



BHUTAN & BEYOND

## Mystical Bhutan 06-18 OCT 22 (12 nts)

After the awesome flight into Paro be amazed by the colour & spectacle of the Thimphu & Gangtey Tshechu's. This small group tour, catering to a maximum of 8 persons, also features splendour of the magnificent Punakha Dzong; the most important temples & scenery of the central Bumthang region; the remote beauty of the Phobjikha Valley; and culminates with a pilgrimage hike to the majestic Taktsang Monastery (Tigers Nest) in Paro valley.

This tour combines the very best the Kingdom of Bhutan has to offer in the west & central regions.

And please don't forget we guarantee our small group cultural tours will operate even if only 3 persons book & travel! (COVID issues excepted).

### Tour Itinerary Overview.

- 3 nights Thimphu with sightseeing, hiking and shopping options.
- 2 nights Phobjikha valley for festival, hiking and exploring.
- 2 nights Bumthang valleys, hiking, sightseeing
- 1 night Trongsa with museum & Dzong visits.
- 2 nights Punakha valley with monastery & Dzong visits.
- 2 nights Paro valley with Taktsang Monastery hike, shopping & sightseeing.

### Reasons To Book This Small Group Tour

- We only take a maximum of 8 persons on our tours.
- Witness the spectacle of the Thimphu & Gangtey Tshechu's (festivals).
- We tailor our tours for less driving and more sightseeing!
- 18 years experience, service & knowledge.
- Competitive pricing & well constructed itineraries.
- Access to our exclusive travel app COMPANION
- Our comprehensive Bhutan Visitor Information planning guide.
- Provision of our SHERPA app weblink for your COVID-19 requirements.
- ATAS Accredited via our parent company MTA Travel.

### CALL THE BHUTAN TRAVEL EXPERTS ON

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

### Bhutan 13 Day/12 Night Land Tour Costs & Inclusions

#### Tour Dates – 06 – 18 OCT 2022

All inclusive Bhutan land tour cost @US\$3646.00 per person twin/dbl share.

Single room supplement @US\$600.00

*Please note tour costs are quoted in USD.*

*Airfares to from Bhutan are additional.*



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### Tour Inclusions:

- English speaking guide, driver & private coach.
- All touring & transfers throughout your journey.
- Bhutanese style 3\* hotel accom with private bathrooms.
- All meals including bottled water daily.
- Entrance fees, hiking & sightseeing.
- Bhutan visa fees & processing.
- Sustainable development fee (SDF) & local taxes.
- The spectacle of the Thimphu & Gangtey Tshechu's (festivals).
- Bank transfer & communication fees.
- Professionally operated by Bhutan Tourism Corp – BTCL.

### Tour Exclusions:

- Flights to/from Paro are additional.
- Personal items: phone calls, laundry, drinks etc.
- Tipping – we will advise your tipping regime.
- Travel Insurance – mandatory to enter Bhutan.
- Any COVID-19 PCR or RAT tests required.

### Available On Request:

- Upgrade to Business Class on your flights.
- Ex-Australia airfares.
- Stopovers & additional Asian arrangements.

### COVID-19 Updates & Procedures:

Our Sherpa travel app will keep you updated with COVID-19 requirements pre, during & post travel. These include PCR, RAT & any other tests and where to get them, vaccination certificates & other documentation plus any tracing apps required at your destination and stopovers. Once your tour booking is confirmed and your air travel process commences, we will provide you with your personal Sherpa app web links to assist you manage the COVID-19 procedures that will be relevant at the time of travel.

### Cancellation Conditions:

- Deposit date until 35 days prior arrival in Bhutan - Land tour deposit is refundable less B&B service fees.
- 35 days or less prior to arrival in Bhutan - No land tour refund permitted.

