



## Traversing Bhutan East to West – 16 nts

We love Bhutan....it really is the most wonderful, rewarding destination! We are very fortunate to travel to Bhutan annually to ensure our itineraries and inclusions are the very best possible for our valued clients. Below is an itinerary designed for private travellers and can be tailored to suit your exact requirements.

A 16 night fully comprehensive tour across Bhutan. The ultimate adventure. This tour combines the very best the Kingdom of Bhutan has to offer in the east, west & central regions.

Please note this tour can be taken in either direction & it is possible to include domestic flights in Bhutan to avoid entering or exiting Bhutan to or from India.

### Tour Itinerary Overview.

- 1 night Samdrup Jongkhar – drive from Guwahati airport India.
- 2 nights Trashigang incl Radi Village weavers, Dzongs & Lhakhangs.
- 1 night Mongar followed by Bhutan's most scenic drive & visit Ura Village.
- 3 nights Bumthang valleys with Lhakhangs, hiking, sightseeing & Dzongs.
- 1 night Trongsa with Tower of Trongsa museum, Dzong & hiking.
- 2 nights Phobjikha valley with hiking, village, Gangtey Goemba & wildlife.
- 2 nights Punakha valley with hiking, Lhakhangs & Bhutan's best Dzong.
- 2 nights Thimphu with city & valley sightseeing, hikes & shopping.
- 2 nights Paro valley with Dzong, Taktsang Monastery hike & shopping.

### OR CALL THE BHUTAN TRAVEL EXPERTS ON

AUS [toll free](tel:1300367875), James – [0412 416 111](tel:0412416111), Nicola – [0413 598 669](tel:0413598669)

### Why Book with Bhutan & Beyond?

- 16 years experience, service & knowledge.
- We personally visit Bhutan at least once every year.
- Competitive pricing and luxury hotel upgrade options.
- Exceptionally well constructed & flexible itineraries.
- We provide a comprehensive Bhutan visitor guide
- Experts at combining Bhutan with India & Nepal.
- ATAS Accredited via our parent company MTA Travel
- Access to our exclusive travel app COMPANION

### Your Bhutan Land Package Inclusions:

- Personal guide & driver with SUV or minibus.
- All touring & transfers throughout.
- Additional Guwahati-Bhutan arrival transfer.
- Additional vehicle & crew re positioning fee Thimphu to Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Traditional 3 star hotels with private bathrooms.



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- All meals and bottled water daily.
- All sightseeing & entrance fees.
- Bhutan Govt royalties & taxes.
- Bhutan visa fees.
- Bank transfer & communications fees.
- Professionally operated by Bhutan Tourism Corp.
- Comprehensive Bhutan visitor guide & full support from Bhutan & Beyond.

### Optional Activities:

Please ensure your travel insurance covers you for these activities.

- White Water Rafting – Punakha Valley. US\$250.00 for up to 5 persons.
- Archery in Paro town @ US\$7.00 pp.
- Mountain bike hire in Paro & Thimphu from US\$25 pp per day.

### Your Bhutan land package excludes:

- Airfares to Guwahati (India) & from Paro (Bhutan)
- Personal items – laundry, drinks, tel calls, tips etc.
- Any luxury hotel upgrade costs are additional.
- Indian Visa – Please arrange this independently.
- Travel Insurance – mandatory to enter Bhutan.

### Cancellation Conditions

Deposit date until 60 days prior to departure – Loss of deposit  
From 60 days prior to arrival in Bhutan – No refund permitted

### Day 1

#### Guwahati (India) Airport to Samdrup Jongkhar (3+ hours)

Today you will be greeted at Guwahati airport by your Bhutanese guide & our Indian ground operator. Transfer by private taxi to the India-Bhutan border and the bustling town of Samdrup Jongkhar where you will spend your first night in Bhutan.

Samdrup Jongkhar is your typical border town with little of interest, being slightly chaotic and generally lacking in the charms the rest of Bhutan will unfold to you. The remainder of the day is at leisure to wander about the small bazaar area.

