

# HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS

7 Nights / 8 Days

Paro – Thimpu – Phobjikha – Punakha – Paro

Bhutan is the last Himalayan kingdom, wedged between China and India right in the lap of the world's highest mountains. It was closed to the world until the 1970s.

Explore the spiritual Buddhist monasteries passing through beautiful villages and witness the maximum beauty of Bhutan. Experience the breath-taking view of Himalayan Range, peaceful rural environment and enjoy the cultural architectural landmarks of Bhutan. See the streets full of monks in their colourful dresses and masks, dancing in traditional ways and beating drums.



## **ITINERARY**

### **Day 01: Arrive Paro and transfer to Thimphu (55km, approx. 1.1/2-hour drive)**

Flying along the Himalayan range offers fascinating views and an exciting descent into the Kingdom. Bhutan's first gift to you as you disembark from the aircraft will be cool, clean fresh mountain air.

On Arrival at Paro airport and after immigration formalities and baggage collection, you will be met by your driver to transfer you to Thimphu, the capital town of Bhutan with enroute stop at Chuzom, the confluence of Thimphu and Paro rivers. Three different styles of stupas; Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese adorn this confluence. Shortly before reaching Chuzom, you will see on your left TschogangLhakhang, "the temple of the excellent horse". It is a private temple, built in 15th century, as the result of visitation from Balaha, the excellent horse, a manifestation of Chenrezig, the compassionate Buddha.

On arrival in Thimphu; Check-into the hotel. The capital town of Bhutan and the centre of Government, religion and commerce, Thimphu is a unique city with unusual mixture of modern development alongside ancient traditions. With the population of about 90,000 it is perhaps still the world's only capital city without a traffic light. Evening an exploratory walk around Thimphu main street and market area. Dinner and Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.

### **Day 02: Thimphu**

After breakfast, drive to visit Memorial Chorten. Also known as Thimphu Chorten, this stupa is located at the heart of the Thimphu city and was built in 1974 to honour the third King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk (1928-1972) popularly known as Father of modern Bhutan.

Afterwards visit to Buddha Point (Kuensel Phodrang). It holds one of the largest Buddha's statues in the country of 169 feet (51.5m), made of bronze and gilded in gold. Visitors can also get a good overview of the Thimphu valley from this point. Then Takin Preserve. The Takin is the national animal of Bhutan and looks like a cross between a cow and a goat. Legend has it that the animal was created by the great Buddhist yogi, Drukpa Kuenley, and it can be found only in Bhutan and nearby areas. Taxonomists place the animal in a category of its own as it is not similar enough to any other animal to fit established categories.

Post lunch, sightseeing in Thimphu valley including visit to the following: visit Junghi Handmade, Changzamtog National Weaving Centre the Institute for Zorig Chusum (commonly known as the Painting School) where students undergo a 6-year training course in Bhutan's 13 traditional arts and crafts, Conclude the day's sightseeing with visit of Trashichhoedzong, or 'the fortress of the glorious religion'. This is one of the most impressive buildings situated along the right flank of the Thimphu River built in 1641 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel who unified Bhutan and was later reconstructed in 1962 by the third King His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. This impressive fortress/monastery houses Secretariat building, the throne room of His Majesty, the King and various government offices.

Evening at leisure in Thimphu city centre. Also explore the Local Crafts Bazaar, to browse through example of Bhutan's fine traditional arts. Dinner and Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu. (Altitude 2,320m)

### **Day 03: Thimphu - Phobjikha (135 kilometers / 84 miles)**

After an early breakfast, have some riding around the Thimphu valley to get used to the traffic conditions. You can then start ride up to Dochu-la pass (3,088m/ 10,130 ft) stopping briefly here to take in the view and admire the chorten, mani wall, and prayer flags which decorate the highest point on the road. If skies are clear, the following peaks can be seen from this pass (left to right): Masagang (7,158m), Tsendagang (6,960m), Terigang (7,060m), Jejegangphugang (7,158 m ), Kangphugang (7,170 m ), Zongphugang (7, 060 m ), a table mountain that dominates the isolated region of Lunana - finally Gangkar puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m. for the Punakha valley and then unto the Phobjikha/Gangtey valley.

