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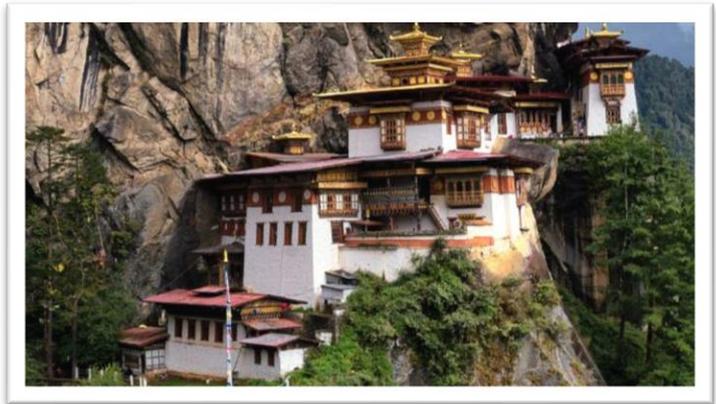
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THE CLASSIC AND COMPLETE BHUTAN ADVENTURE

11 nights in Bhutan

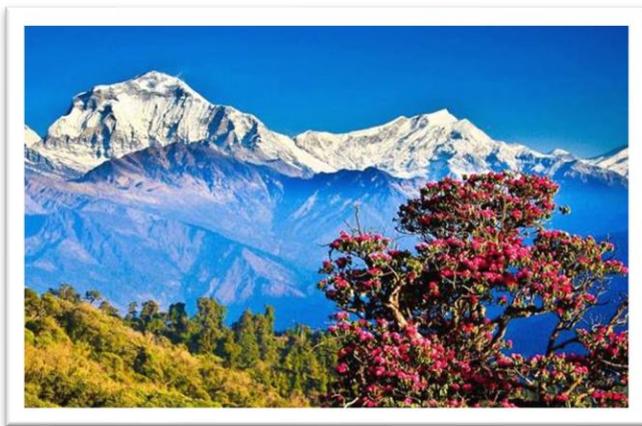
ABOUT THIS TOUR

This unique tour offers an in-depth visit of the Himalaya's most unique and lesser visited destination, Bhutan. Sharing its 'roof of the world' status with neighboring Tibet and Nepal, Bhutan is an anomaly in the scope of adventure travel. It remains a devoted and peaceful Buddhist Kingdom whereby all tourism is operated by a well organized Government initiative that fosters direct representation by the Bhutanese themselves. Bhutan is a magical destination and we welcome you to discover it with us.



IS THIS TOUR FOR ME?

This tour can be classified as a light hiking & exploratory tour of Bhutan's diverse cultural ethnicity and wonderful mountain nature. The trip is active in the sense that daily hikes and/or cultural walks are provided. It is not rated as a full hiking tour but do expect to be walking each day whether it's to visit temples or rural villages or exploring National Parks, plantations or even walking up to viewpoints. If you're seeking a glimpse of Himalaya culture and an extraordinary Kingdom of happy citizens than this is a perfect tour for you!



HOTELS, MEALS & COMFORT LEVEL

Bhutan is expensive and has some of the highest daily visa fees on the planet. For this reason, it receives much tourism investment and pours this capital back into tourism infrastructure. Our hotel standard is generally 3 star throughout and they are located in excellent locations. Meals are superb, the food is clean and well prepared and mostly local specialty dishes are served.

Our trip involves travel by modern, private coach and we also have 1 flight included within the country itself. Altitudes are moderate on this journey ranging from 7-9000 feet and at times we'll drive over passes that

exceed 10,000 feet. January weather is winter but it's mild by our standards (50 F) however nights may be in the 30s. This is a great season to travel as prices are lower and there are much less tourists on the ground!



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TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- * Diverse landscapes from soaring Himalaya Mountains to rural villages, ancient plantations and temples.
- * Engaging local cultural aspects with an emerging music, art and culinary scene.
- * A real life insight into the 'happiest culture' on the planet and a chance to pick up some tips in this department!
- * Sensible hiking distances to allow you to experience the landscapes and local cultures
- * An opportunity to give back to the Developing World communities and to spread a message of peace and unity.



GENERAL ITINERARY

Total Nights in Bhutan – 11

* Day 1 would be your travel day from your home country / a night in Paro can be booked but tour starts on the Day 2 below.



