



Journey of Purpose and Discovery to Bhutan

Thimphu, Punakha & Paro (via Bangkok)
11 days / 8 nights
October 18-28, 2019

\$6,299 (Based on double occupancy)
\$1,199 Single Supplement

Enjoy the unique culture and traditions of Bhutan while you spend time with the locals. This special journey is like taking a step back in time to explore this still seldom traveled land described as one of the happiest on earth!

BOOK NOW 888.747.7501

Bhutan Highlights

- ✓ 11 days & 8 nights
- ✓ Make new friends while immersing yourself in the culture of Bhutan, **giving back to a local community project** and exploring this beautiful and peaceful nation.
- ✓ Small group size with high-end service and accommodations throughout the journey.
- ✓ *Optional* post program **extension in Bangkok, Thailand** will be available on this program.

Community Connections & Cultural Immersion

- ✓ Visit a **local primary school** and donate time to helping in a classroom. Learn about Bhutan's education system and spend time with the children and teachers.
- ✓ Meet with the staff and children at a non-profit organization such as **Draktsho**. Their mission is to ensure children with disabilities have opportunities for developing skills for life and vocation, to become self-reliant and make a living to better lead a contented life.
- ✓ Take a challenging hike to the enchanting **Drubthop Goetba Monastery** for an unbelievable viewpoint of the surrounding valley. Built around a cave where the Guru Rinpoche meditated, this monastery clings to a cliff of rock 3,000 feet above the valley floor. It is home to 70 nuns and is one of the few nunneries in the country; you will have time to speak with the nuns and learn about their daily lives and Buddhism in general.
- ✓ See some of the most beautiful mountain and valley scenery in the world, including visits to various **local dzongs** - fortresses found exclusively in Tibet and Bhutan and known for their distinct architecture.

What's included?

- 4* accommodations throughout
- All transportation and activities outlined in the itinerary
- Flights to and from Paro, Bhutan, including airport transfers, will be arranged by our overseas coordinators
- International air to and from Bangkok (gateway city set tentatively out of Los Angeles)
- Local English speaking guide
- Tips for your local guides/driver & restaurant staff
- Visa for Bhutan

Not included:

- Personal expenses at the hotels
- Meals not specified
- Passport renewal or issuance
- Domestic flight to gateway city
- National Guide tip, tips to your maid or porters



📍 Los Angeles, California

DAY 1-2, October 18-19, 2019

Fly to Bangkok today.

Depart from Los Angeles late today and make your way to Thailand. Lose a day as you cross the International Date Line.

Note: Gateway city is subject to change and tentative at this time.

📍 Bangkok, Thailand

DAY 3, October 20

Arrival and hotel check in.

Upon arrival at **Suvarnabhumi Bangkok International Airport**, you will be met and greeted by a local representative and transferred to a nearby airport hotel for check-in and overnight. Depending on your arrival time, dinner will be provided at the hotel this evening.

Overnight: Novotel Airport Hotel

Included meals: Dinner

📍 Bangkok, Thailand

DAY 4, October 21

Welcome to Bhutan!

Head back to the airport early this morning for your flight to Paro. The Dragon Kingdom of Bhutan is the last of the Buddhist kingdoms that once occupied a vast area of the Himalayas. Lunch is on your own if not provided on your flight.

Upon arrival in Paro, drive the two hours to **Thimphu**, through spectacular mountain scenery and serene countryside to Bhutan's capital. Sandwiched in the heart of the Himalayas, Thimphu is a small, charming city, with all the buildings constructed and painted in the traditional Bhutanese style.

Arrive in Thimphu this afternoon for check-in and **welcome briefing & orientation**. Travelers will gather this afternoon with the national guide and receive further information on the program.

Visit a local **farmer's market** before dinner.

Overnight: Khang Residency Hotel

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner



📍 Thimpu, Bhutan

DAY 5, October 22

Explore Thimpu & Humanitarian Visit

Please Note: Breakfast is included daily in your program

Take part in a humanitarian visit at a local **non-profit or community program**, such as *Draktsho Vocational Training Center*, this morning. They are a non-profit organization and the only one of its kind in the country with aspirations to enhance the living standard of children and youth with disabilities through empowerment by training and eventual integration with the mainstream population.

Continue exploring during a stop at a handicrafts emporium and onward to see the **Drubthob Goemba Monastery** and enjoy the views of the fascinating Thimpu Valley. The monastery was founded by later reincarnation of Drubthob Chakzampa, who is known throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world for building iron bridges and is considered the father of Tibetan Opera. This is also home of the **Zilukha Nunnery**, where you will have a chance to talk with the nuns about their lives and Buddhism in general.

You will have some time to get lunch on your own this afternoon before visiting the **Giant Buddha Dordenma Statue**. Inside of Thimphu's 169-foot Buddha Dordenma statue, there are 125,000 miniature Buddhas encapsulated inside, ranging from 8 to 12 inches tall. The statue sits atop a golden meditation hall and came with a price tag of 100 million dollars when built in 2015 to honor the 60th birthday of Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth King of Bhutan.

Dinner will be provided this evening.

