

## Bhutan

### 8 Night 9 Days

#### Tentative Itinerary:

#### Day 1: Arrive Paro – Thimphu

Welcome to Paro. One should experience when the flight into Bhutan takes you to the great Himalayas & offers you the most scintillating scenery of the world's highest glacial peaks. As you enter Paro valley, you will see the silvery Pa-chu (Paro river) meandering down the valley, the Paro Dzong (fortress) and the Ta Dzong. Assistance upon arrival at Paro airport and drive to Thimphu, the Capital of Bhutan. Upon arrival check in at the hotel. Rest of the time at leisure to discover the Capital on your own. Overnight at the hotel.

#### Day 2: Thimphu

Today after breakfast visit the Memorable Chorten dedicated to the 03rd King of Bhutan, The Textile Museum & Folk Heritage Museum that provides a fascinating insight into the Bhutanese material culture and way of life. Drive to the 15th century Changakha Lhakhang spectacularly located on the spur. The Takin Sanctuary near the lhakhang will give the visitor a chance to glance at the National animal of Bhutan, Takin. Also visit the school of Arts and Crafts and the National Library which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist texts as well as modern academic books mainly on Himalayan culture and religion. Evening visit the Tashichho Dzong; the main secretarial building which houses the throne room of His Majesty the King of Bhutan and also the head seat of Chief Abbot of Bhutan. Overnight at the hotel.

#### Day 3: Thumphu – Trongsa

After breakfast depart for Trongsa drive to Dochu La Pass (3050m). If the weather permits you can see a range of high peaks towards the north east. The recently built 108 chortens gives the ridge a very beautiful and charming presence. Continue the drive via the Pele La Pass (3300m 10800ft) crosses the Black Mountains, the traditional boundary between west and central Bhutan.

Crossing the pretty villages of Rukubji and Chendebji to reach the huge 18th century Chendebji Chorten patterned on Kathmandu's Swayambhunath Stupa, with eyes painted at four cardinal points. It was built by Lama Shida from Tibet to cover the remains of an evil spirit that was subdued at this spot. Further drive to Trongsa with the beautiful view of Trongsa Dzong while approaching Trongsa. Upon arrival check in at the hotel.

#### Day 4: Trongsa – Bumthang

After breakfast visit the Trongsa Dzong located on a spur overlooking the Mangde River. Built in 1648, it was the seat of power over central and eastern Bhutan. Both the first and second King of Bhutan ruled the country from this ancient seat. All five Kings were invested as Trongsa Penlop ('governor') prior to ascending the throne. The Dzong is a massive structure with many levels, sloping down the contours of the ridge on which it is built. Also visit the Ta Dzong (watch tower), dedicated to Buddhist epic hero, King Gesar of Ling. Continue drive to

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Bumthang ascending quickly with an impressive of the Trongsa Dzong, passing the forest of Rhododendrons and old decimated trees. After the Yuto La Pass (3400m 11155ft), the dramatic scenery changes to gentle spruce and fir covered slopes, reminiscent of the Alps. We will have a brief stop at Zugney to watch the ladies weaving yatras, the specialty of the region. These brightly coloured wool fabrics are displayed outside the houses for sale. Continue the drive over Kiki La (2900m 9515ft), we will have a bird's eye view of Jakar Dzong and the Bumthang Valley. Upon arrival check in at the hotel. Rest of the time at leisure. Overnight at the hotel.

#### Day 5: Bumthang

Today after breakfast visit Jampey Lhakhang, Kuje Lhakhang, and Tamsing Monastery. Jampey Lhakhang is one of the oldest monasteries in Bhutan built in 07th century. Kuje Lhakhang is where Guru Rinpoche left the imprint of His body in the cave He was meditating. Tamsing Monastery is the private monastery where we can wash our sins if we carry the coat of nail thrice around the shrines. This coat of nail is made my Pemalingpa Himself. Also visit the Jakar Dzong, the Fortress of the White Bird, founded in 1549 by the Drukpa Lama Ngagi Wangchuck who saw a white bird landing there when he was looking for a place to build a temple. The headquarters of the Bumthang district is established here but there are no resident monks. Overnight at the hotel.

#### Day 6: Bumthang – Punakha

After breakfast depart for Punakha, en route visit Punakha Dzong is built in 1637 by Shabdrung, the spiritual and temporal ruler of Bhutan prior to the present dynasty. It is an old capital which still serves as the winter residence of the monk body. The first King, Ugyen Wangchuck, was crowned here in 1907. Rest of the time at leisure. Overnight at the hotel.

#### Day 7: Punakha – Paro

After early breakfast we will retrace back towards Dochula Pass and Simtokha to drive towards Paro. Upon arrival check in at the hotel. Visit the National Museum which houses and impressive collection of fine arts, paintings, bronzes, textiles, jewellery and handicrafts sections as well as galleries of stamps for which the Country is very popular. Also visit the Rinpung Dzong, the Fortress of the Heap of Jewels, built in 1645 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. It is an imposing square fortress, representative of typical Dzong architecture, with a central tower and courtyards housing the administrative (Dzongkhag) and has a community of about 200 monks. A hike down the moderate slope to the cantilever bridge, one of the finest specimens in Bhutan with its shingle roof and two guard-houses at each end. Overnight at the hotel.

#### Day 8: Paro

After breakfast drive 20 minutes to the end of the valley to Drukgyel Dzong from where one can see the towering peak of Jomolhari (7,316m, 24,003 ft). This mountain, also revered as a powerful goddess, forms the border with Tibet and provides magnificent background to the ruined Drukgyel Dzong and village. Drive to Rumthangka and begin the Taktsang hike.

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Taktsang Monastery, clinging on the steep rock, is one of the holiest temples in Bhutan. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche flew on the Tigress back and meditated here. The trek to the temple through the pine tree and sweet aroma of the air is indeed a very special and memorable event. The return hike will take about 05-06 hours. On Our way back, we will visit Kyichu Temple (built by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gompo in the 7th century). Rest of the time free for souvenir shopping in the small town of Paro. Overnight at the hotel.

**Day 9: Departure**

Vacation comes to an end with good memories that will last forever.

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