*Please note: - These conditions cover land travel arrangements only, not airfares, which are subject to their own cancellation conditions.*



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### DETAILED TOUR ITINERARY – 06 - 18 OCTOBER 2022

#### Thursday 06 October 2022:

##### Paro Airport to Thimphu (1 hr 30 mins drive time)

After clearing immigration and customs you will be greeted by your BTCL guide and driver and transferred to Bhutan's capital Thimphu, travelling through the spectacular countryside en-route. All the houses and buildings in the Kingdom are painted and constructed in traditional Bhutanese style.

On arrival in Thimphu, visit the awesome Buddha Dordenma statue located at Kuenselphodrang. The statue is made of bronze and gilded in gold. It is considered the largest Buddha Shakyamuni statue in the world. There is also an excellent 3 km hike option through Kuenselphodrang Nature Park which offers sensational valley views.

Enjoy a very traditional Bhutanese lunch at a local restaurant and this afternoon take a fascinating wander through the colourful festival markets. Time permitting visit the National Memorial Chorten and the Takin Preserve, home to Bhutan's most unusual national mammal.

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

#### Friday 07 October:

##### Exploring Thimphu & Festival Visit

This morning drive north up the valley to the majestic Trashichhoe Dzong to witness the colour & spectacle of the last day of the Thimphu Tshechu. Take either a picnic lunch and dine at the festival with the locals, or lunch at a local restaurant.

SPECIAL NOTE: Early this morning at approx 03.00 am you can have the option of attending the festival to witness the unfurling of the Thongdrel. It is an intensely religious experience for the Bhutanese. The extremely large thongdrel is a painting (Thangka) which is not allowed to be struck by the direct rays of the sun. Therefore it must be rolled back up by 7:30 AM. The mere sight of the Thongdrel is said to cleanse the viewer of sin. You would then return to the hotel for breakfast and rest before later returning to the festival again.

This afternoon visit the beautiful Tara Lhaden Zhingkhram Lhakhang (temple) nearby & enjoy some free time to explore Bhutan's weekend markets, where the locals go for a wide range of produce.

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



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**Saturday 08 October:**

### **Thimphu to Phobjikha Valley (4-5 hrs)**

This morning you will be transferred by road eastwards to the Phobjikha Valley. En-route passing the Semtokha Dzong, built in 1629 & the oldest fortress of its kind that guarded the Thimphu valley, which today it is a monastery. Continue ascending to Dochu La (pass) to view the 108 Stupas, commissioned by a former Queen as 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.

When the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong (currently being rebuilt) comes into view, notice the large cacti that cover the hillside below which, were planted long ago to discourage invaders from climbing the steep slope to the Dzong. From the road 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 sought after for their skills in construction of Dzongs and Lhakhangs (temples).

Potatoes are Phobjikha's primary cash crop and mainly 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.

Time permitting walk the Gangtey Nature Trail on arrival this afternoon. Alternatively undertake this tomorrow morning. This is an easy, mainly flat, walk through forest and pastures.

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

**Sunday 09 October:**

### **Exploring & festival visit in the Phobjikha Valley**

Today you will visit the sacred Gangtey Goenpa (Monastery) to witness the Gangtey Tshechu enroute wander through Gangtey village.

This afternoon visit the Black Crane nature information centre & time permitting take an excursion further down the valley to the more remote Phobji region. Here you can enjoy an easy hike through villages, temples & farm houses.

**Overnight Phobjikha Valley - Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel.**



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### Monday 10 October:

#### Phobjikha to Choekhor Valley (4 hrs)

Early this morning depart Phobjikha to the central Bumthang region comprising the 4 valleys Choekhor, Tang, Ura and Chhume. Traverse the Pele La (Pass) which crosses through the Black Mountains National Park and divides western and central Bhutan. You will spend more time in Trongsa on your return journey. Keep a watchful eye out for Rhesus Macaques (Brown Monkeys) on the side of the road. The Trongsa Dzong is perched at the end of a ridge and seems to hang in space at the head of the valley. The Dzongs location afforded it great power over this part of the country as the only foot and mule trail between east and western Bhutan leads straight through Trongsa and through the Dzong itself.