Overnight: Khang Residency Hotel

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner



📍 Thimpu, Bhutan

DAY 6, October 23

Cultural Immersion

Begin your day with a visit to the **Folk Heritage Museum**, where displays feature traditional Bhutanese history and life including a typical house filled with indigenous household items. At the **National Textile Museum**, see a vast collection of old and rare textiles and traditional garments such as the *kira* worn by women, and the *gho*, by men. These museums, both of which opened in 2001, provide fascinating insight into Bhutanese culture.

Lunch will be on your own today.

You will also enjoy a short visit to a local painting school, see the national animal of Bhutan at the **Motithang Takin Preserve**, shop at a local **craft bazaar** and explore the **Tashi Chhoe Dzong**. This Buddhist monastery and fortress on the northern edge of the city has been the seat of the *Dharma Raja*, head of Bhutan's civil government after combining with the monarchy in 1907. The splendid dzong was the site of the formal coronation of the first king in 2008 and hosts the city's annual (and colorful) *tsechu* festivities.

Dinner will be provided this evening with lunch on your own arrangement.

Overnight: Khang Residency Hotel
Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

📍 Punakha, Bhutan

DAY 7, October 24

Depart for Punakha

Depart this morning for the drive to Punakha. In route, traverse **Dochula Pass** (10,500 ft.) and see one of Bhutan's most breathtaking views – a plethora of colorful rhododendron blossoms and soft green wild herbs and forest trees dot a canvas of alpine snow. Enjoy panoramic views of the Himalayan mountain ranges and the fertile valley of Punakha (4,430 feet).

Late this afternoon you will arrive in **Punakha**, formerly established as Bhutan's winter capital because of its more temperate valley climate. After arrival, visit the nearby stone mason village of **Rinchen Gang**. Believed to be one of the oldest villages in Bhutan, the short hike up to the village affords magnificent views of the Dzong valley and river below. Visit some of the village homes to see the fine stone and masonry work firsthand.

Enjoy an excursion to **Chimi Lhakhang**, also known as the temple of fertility, situated on a hillock in the center of the valley. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children should pray at this temple and are usually blessed with a child soon after.

Lunch and dinner will be provided today including staples of the local diet like rice, seasonal vegetables, noodles, naan, chicken/beef and vegetarian Ema Datshi Chili Cheese along with local desert options.

Overnight: Drubchu Hotel
Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner





📍 Paro, Bhutan

DAY 8, October 25

Explore Punakha & Visit a local school

This morning you will take a short drive through the valley, then a trek up to the majestic **Khamsung Yuely Namgyel Temple**. Enjoy the grand views of Mo Chu River Valley before a meandering walk through terraced rice fields and small villages. After the Namgyel Temple visit, you will visit **Punakha Dzong** which is arguably the most beautiful dzong in the country, especially in spring when the lilac-colored jacaranda trees bring a lush sensuality to the dzong's characteristically towering whitewashed walls. This dzong was the second to be built in Bhutan and it served as the capital and seat of government until the mid-1950s. All of Bhutan's kings have been crowned here. The dzong is still the winter residence of the dratshang (official monk body).

Lunch will be provided today.

Depart Punakha for the scenic drive back to **Paro**, arriving at your hotel in the afternoon. **Tashi Namgay Resort** is set amidst five acres of lush foliage and green lawns. Located conveniently in the heart of Paro valley but away from the distractions of the main town,

End your day with a visit to a **local primary school** in Paro. Meet with the staff and students to learn about the education system in Bhutan and opportunities for children to be educated.

Dinner is on your own this evening after you check into your local hotel.

Overnight: Tashi Namgay

Included meals: Breakfast & Lunch



📍 Paro, Bhutan

DAY 9, October 26

Hike to the Tigers Nest & Free Time

This morning, your guide leads you on a hike to the enchanting **Tigers Nest**, the *Taktsang Monastery* viewpoint. Built around a cave where the Guru Rinpoche meditated, this monastery impossibly seems to cling to a cliff of rock 3,000 feet above the valley floor. The Taktsang Monastery is one of the most venerated pilgrim sites of the Himalayan world, containing 13 holy places.

Please note: The hike takes about 5 hours (roundtrip) and is challenging although unforgettably thrilling and mystical. *Transport by pony is available on the ascent if you do not wish to hike. **Walking is mandatory on the descent.** *

Lunch is on your own arrangement today with either free time to relax or those interested can continue your exploration with the local guide.

Later in the day, those interested can visit **Rinpung Dzong**, meaning “fortress of the heap of jewels”, which has a long and fascinating history. Along the wooden galleries lining the inner courtyard are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore.

A farewell dinner will be provided this evening.

Overnight: Tashi Namgay

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner



📍 Bangkok, Thailand

DAY 10, October 27

Depart Bhutan

Today say goodbye to Bhutan, departing for the airport late this morning to fly back to Bangkok. Check back into your airport hotel this evening.

Lunch is on your own this afternoon. Meal service should be included on your flight to Bangkok.

Overnight: Novotel Airport Hotel

Included meals: Breakfast (boxed)

📍 Bangkok, Thailand

DAY 11, October 28

Fly back to Los Angeles today (flight time pending).

Included meals: Breakfast



📍 Bangkok, Thailand

Novotel Airport Hotel

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Bangkok, Thailand

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<http://www.novotel.com/gb/hotel-6183-novotel-bangkok-suvarnabhumi-airport/index.shtml>



📍 Thimphu, Bhutan

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📍 Punakha, Bhutan

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📍 Paro, Bhutan

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