guest house. 18 March (BLD)**

**Day 10 Bumthang – Paro Transfer to the airport for your flight to Paro.** On arrival in Paro you will visit the Drugal Dzong ruins, and the Historic building for Bhutanese culture Cultural heritage museum in a 17th-century watchtower with Bhutanese statues, paintings & other art. **Overnight hotel 19 March (BLD)**

**Day 11 Paro** After breakfast you will hike to the famous Taktsang Monastery. It's a good half day hike, but as we have special permission to visit the monastery the tour should take between 5-6 hours. In the afternoon witness the Festival or you may also like 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 20 March (BLD)**

**Day 12 Paro - Paro Tshechu** is the most popular religious festival drawing the largest number of tourists at a single time. The Tshechu offers the opportunity to see and mingle with the Bhutanese as they enjoy themselves in their finest attire after a year's hard work on the farm. The unravelling of one of the biggest Thangka (appliqué religious art) is the highlight of the Tshechu. **(BLD) 21 March Overnight Hotel**

**Day 13 End Paro** – Transfer to the airport for your onward journey **22 March (B)**

### 13 Day/12 Night Land Content

#### **Inclusions:**

\*All Airport Transfers \*flight Bhumtang to Paro \*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 Sydney Bangkok \$800, Druk Air flight Bangkok Paro USD770 (approx.AUD1090)  
Soft and Hard Drinks, Gratuities allow approx. Aust\$70 per person



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