Day 2 ARRIVAL TO PARO (7,200 ft)

Arrival to Paro International Airport. Rest and recovery day in Paro before the tour begins. As this is the first official day of the tour, we will have light walking exploration of the city and region but come back to explore Paro at the end of the trip to explore the valley and famous temples. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*

Day 3 BUMTHANG (9,185 ft)

Short internal flight (35 min) to Bumthang. *Bumthang* directly translates as "beautiful field" – *thang* means field or flat place, and *bum* is said to be an abbreviation of either *bumpa* (a vessel for holy water, thus

describing the shape and nature of the valley), or simply *bum* ("girl," indicating this is the valley of beautiful girls). The name is said to have arisen after construction of Jambay Lhakhang Temple. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*

Day 4 - BUMTHANG

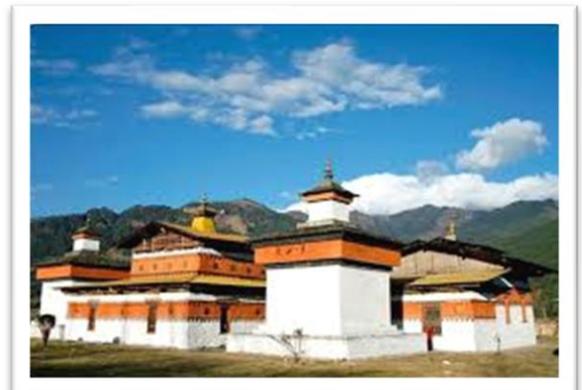
Further explorations / hikes in the Bumthang region. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*

Day 5 - GANGTEY (9,510 ft)

Private bus transfer from Bumthang to Gangtey (5-6 hours). For our 2 days here we'll make explorations on foot that include rural areas, monasteries and temples of the beautiful glacial Phobjikha Valley. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*

Day 6 - GANGTEY

Continuation of our visits of Gangtey and the beautiful Phobjikha Valley. *All meals included. 3 star tourist class hotel.*





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Day 7 PUNAKHA (4,300 ft)

Private bus transfer from Gangtey to Punakha (2.5 hours). Today we drive over the *Dochula* Himalaya range today to the ancient capital *Punakha*. The imposing Punakha Dzong is located between two rivers and was renovated a few years ago, due to flood damages. Punakha is warmer than other western districts of Bhutan due to its lower elevations. En-route we visit the Temple of the Divine Made Monk which can be accessed by a beautiful hike. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*

Day 8 PUNAKHA

This morning we hike to the Khamsum Yuley Namgyel Stupa, which sits atop a hill and is dedicated to the Fifth monarch of Bhutan. A 45 minute hike gets us there and from here spectacular views are possible in many directions. Here we also visit a nunnery and perhaps have tea with a farmer and his family at their home and take a tour of their home and lifestyle too. All in all a wonderful day out in nature and understanding the culture of the Punakha region. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*



Day 9 THIMPU (7,623 ft)

Today we transfer from Punakha to Thimpu, the national capital of Bhutan. Transfer time is approximately 3 hours in our private coach. We divide our time in Thimpu with visiting cultural sites of Thimpu and its natural areas. Some of the sites will include the world's largest seated Buddha protecting the valley below, the national animal the *Takin* which is an endangered species and is a curious mix of a yak, cow and goat. The Textile Museum is an interesting stop and the post office where one can get stamps of yourself made and actually use it to post stamps and letters home. We also visit the *Tashicho Dzong* fortress, the center of the Bhutan Government and have some hiking time in this region. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*



Day 10 THIMPU

Continuation of the visits stated above and an alternative hiking option. *All meals included. 3 star hotel.*

Day 11 PARO (7,200 ft)

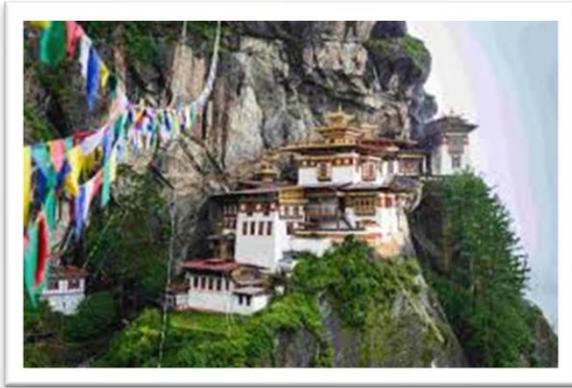
Today we drive back to Paro for a glimpse of life in Western Bhutan. Our travel time by private coach is approximately 1 hr 30 min. If the weather is clear and if on our previous visit we were not able to view the mountains, perhaps we will be lucky today - the surrounding Bhutanese Himalayas will take your breath away and we will hike in this location. This day is spent visiting sites in and around the valley, including one of the oldest temples in the Buddhist World. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*