We then descend down to the Punakha Valley at an altitude of 1350mts. The road has lots of sharp bends, but lots of breathtaking views of the mountains and valleys. The ride takes your further through the villages of Sha villages until you climb and enter the hidden valley of Phobjikha. Dinner and Overnight at the hotel in Phobjikha. (Altitude 2,320m)

### **Day 04: Phobjikha - Punakha**

After breakfast take a walk down to the Black-necked Crane Visitor Centre directly below the lodge, a conservation center dedicated to protecting Thrung Trung Karmo, as these vulnerable birds are known in the Kingdom. The valley is the winter residence for approximately 400 cranes who migrate here from Tibet each year between the months of October and March. Phobjikha is a designated conservation area supported by the Bhutanese government with assistance from the World Wildlife Fund. The lack of powerlines here will impress

photographers and conservationists alike. The government had them buried underground several years ago to protect this precious habitat of the cranes and visit the 16th century golden-topped Gangtey Goemba (monastery) at the head of the valley which encompasses a school, meditation facilities and quarters for monks, and is home to the mind reincarnation of Pema Lingpa, one of the region's historically important Buddhist treasure 'discoverers. Later drive back to Punakha. Dinner and Overnight at the hotel in Punakha. (Altitude 1,300m)

### **Day 05: Punakha**

After breakfast visit Punakha Dzong or 'Palace of Great Happiness or Bliss, built at the junction of the Phochu and Mochu rivers in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. This majestic dzong served as both the religious and the administrative center of Bhutan in the past. It measures some 600 by 240 feet and has a six-story, gold-domed tower. Inside are courtyards and religious statuary that hint at the depth of history and spiritual tradition embodied here. Your guide will illuminate your understanding of this intricate culture that is exotic, though long established here. After exploring Punakha city centre, embark on a short walking excursion to Chimi Lhakhang, located on a ridge surrounded by beautiful paddy fields. From road point, it takes about 10-15 minutes walk through Sobsukha village to reach the monastery. Also known as Fertility temple, it is associated with Lama Drukpa Kuenley, popularly known as 'Divine Madman'. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children and wanting one, if they pray at this temple, they are usually blessed with a child very soon.

Afternoon visit the Khamsum Yuley Chorten. There is no temple in Bhutan built elaborately as this. This fascinating temple was built by the Queen Mother of the 5th King to bring universal peace in this world. The best of the spiritual art works is painted on the inner walls. There are also paintings of Buddhist teachers and tutelary deities of the country. This is a great temple to study the symbolic meanings from frescoes and sculptures. Dinner and Overnight at the hotel in Punakha & Wangdue. (Altitude 1,300m)

### **Day 06: Punakha - Paro (125km, Approx 4.1/2 hours drive)**

After breakfast drive back to Paro descending back down from Dochu La, follow the way back up the dramatic Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu River valleys, en route visit Simtokha Dzong, the oldest fortress of the country constructed by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel in 1629. The name Simtokha literally means 'Atop a Demon' and the legend associated with the dzong's construction tells us that it was built in order to subdue an evil spirit that was harassing travelers in the region. Later in the day after checking into hotel, proceed to visit Ta Dzong, originally built as Watchtower, which now houses National Museum. The extensive collection

includes antique thangka paintings, textiles, weapons & armour, household objects and a rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts. Then walk down the trail to 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 such as four friends, the old man of long life, the wheel of life, scenes from the life of Milarepa, Mount. Sumeru and other cosmic Mandala. Dinner and Overnight at the hotel in Paro. (Altitude 2,280m)

### **Day 07: Paro**

After breakfast excursion to Taktshang Monastery (approx. 5 hours round trip walk): It is one of the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries, perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro valley floor. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery and hence it is called 'Tiger's Nest'. This site has been recognized as a most sacred place and visited by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646 and now visited by all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime. The hike to the monastery makes a splendid half day excursion.

Later in the afternoon drive to Drukgyel Dzong, a ruined fortress where Bhutanese warriors fought Tibetan invaders centuries ago. In the early 1954, the Drukgyel Dzong was completely destroyed by fire and today only the ruins remain. The snowy dome of sacred Chomolhari, "mountain of goddess" can be seen in all her glory from the approach road to the Dzong. While return to the hotel, along the way, visit the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by Tibetan King, Songsten Gampo. The building of this temple marks the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan. Dinner and Overnight at the hotel in Paro. (Altitude 2,280m)

### **Day 08: Depart Paro**

After early breakfast at the hotel, drive to the airport for flight to your onward destination.

[End of our services....](#)

## **SOME OPTIONAL SUGGESTIONS.**

These are some optional suggestions and are always subject to change. Advance booking required at most of the places. Not included.

1. If required, the itinerary can be modified as per your wish.
2. Depending on your flight, you might need to stay one night in Kathmandu before flying to Paro but this can be added later on extra cost .
3. If you wish you can enjoy dinner with local family.
4. You can visit a traditional Farmhouse.
5. You can enjoy traditional mask dance & cultural show
6. You can experience Archery – the national sport
7. You can have a local cooking demonstration.
8. You can enjoy mountain biking.