



# WORLD DISCOVERY

HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE

## Explore Bhutan

Private journey – 10 days/9 nights



Meals: 9 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 9 dinners

|          |                    |          |
|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Thimphu  | Hotel Pedling      | 2 nights |
| Trongsa  | Yang-Khil Hotel    | 1 night  |
| Bumthang | Mountain Lodge     | 2 nights |
| Punakha  | Hotel Zangthopelri | 1 night  |
| Paro     | Olathang Hotel     | 3 nights |

### DAY 1 - Arrival in Paro. Drive to Thimphu.

In clear weather, Druk Air's flight to Bhutan provides a wonderful view of the Himalayan scenery, culminating in an exciting descent past forested hills into the kingdom. On arrival at Paro airport, you will be met by a World Discovery representative. On completion of airport formalities, there will be an interesting drive of about 2 hours' duration to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. On reaching Thimphu drive up to a viewpoint overlooking the valley, before visiting the **Takin Research Centre** for a glimpse of Bhutan's endangered (and distinctly odd-looking) national animal. Continue to the imposing **Tasichho Dzong**, the main secretariat building which houses the throne room of the King of Bhutan. There

should be time to wander through the streets of Thimphu before checking in at your hotel.

**Meals included: Dinner.**

### DAY 2 - Thimphu sightseeing.

Begin the morning with a visit to Thimphu's colourful **Weekend Market**. Close to the market is the stadium, where you can usually see an **Archery match** in progress (archery is Bhutan's national sport). Sightseeing today will include the **National Memorial Chorten**, dedicated to Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck ("the father of modern Bhutan"), and the **National Library**, which houses an extensive collection of Buddhist literature.

**Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

### DAY 3 - Via Wangdephodrang to Trongsa.

After an early breakfast drive up to the Dochu-la Pass (3,088m/10,130ft) from where on a clear day you can view the glory of the high Himalayan peaks including Gangkar Puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m. Continue onwards, reaching Wangdephodrang in time for lunch. In the afternoon journey to Trongsa across the Pele-la Pass (3,300m/10,830ft), the traditional boundary between east and west Bhutan. The pass is marked by a large white chorten and prayer flags. There is an abrupt change in vegetation at this point, with mountain forest replaced by high altitude dwarf bamboo. Arrive at Trongsa in the late afternoon.

**Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

#### DAY 4 - Trongsa to Bumthang via Yutong-La Pass.

After breakfast there will be a visit on foot to the 17th century **Trongsa Dzong** before you set off for Bumthang, a journey of about 3 hours, over the Yutong-la Pass (3,400m/11,155ft). The road winds steeply up to the pass, then runs down through coniferous forest into a wide, open, cultivated valley known as the Chumey Valley. Arrive in Bumthang in time for a late lunch. In the afternoon, visit **Tamshing Monastery** (housing some of the oldest wall paintings in Bhutan), and **Jakar Dzong** (the administrative centre of the region). Stroll in the village, visit the little handicrafts shop at the entrance to the town, and perhaps take refreshments at a local restaurant.

**Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

#### DAY 5 - Bumthang.

A day of further visits in the beautiful Bumthang region. You can decide in discussion with your guide how you want to spend the day. There are many fine monasteries and temples in the area, the most impressive being **Jampey Lhakang**, one of the most ancient in Bhutan (7th century) and the important temple complex at **Kurjey Lhakang**. Bumthang is also the ideal destination to do some walking and you may want to incorporate a 2 or 3 hour walk into your schedule.

**Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

#### DAY 6 - Bumthang to Punakha.

Return westwards along the central highway to Trongsa, where you will be served lunch in a local restaurant famous for its cuisine. Visit the imposing **Wangdephodrang Dzong** and take a look at the small town before continuing to **Punakha**, which you will reach in the late afternoon.

**Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

#### DAY 7 - Punakha. Return to Paro.

After breakfast explore Punakha, beginning with **Punakha Dzong**, which served as the seat of the Bhutanese government until the king decided to give this honour to Thimphu in 1955. After the visit take a short walk, passing by quaint village houses, to **Chimi Lhakang**, built by the famous 'Divine Madman', Drukpa Kuenley; the temple is a famous pilgrimage site for infertile women who wish to bear children. In the afternoon return to Paro and check into the hotel.

**Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

#### DAY 8 - Paro sightseeing.

The valley of Paro contains a wealth of attractions. In the morning, visit **Ta Dzong**, a former watchtower which is now Bhutan's National Museum. Afterwards, walk down a hillside trail to visit **Paro Dzong** (also known as Rinjung Dzong). After lunch, drive up the valley to view the ruins of **Drukgyel Dzong**, 18 km from Paro town on the north side of the valley. It was from here that the Bhutanese repelled several invading Tibetan armies during the 17th century. Also visit **Kyichu Lhakang**, one of the oldest and most sacred shrines of the kingdom. In the evening before dinner, visit a traditional farmhouse for an opportunity to interact with a local family and learn something of their lifestyle.

**Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

#### DAY 9 - Taktshang Gomba (the Tiger's Nest).

On your final day in Bhutan you will enjoy a walk up through pine forest to view Bhutan's most famous site, the **Tiger's Nest Monastery** to the north of Paro. Later on, take a stroll along the main street of Paro, and perhaps visit a few handicrafts shops, or take refreshments at a local café or bar.

**Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

#### DAY 10 - Depart.

After breakfast, drive to Paro airport for your onward flight with Druk Air.

**Meals included: Breakfast.**