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Day 12 PARO & THE TIGER'S NEST HIKE (10,240 ft)

Today we hike to the famous Tiger's Nest – properly known as the Temple of *Taktsang Lhakhang*. The excursion will take about 4 hours and lunch will be served at the cafeteria en route. This magical monastery clings to a granite cliff 2000 meters about the valley floor. Your guide will share with you the legends that are associated with the place. After the hike, we can perhaps enjoy a traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath before our farewell dinner. *Hotel Standard 3 Star Government operated. All meals included.*

Day 13 DEPARTURE DAY

This morning we bid farewell to friendly Bhutan and you will be transferred to the airport. Breakfast only included.

What Your Tour INCLUDES:

- 11 nights hotel accommodation twin or double share (No SINGLE room options available due to short room inventories in Bhutan)
- All meals as indicated on itinerary (basically all meals except for any nights/days outside of this itinerary)
- Private taxi and/or small bus transfers for airport arrivals and departures
- Private charter bus service and all transfers as per itinerary
- 1 x internal flight / baggage limited to 20 kg / 44 pounds (checked) and 1 carry on piece
- Guided excursions with local guides and entrance fees as per itinerary
- Entrance fees: included for various small museums and temples where provided during visits.
- National Park entrance fees where indicated on itinerary
- Adventurebug Trip Leader and incredible local guides from Bhutan on this tour 24/7
- Tips for all provided meals and transfers / drivers
- Daily VISA fees for our stay in Bhutan – THIS INCLUDES THE BHUTANESE ENTRANCE VISA
- Regional taxes, permits, tourism taxes and associated agency fees

What's Not Included

- International flights (to/from Bhutan)
- Departure taxes (if applicable but at this time no indication of this tax).
- Additional nights of stay in Bhutan (and visas, meals, etc) apart from the 11 included nights
- Baggage handling in hotels and on/off transfer coaches, etc.
- Travel insurance (It is compulsory to have personal travel and medical insurance)
- Meals (where not listed as included in the itinerary)
- All beverages as they are not included with meals
- Optional additional tours or activities during free choice time
- Other transfers and/or private shuttles and taxis
- Tips for local guide services (when applicable). Note – Tips are **included** for the drivers and meals. You are only responsible for tipping guides and any baggage assistance, room cleaners, etc.



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Optional Extras

At this time we have no optional extras built into the tour. We can update you regarding additional visits, attractions and recommendations to extend and/or enhance your visit to this region.

Additional Nights pre/post Tour

If you choose to arrive earlier than the tour start date, or stay longer at the end, we will submit your rooming request to the first hotel location. We recommend that you arrive one day earlier to acclimatize, however this expense is outside of the tour price and must be covered by you. The Bhutan Agency set room rate for additional nights (includes your visa, meals, airport transfer and hotel room), can be requested from us.

Pre Departure Information

VISA & PASSPORT

Please ensure your passport is valid and it's always beneficial to have at least 6 months remaining before expiry. Our Bhutan excursion price includes the VISA for entrance and daily stay. This is carried out after we finalize your place on the tour and we submit a copy of your valid passport to our agent in Bhutan. It is very well organized and managed internally within Bhutan.



VACCINATIONS & TRAVEL HEALTH

Speak to your Physician or a travel health specialist about inoculations for this region. As our zone of travel is in the developing world, the World Health Organization recommends a standard set of vaccines that include and are not restricted to: Hepatitis, Typhoid, Yellow Fever, Tetanus and perhaps prophylactics for Malaria in rural, low elevation areas. Bottled water is recommended and widely available. Food preparation and quality on our tour is of a very high standard.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The areas chosen for this tour are within the recommended safe zones by the US and British State Advisory Departments. Your tour operator keeps a close watch on these advisories for all destinations we operate in. Common sense when travelling in built-up, urban areas is always advised. Using ATMs and carrying large sums of money or valuables must always be done so with caution. Avoid demonstrations, crowds and protests and never venture out alone during the evenings unless you are advised otherwise.

