

BHUTAN with TRIBAL TRUST

TRIP DATES:

September 22nd to October 3rd, 2023



Day 1 – Sep 22 (Friday): Arrive Paro (2,300m / 7,600ft) • Flight - BANGKOK/PARO

Today we depart for the Kingdom of Bhutan. As we approach Bhutan, we see the massive peaks of the eastern Himalaya, including Kanchenjunga (28,169 ft or 8586 m), the world's third highest peak, and Mt. Jhomolhari (24,029 ft or 7,326 m), Bhutan's holy mountain. Upon arrival in the Paro Valley and after completing the visa formalities, your Bhutanese guide and driver will be waiting outside of the terminal to receive and escort you to our accommodations for the evening.

We begin our spiritual journey with a powerful butter lamp lighting ceremony at the 7th Century wishfulfilling Kyichu Temple. The ceremony is performed to embark on a journey with safe passage throughout the Kingdom. We will then stretch our legs on a short walk / hike back to our hotel following a farm road and enjoy your first evening in Bhutan.

Overnight: Zhiwa Ling Heritage (1 night)

Day 2 – Sep 23 (Saturday): Journey to the Spiritual Heartland of the Kingdom, Bumthang (2,650m/8,745ft) blessed by the Guru Rinpochey – the Patron saint of Bhutan

This morning we take a scenic flight across Bhutan to Bumthang, the ancestral home of our present young Queen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck. Once in Jakar Valley, we check into our hotel and freshen up. Enjoy a full day of walking to tour Bumthang Valley, one of the most beautiful and sacred in Bhutan

Day 3 – Sep 24 (Sunday): Bumthang

Early morning drive straight to Tang valley, which will take approx. total of 4 hours 'drive.

Visit the burning lake. The legend of Pema Lingpa, Bhutan's "treasure discoverer," lives on in Membartsho, where in the 15th century he is said to have uncovered terma (Buddhist teachings that were hidden for discovery by future generations) and then onwards to Pemacholing Nunnery, where about more than 100 nuns reside and takes to complete 12 years of study. Once in the nunnery, you will engage in an impressive & emotional drum ceremony by the nuns performed for the wellbeing of all sentient beings & world peace.

Overnight: Amankora (2 nights)

Day 4 – Sep 25 (Monday): Central Bhutan - bound for Jangbi's Monpa Community

Today is a long day (approximately 6 hours) for us but a very beautiful scenic drive.

Crossing over 12,000 ft Yotongla pass, we reach the bustling village of Trongsa and on the hillside is a watchtower (the Ta Dzong) with an excellent example of the medieval fortresses that controlled Bhutan well into the mid-20th century, stimulates the senses with its intricate maze of buildings and temples and wondrous views of the valley. This building houses the Monarchy Museum which we can visit on our journey while stopping for lunch there. View the massive Trongsa Dzong. Bhutan's dzongs originally served three purposes: they were fortresses, administrative to the most obvious centres for local government, and a residence for the monks and place for their religious activities. We proceed further south from Trongsa for about 3 hours, taking a farm road to the village of Jangbi, where the Monpa's reside and our home for the next two nights. The Monpa live in the Black Forest and are considered the first inhabitants of Bhutan. Our Bhutanese guide will present a camp orientation.

The local community of Monpa people, led by the village headman, will welcome us with folk song and dances and offering of fruits and local moonshine. The Monpas practiced Bon or Shamanism long before the advent of Buddhism. The few shaman masters in this village reach out to the spirit world and channel the transcendental energies into the lives of the Monpas.

Day 5 – Sep 26 (Tuesday): Experience the Monpa neighborhood The day is an exciting time for us in the Monpa community!

The day will let us peek into the lives of the Monpa people through firsthand experience. Our activities include visiting homes and pounding rice, cooking demonstration and making wooden utensils, ploughing the fields with traditional equipment, grinding corn with traditional mill, rope making, traditional carrying stand and stretcher, traditional monpa soap, participating in various farm tasks and interacting with the Monpa people. The adventurous can try wearing their typical outfit called the paagay, woven out from the nettle barks. The dress is a white color wraparound that is tied in the neck with a knot and at the waist with a belt forming a large pouch above the waist to store all kinds of essentials required for the day.

For those who want to venture beyond the village of Jangbi, we will have an option to hike to Wangling, another Monpa village.

In gratitude for sharing their time with us, we will serve the Monpa their shared meal around a huge fire. Monpas will proudly demonstrate their traditional Monpa tribal dance. During your stay, you will have the rare opportunity to listen to the Indigenous Living Treasure, Ap Tawla (healer). He will enthusiastically share many stories of his natural healing practice of over 50 years.

Relax and rejuvenate in a hot stone herbal bath, a tradition known for its medicinal benefits.

Overnight: Tented Camp (2 nights)

Day 6 & 7 – Sep 27 & 28 (Wednesday & Thursday): Drive to Gangtey Valley (2,900m/9,510ft)

The drive to the stunning Phobjikha Valley today takes us from sub-tropical vegetation to alpine highland filled with hemlocks and juniper trees in 4hrs drive time. This valley is home to the endangered black-necked cranes and the conservation efforts of Bhutan and WWF have created a safe haven for these beautiful birds, which flock the marshy wetlands in winter for roosting and a visit to the Crane Center that sheds light to this legacy.