#### Overnight Samdrup Jongkhar – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel



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### Day 2:

#### Samdrup Jongkhar to Trashigang (6-7 hrs)

An early morning departure from Samdrup Jongkhar to Trashigang for your first of two long 7 hour drives on this journey. En-route visit the small and relatively undeveloped village of Womrong which will offer your first view of a small Bhutanese Dzong and soon after the Zangto Pelri Lhakhang (temple). Next stop is Khaling, the site of an historic battlefield and location of the National Hand Loom Centre, where young girls from all over Bhutan are trained in traditional hand weaving and vegetable dyeing. Finally visit the university town of Kanglung with its clock tower and large Sherubtse College campus.

Trashigang is a lively and interesting town and the bars are worth a visit this evening although they do close early at 8.00 pm.

#### Overnight Trashigang – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel

### Day 3:

#### Sightseeing in the Trashigang region.

Eastern Bhutan is the heartland of weaving in the Kingdom and Bhutanese weavings and textiles are generally acknowledged as amongst the finest in the world. You will have an excellent opportunity to both trade and interact with the weavers themselves on today's excursion to the weaving village of Radi, approx 2.5 hours (each way) eastwards from Trashigang.

For those who wish to have the day at leisure you are welcome to spend time exploring Trashigang on your own or to take a short hike. The Dzong is worth visiting and offers excellent views from a high promontory overlooking the confluence of the Drangme Chhu (river) and Gamri Chhu. Up until the beginning of the 20th century all of eastern Bhutan was governed from this Dzong.

#### Overnight Trashigang – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel

### Day 4:

#### Trashigang to Mongar (4+ hrs)

Enjoy a leisurely start for your journey westwards to Mongar today. There are no major points of interest in Mongar however it is essential to stop here en-route to the central Bumthang valleys and avoid a tortuous 11.5 hour road trip. When you descend into the valley of the Kuri Chhu you pass extensive cornfields and at the valley floor rice terraces, and tropical fruits such as mango and pineapples, flourish.



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### Day 4 – continued.

When travelling through eastern Bhutan the dominant language is Sharchop which is different enough from Dzongkha (the national language of Bhutan) that eastern and western Bhutanese usually have to use English or Nepali to communicate. The towns between west and east Bhutan also differ as in western Bhutan most towns are situated in valleys whereas in eastern Bhutan most towns, including Mongar, are situated at the tops of hills or ridges.

### Overnight Mongar – Traditional Style 3\* Hotel.

### Day 5:

#### Mongar to Choekhor Valley, Bumthang Region. (7 hrs)

Early morning departure to Jakar, in the Choekhor Valley, for this second and final longer drive on your journey through the Kingdom. The route between Mongar & Jakar is one of the most spectacular drives in the country. When crossing the Thruming La (Bhutan's highest pass at 3780 metres) you are now officially departing eastern Bhutan & entering western Bhutan, albeit in the central region of the country.

En-route visit the Ura valley, the highest valley in Bumthang, and believed by some to have been the home of Bhutan's earliest inhabitants. The cobbled streets of the very traditional village of Ura give a medieval feel and the old women of this region still wear sheepskin shawls on their backs which double as a blanket and cushion.

OPTION: Choose to stop and have the first of your three nights in the Bumthang region at an Ura farm stay with a local family.

### Overnight Choekhor Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#)

### Day 6:

#### Sightseeing in the Bumthang region.

Today your sightseeing includes visits to the Wangdicholing Palace and one or both of the Jambay & Kurjey Lhakhangs. These are the oldest two monasteries in the kingdom and all the Kings of Bhutan are cremated at Kurjey Lhakhang. You can take the option of a hike back to your hotel from these Lhakhangs.

This afternoon other options include the Tamshing Monastery where about 95 Monks reside, most being under 15 and from poorer families who cannot afford to send their children to state school, and take a wander through nearby Chamkhar town. The Jakar Dzong is close by and also worth a visit.

### Overnight Choekhor Valley – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel.



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### Day 7:

At leisure in the Bumthang Valleys today.

A free day to take some suggestions above, enjoy a day at leisure, or take one of the many hikes available in this region.

Overnight Choekhor Valley – **Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel**

### Day 8:

Choekhor Valley to Trongsa (3-4 hrs)

Today transfer to Trongsa, via the Chhume valley for the opportunity to shop for local handicrafts and textiles. This region is renowned for its exceptionally high quality weavings. Traverse the Yotu La (pass) and continue on to Trongsa where the Dzong is the ancestral home of the Royal Family of Bhutan. The Dzong has added the excellent Tower of Trongsa Museum into its ancient watchtower, which you will visit this afternoon, followed by an excursion to the Dzong itself.