MONEY ISSUES

The Bhutanese currency is the *ngultrum*, which is pegged to the Indian *rupee* and thus trades at par with that currency. There are no coins, and you can expect to be handed wads of cash. The smallest note is for 1-*ngultrum*, and it's worth only about \$0.02 USD. As of April 2013, USD1 is equivalent to about 53 *Ngultrum* if you are using USD50 or USD100 notes. Please take note that USD50 and USD100 notes are given a better exchange rate than USD20 notes or lesser. The smaller USD notes fetch about 5% less.

If you plan to bring \$100 U.S. notes be aware that the banks in Bhutan do not accept notes printed in 1996 due to counterfeiting that took place in that year. So **go through your notes carefully**--also, no tears, ink marks, staple holes etc. Bhutan is a cash economy! Visa and Mastercard are not accepted at smaller shops, but bigger shops and some hotels accept Mastercard. There is an American Express office in the capital, and Amex is accepted in a few rare instances. More important, an Amex office means you can get your travellers' checks replaced if necessary -- if they're even accepted at all!



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If you bring in cash, your best option is to change dollars or whatever you bring into *ngultrums* at the airport. The exchange rate is the same as in the banks in town. Keep in mind that banks get much harder to find outside the capital. You can also change your money at the hotels in Thimphu, but the rate is not as good. For a stay of two weeks 100-150\$ will cover your expenses, inclusive drinks with meals, and some souvenirs. However, this will certainly not be enough to cover tips.

WEATHER & CLIMATE

Winter (December, January & February) is sunny, cool and agreeable to say the least. It is the best time to tour the western districts of *Paro*, *Wangdue*, *Punakha*, *Thimphu* and *Haa*. One of the chief attractions in winter is the beautiful Gangtey (Phobjikha) valley where you can expect to see a wide expanse of rolling plain with bamboo shrubs. The graceful Black-Necked Cranes come to roost at the plain from the Tibetan plateau during this time of the year offering you wild-life picture opportunities. At the Dochula Pass en route to Punkaha, you can view the Himalayan peaks including the highest mountain peak in Bhutan – Gangkar Puensum when the weather is clear and sunny as it is during most winter days.

Annual Average Temperatures of Different Places Of Interest												
city	TEMPERATURE ° F											
	Jan/Feb		Mar/Apr		May/June		Jul/Aug		Sep/Oct		Nov/Dec	
	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
Paro	55.4	37.4	59	37.4	73.4	55.4	77	59	71.6	50	53.6	37.4
Thimphu	57.2	32	60.8	42.8	71.6	57.2	80.6	62.6	68	55.4	60.8	33.8
Punakha	64.4	44.6	75.2	48.2	71.6	50	78.8	55.4	77	51.8	71.6	48.2
Wangdi	62.6	44.6	75.2	51.8	82.4	64.4	84.2	68	78.8	62.2	71.6	44.6
Phuentsholing	67.3	51.4	76.2	53.7	84.3	67.4	81.5	70.4	78.2	61.5	69.3	47.5
Trongsa	53.6	33.8	60.8	35.6	68	57.2	64.4	57.4	62.6	55.4	60.8	48.2
Bumthang	50	33.8	60.8	41	64.4	50	69.8	55.4	66.2	51.8	59	35.6
Mongar	73.4	50	80.6	51.8	86	68	95	71.6	86	64.4	77	46.4
Trashigang	60.8	39.2	66.2	44.6	68	55.4	71.6	57.2	68	51.8	60.8	48.2

ELECTRICITY

In Bhutan, they use 220-240 VOLTS and the plug shapes are as follows:



Great Britain
Grounded
BS-1363



India
Grounded
BS-546 "Small"

LANGUAGE (official):

Bhutan = Dzongkha

*English is spoken in Tour Districts, hotels, etc on this tour.

INTERNAL TRAVEL – WHAT TO EXPECT

Our transfers by private coach are in modern, comfortable tour class buses with air conditioning and licensed drivers. In Bhutan, we have some (5-6 hour) journeys which take some time due to the terrain (Himalaya Passes) and poor infrastructure around built up areas – this is what makes adventure touring interesting! Our routes follow the principal road networks of the region with larger towns and services available if need be. We have one internal flight (1 way) that is approximately 1 hour in duration.