In the afternoon visit Gangtey Monastery dating back to 15th century whose founder is the Body emanations of the 16th-century Tertön (treasure finder) Pema Lingpa. Visit a shrine inside and interact with some of the monks walking around. We will also take chance to light butter lamps here and offer our prayers for the liberation of all the sentient beings that are suffering. The highlight of our visit to this sacred valley is to witness the 3-day Gangtey Tshechu Festival 2023. It is held at Gangtey goenpa. The monks and local people perform various kinds of mask dances and folk dances during this festival. The festival concludes with the receiving of blessings for the spiritual wisdom and power –Ngedup Langwa.

For the next day, the pristine environment of Phobjikha valley has a Crane Center to view some interesting exhibits put together by the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) and to watch a brief film about the black-necked cranes. In the afternoon, proceed with the nature trail hike. The forests surrounding the valley are full of birds and mammals alike, and the nature hike is a wonderful way to experience this pristine ecosystem.

Free time for yourself at the valley or to explore the spa services offered by the Lodge.

Nature Trail Hike;

Hike Length: 2.99Kms/1.8Miles Hike Time: 1.5 Hours Elevation Loss:140m/462Miles

Overnight: Gangtey Lodge (2 nights)

Day 8 – Sep 29 (Friday): Towards the Capital, Thimphu (2,400m/7,800ft)

Our drive today follows the course of the Wangchu rivers dropping down all the way from Lawala pass, passing through hamlets and reaching Wangdiphodrang at just 4500 ft before we ascend up over winding roads across 10,000ft Dochula where on the clear day you will be treated with a visit of 108 stupas adorning the landscape and the amazing views of the eastern Himalayas of Bhutan in the backdrop.

As we descend towards Thimphu, we can see the oldest fort the Simtokha Dzong built in 1637 by Zhabdrung Rinpoche, the Unifier of Bhutan, this massive fortress holds some of the most sacred relics including the preserved remains of Zhabdrung himself. The central monk body of Bhutan moves from Punakha to Thimphu every spring to take avoid Punakha's hot summer.

We check into the stunning Six Senses Hotel Thimphu in time to relax and explore the property. This evening in Thimphu, we are honored to meet, dine and strike some interesting

conversations with Bhutanese dignitaries invited on topics of interest. Most participants have said that this was one of the highlights of their trip!

In the morning drive up to see the tallest seated Buddha statue in the world facing towards the East, bestowing infinite love and compassion to all sentient beings in the spheres. The statue houses an enormous meditational house in the base and two storied chapels on the top floors. You will be fascinated at fine art works crafted by the local artisans. The site also offers a good view of the valley below. Option for a scenic hike around the Buddha or visit the gorgeous Hidden Monk Village Dodedrak.

Day 9 – Sep 30 (Saturday): Explore the capital city in Thimphu

Local shops entice with traditional weavings; Tibetan and Bhutanese silverwork; coral and turquoise beads and prayer flags. A number of cottage industries, including metalworking and paper making, are found in Thimphu, and visitors often enjoy visiting their workshops to see artisans practicing their craft. Depending upon the interest of the group, there are couple of major sightseeing; National Textile Museum, where Bhutan's finest weavings and brocades are on display is a must see! There's also the School of Zorigchusum, where students undergo 4 years training in traditional arts and crafts and the Jungshi Paper Factory, where you can observe the delicate artistry involved in creating deh- sho, or locally handmade paper. If not visit to above option – we can arrange astrology reading.

Overnight: Six Senses (2 nights)

Day 10 – Oct 1 (Sunday): Drive to Paro

Drive to Paro valley and upon reaching the valley, ascend up to the most obvious National Museum of Bhutan located inside the Ta Dzong which once acted as the watch tower for the Paro Dzong below. The museum houses the historical and cultural artifacts, rich flora and fauna collections with a good view of the valley below. Few minutes' drive below is the Paro Rinpung Dzong. Admire the impressive architecture of the Paro Dzong, a stronghold that once defended the country from Tibetan invasions. Eventually, end your day with a walk down from the Dzong towards Buddhist Art Gallery where you may chance to see local artisans working on their paintings.

Afternoon, we visit the Duntse Lhakhang, one of the sacred temples built in the Himalayan region over the areas of Tibet and Bhutan by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo. This temple reflects the introduction of Buddhism in the kingdom. See the ancient murals on the walls still well preserved.

Evening – we participate in making of 'Tsa Tsa' - mini stupas, which we will take next day for our Tiger Nest hike and offer/place with brief prayers for oneself and all sentient beings.

Day 11 – Oct 2 (Monday): Taktsang “Tiger Nest” Excursion



After early breakfast, drive back to Paro and we embark on our hike to Taktsang-The Tiger's Nest. This serene monastery clings to a steep granite cliff about 700 meters above the valley floor. Legend has it that the Guru Padmasamhava flew to this rocky cave in the 8th century to meditate. He flew here on the back of a tigress hence the name. Being one of the most revered pilgrim sites, many thousands of pilgrims come here every year, some walking for a month to reach here. The surrounding area has many temples, monasteries and cells where many monks, nuns and lay people can meditate-some even for a life time. Although we are not allowed inside the monastery, we can hike up to the view point, where a cafeteria is situated. From here you can get a most spectacular and breath-taking view of Taktsang. It takes about 2 hours to get there and about 2 hours to return down (approx.).

Overnight: Uma Como (2 nights)

Day 12 – Oct 3 (Tuesday): Depart Bhutan

- Flight - Paro/Bangkok

We bid farewell to our newfound friends of Bhutan. Your guide and driver will accompany you to the airport for your departure.

Tashi Delek!

Notes on itinerary:

This is a guideline for the travels across the Kingdom and the overall site seeing's are very flexible in terms of adding more cultural, religious and or nature/hiking experiences along the way in discussion with your guide.