There are very good hikes in this region too. One worth considering traverses the valley below the Dzong and takes approx 2.5 hours.

Overnight Trongsa – **[Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#)**

### Day 9:

Trongsa to Phobjikha Valley (2-3 hrs)

Continue westwards via the Pele La (Pass) which crosses through the Black Mountains National Park and divides western and central Bhutan. This is the best place in Bhutan to see yaks from the road. You will pass the village of Rukubji surrounded by extensive fields of mustard, potatoes, barley and wheat and keep a watchful eye out for Rhesus Macaques (Brown Monkeys).

Potatoes are this region's primary cash crop once exported to India. Phobjikha is a glacial valley on the western slopes of the Black Mountains and is one of the most beautiful open valleys in Bhutan. It is also one of the most important wildlife preserves in the country and the winter home (late October to early February) of the rare black necked crane, which annually flies in from Tibet. There are also muntjaks (barking deer), wild boar, sambar, Himalayan black bear, leopard and red foxes.

Overnight Phobjikha Valley – **[Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#)**



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### Day 10:

#### At Leisure in Phobjikha Valley

Whilst in Phobjikha visit the Black Crane nature information centre and the sacred Gangtey Goemba (Monastery) plus take a wander through the quaint village of Gangtey and hike the Gangtey Nature Trail.

There are many more wonderful strolls & hikes in the Phobjikha Valley and your guide will recommend a suitable hike for your fitness and to suit the conditions. Alternatively just enjoy the serenity and beauty of this very special place.

There is an option here to spend 1 or 2 nights in a farm stay with a Bhutanese family for a very traditional and authentic experience.

#### Overnight Phobjikha Valley – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel

### Day 11:

#### Phobjikha Valley to Punakha Valley (3-4 hrs)

This morning depart westwards for the Punakha valley. As you pass the dramatic Wangdue Phodrang Dzong (sadly destroyed by fire in June 2012 & soon to be under reconstruction again) notice the large cacti that cover the surrounding hillsides. These were planted long ago to discourage invaders from climbing the steep slope to the Dzong. From this point you can also view Rinchengang, one of Bhutan's oldest villages, which did not have access to water, electricity or schooling until the early 1990's. The craftsmen of Rinchengang are stonemasons, originally from India, and sought after for their skills in construction of Dzongs and Lhakhangs (temples).

Punakha holds the title as the winter capital because of its more temperate climate. Arriving into the valley visit Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (also known as the Divine Madman or Mad Monk), which is a pleasant, easy 20 minute walk across paddy fields. It is believed that childless women who visit the temple will conceive after receiving a "wang" (blessing) from the resident monk. Continue on to the local Nunnery and the small very traditional village of Talo where you can stroll through the beautiful and serene gardens of the local monastery.

#### Overnight Punakha Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#).

### Day 12:

#### Sightseeing and hiking in Punakha today.

This morning visit the dramatic Punakha Dzong, which formally served as the seat of the government and is still the winter residence of the Dzatsheng (Central Monk Body). This is Bhutan's most spectacular Dzong and an excellent example of how



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### Day 12 – continued.

a medieval fortress, and a centre of both monastic and administrative functions, has adapted and evolved for modern day use.

This afternoon travel up the valley & hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyel Chorten along the river bank and through tiny villages surrounded by vegetable fields and rice paddies. This Chorten holds very special significance being consecrated in 1999 and dedicated to the protection of the former Crown Prince, today's current King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, by his mother who was one of the 4 former Queens.

### Overnight Punakha Valley – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel.

### Day 13:

#### Punakha Valley to Thimphu (3 hrs)

This morning transfer by road to Thimphu, Bhutan's quirky capital, via Dochu La (Pass). At the pass view the 108 Stupas, commissioned by a former Queen, and a memorial to those who lost their lives during the low intensity conflict in late 2002 when Bhutan evicted Indian rebels camped in the jungle on the Bhutan – Indian border. On a clear day you will witness a breathtaking view of the eastern Himalaya and depending on the time of the year the vista can vary from alpine snow (November – March) to a profusion of blossoms (March – May) splashed among the soft green of the wild herbs and forest trees. From the pass you can elect to hike down to the Tibetan village of Hongtshu and your guide will advise you the best options. Pass the Semtokha Dzong built in 1629, the oldest fortress of its kind that guarded Thimphu, and today is a monastery.