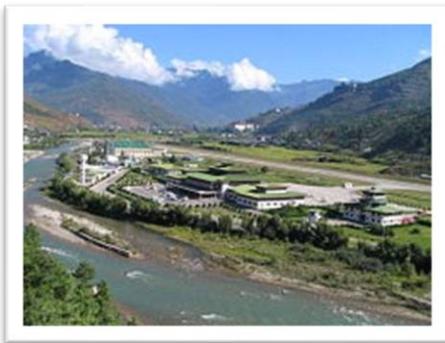
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INTERNET AND CELL PHONE CONNECTIVITY

There is internet and cell phone coverage in most of Bhutan's larger centers (Paro, Thimpu, Punakha) and in the Government classified hotels there is 'normally' Wifi for free but the quality can be variable – especially in the age of everyone posting photos as this eats up the bandwidth. Alternatively, many travellers now purchase a Bhutan Sim Card for use (both cell phone and data), during their stay.



GETTING TO AND FROM BHUTAN

Paro is the city in Bhutan where the International Airport is located. The airport code is (PBH). You can fly to and from Paro to any destination that Bhutan's two airlines fly: *Bhutan Airlines* and *Druk Air*. These include: *Bangkok, Bagdogra, Delhi, Dhaka, Guwahati, Kolkata, Kathmandu, Mumbai and Singapore*.

If you choose to fly via India, it's possible that Indian visas are required. However they have different rules for transit passengers, so check with the Indian Embassy in your country before booking! Indian Visa rules keep changing. The latest we heard was that transit passengers may also need visas if staying at the airport for certain number of hours.

An Overview of Bhutan's Culture & Religion

Bhutan's national flag is a white dragon on a diagonally divided background of golden yellow and reddish orange. The yellow represents the secular power of the King, the orange the Buddhist religion. The white of the dragon is associated with purity, and the jewels held in the claws stand for the wealth



and perfection of the country. The national emblem is composed of a double diamond thunderbolt placed above a lotus, surmounted by a jewel and framed by two dragons, all contained within a circle. The thunderbolt represents the harmony between secular and religious power resulting from the Vajrayana form of Tibetan Buddhism, the lotus symbolizes purity, the jewel expresses sovereign power and the two dragons, male and female, stand for the name of the country, Drukyl, the land of the thunder dragon.

Bhutan is the only country to maintain Mahayana Buddhism in its Tantric Vajrayana form as the official religion. The main practicing schools are the state sponsored Drukpa Kagyupa and the Nyingmapa. Buddhism transects all strata of society, underpinning multiple aspects of the culture. Indeed, religion is the focal point for the arts, festivals and a considerably above average number of individuals. The presence of so many monasteries, temples and stupas, monks and



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tulkus (reincarnations of high lamas) is indicative of the overarching role religion plays throughout the nation.

Although the Shabdrung is regarded as the founder of the nation, the secular realm has achieved an unprecedented degree of unity under the influential guidance of a Twentieth Century monarchy. Within a cultural context where the spiritual and temporal spheres are intimately connected, political leadership remains interpreted as divinely determined. The royal family traces its roots to the great Sixteenth Century saint Pema Lingpa, and the present monarch still enjoys a god-like status throughout much of his Kingdom. The Forth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck as the head of state now rules the Kingdom, with the throne retaining its position as the fulcrum of the political system. Bhutanese art possesses a major Tibetan influence, although it has developed some of its own derivations. It has three main characteristics: it is anonymous, religious and performs no independent aesthetic function. Intricate wall paintings and thangkas (wall hangings), most historical writing and fine sculpted images all have a religious theme. Given their role, these may be interpreted as created by artisans rather than artists, although there exist many extremely fine examples. All are viewed as sacred, and newly commissioned paintings and sculptures are consecrated through a special ceremony whereby they come to personify the respective deities.

Although both Buddhism and the monarchy are critical elements, it is the general extensive perpetuation of tradition that is possibly the most striking aspect of Bhutan's culture. This is most overtly reflected in the nature of dress and architecture. All Bhutanese continue to wear the traditional dress: for men and boys the gho, a long gown hitched up to the knee so that its lower half resembles a skirt, for women and girls the kira, an ankle-length robe somewhat resembling a kimono. Generally colorful apparel, the fabrics used range from simple cotton checks and stripes to the most intricate designs in woven silk.

The Bhutanese architectural landscape is made up of chortens, stonewalls, temples, monasteries, fortresses, mansions and houses. Associated with a number of clear-cut architectural concepts and building types rooted in Tibetan Buddhism, there is a strong association between state, religious and secular forms. What makes it quite unique is the degree of uniformity, with all structures corresponding to traditional designs. Thus ancient monasteries and fortresses appear to merge with more modern popular dwellings to create a setting that is fully internally consistent.



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