On arrival into Thimphu take an orientation tour of the major city features the National Memorial Stupa, the celebrated Royal Textile Academy and the Takin Preserve (home to Bhutan's most unusual looking national mammal). Take time to wander Thimphu's main streets which are safe and do consider a visit to a local bar this evening. Your guide will advise your best options. Please note Tuesday is 'dry day' in Bhutan and most bars in the city will remain closed.

### Overnight Thimphu – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#)

### Day 14:

#### Sightseeing in Thimphu.

This morning visit the majestic Trashichhoe Dzong and the newly consecrated Tara Lhaden Zhingkhram lhakang (temple). Continue on to the awesome Golden Buddha which also offers an excellent 3 km hike option with sensational valley views. Next visit the 'Simply Bhutan' traditional display village followed by a Bhutanese lunch. At 'Simply Bhutan' you can try ara tasting (local spirit); suja tasting (butter tea); try your hand at archery and enjoy a cultural performance of song & dance during the lunch.



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### Day 14 – continued.

Other recommended places to visit are Zorig Chusum – the Institute of the 13 Arts & Crafts of Bhutan (closed over school holidays and weekends); the Folk Heritage Museum; the National Library, which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts; the hand-made paper making factory & the colourful weekend markets (Fri-Sun) where everyone goes to buy an array of fresh fruits & vegetables, home-wares, handicrafts and clothes.

For those who have an interest in quality weavings and local art check out the Gagyel Lhundrup weaving centre, where you can interact with the weavers, and the adjacent S. Bishwa art gallery. The city bars are also worth a visit. Your guide will advise you the best options. Please note Tuesday is 'dry day' in Bhutan and most bars in the city will remain closed.

### Overnight Thimphu – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel.

### Day 15:

#### Thimphu to Paro (1.5 hrs)

Depart Thimphu at leisure for your short drive, on Bhutan's best road, to the Paro Valley with a few short stops for sightseeing en route. Take lunch at a Paro town restaurant followed by an orientation tour of Paro valley's main sights including the Rinpung Dzong with its cantilever bridge; the National Museum and Kyichu Lhakang, a most revered temple boasting an Orange tree that perpetually bears fruit.

OPTION: Take an early departure from Thimphu and travel to the remote & beautiful Haa valley returning to the Paro valley via the Chele La (pass) on Bhutan's highest motorable road. At the pass you can visit the Kila Nunnery, Bhutan's oldest. This is a full day trip.

### Overnight Paro Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#).

### Day 16:

#### Paro Valley Hiking & Sightseeing

This morning end your Bhutan adventure on a high with a pilgrimage hike to the majestic Taktsang Monastery, also known as 'Tigers Nest'. This is a pilgrimage all Bhutanese Buddhists endeavour to make at least once in their lives and each step they make along the trail counts as credits towards a bright future.

Tigers Nest clings impossibly to a cliff of rock at nearly 800 m above the valley floor and where Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress to subdue the local demons followed by 3 months meditation in a cave still visible in the monastery. In 1998 the monastery was seriously damaged by fire and has since been painstakingly reconstructed to its original condition and consecrated by the 4th King in 2005.



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### Day 16 – continued.

Choose between a 1.5-2 hour round trip hike to the monastery viewpoint, with a café offering excellent Bhutanese vegetarian food & refreshments, or be bold and take the 5 hour round trip hike into the monastery itself – recommended only for the fit and active as this can be quite a strenuous hike with many, many, stairs to contend with. The result is well worth it all the same.

Time permitting we encourage a wander along Paro's main streets for some final handicraft and jewellery shopping. Alternatively, just chill out and admire the scenery, or take a spa treatment or a traditional hot stone bath, from your valley hotel.

### Overnight Paro Valley – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel.

### Day 17:

### Day of departure.

Sadly prepare for your departure this morning to your onward destination. Transfer to Paro Airport for flights to Bangkok, Delhi, Singapore, Kathmandu, Kolkata, Bagdogra, Guwahati or Dhaka.



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