On arrival in the Bumthang region notice the large fields of buckwheat that cover the valleys....buckwheat noodles and pancakes are a Bumthang specialty. Enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure. There are short walks and hikes to choose from and your guide will be happy to make recommendations.

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

### Tuesday 11 October:

#### Exploring & Hiking in the Choekhor Valley

Your morning sightseeing includes visits to the Kurjey Lhakhang & Jambay Lhakhang. These are the oldest two monasteries in the kingdom. All the Kings of Bhutan are cremated at Kurjey Lhakhang.

This afternoon visit Jakar Dzong and take a wander through nearby Chamkhar town, perhaps drop in at the Swiss Farm to taste sweet cheese, apple brandy and locally brewed wine and beer.

Overnight Choekhor - [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#).

### Wednesday 12 October:

#### Choekhor Valley to Trongsa (2 hrs)

Enjoy a more leisurely start today before transferring westwards today to Trongsa, en-route visiting the Chhume weaving centre for the opportunity to shop for excellent local handicrafts and textiles. This region is renowned for its exceptionally high quality weaving's.

On arrival in Trongsa visit the Tower of Trongsa Museum followed by lunch. Trongsa Dzong is the ancestral home of the Royal Family of Bhutan. This afternoon enjoy an excursion to the Dzong itself or take one of the hiking options available in this region.

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



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**Thursday 13 October:**

### **Trongsa to Punakha Valley (4 hrs)**

Depart early this morning on a very scenic drive to the Punakha Valley, which holds the title as the winter capital because of its more temperate climate, taking lunch on arrival in Punakha.

This afternoon, on arrival into Punakha, take an orientation tour of the valley including the markets at Lobesa and the nearby Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (also known as the Divine Madman or Mad Monk) with a very colourful history. It is believed childless women who visit the temple will conceive after receiving a 'wang' (blessing) from the resident monk. The walk across rice paddy fields takes about 20 minutes each way.

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

**Friday 14 October:**

### **Exploring & hiking in the Punakha Valley**

This morning visit the dramatic Punakha Dzong, which formally served as the seat of the government and is still the winter residence of the Dratsheng (Central Monk Body). This is Bhutan's most spectacular Dzong and an excellent example of how a medieval fortress and a centre of both monastic and administrative functions, has adapted and evolved for modern day use.

Continue on and visit the Sangchen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang & Nunnery followed by an excursion along a delightful country lane the very traditional village of Talo where you can wander the beautiful & serene gardens of the local monastery.

Choose to enjoy a relaxing afternoon at leisure or travel up the valley & take a fascinating hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyel Chorten through fields of vegetables, rice paddies and tiny hamlets. This Chorten hold 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.

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



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### Saturday 15 October:

#### Punakha to Thimphu (2 hrs 30 mins)

Early morning departure from the beautiful Punakha and head back to the capital Thimphu, once again traversing Dochu La.

On arrival in Thimphu visit the celebrated Royal Textiles Academy, followed by 'Simply Bhutan' a traditional display village. 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, before a visit to the National Memorial Chorten.

Remainder of the day at leisure to explore on your own.

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

### Sunday 16 October:

#### Thimphu to Paro Valley (1 hr 30 mins)

Enjoy a leisurely start today before a late morning transfer to the Paro Valley. On arrival take lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon enjoy an orientation tour of the major features in Paro town including the Rinpung Dzong, with its cantilever bridge. Also visit the National Museum and enjoy time to wander along the main streets which offer good shopping for jewellery and handicrafts.

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

### Monday 17 October:

#### Hiking & exploring in the Paro Valley

This morning make a pilgrimage hike to the Taksang Monastery, also known as Tigers Nest. This is Bhutan's most revered monastery and all Bhutanese Buddhists strive to make the pilgrimage here at least once in their lives. With each step, merit points are gained for the next part of life's journey.



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### Monday 17 October– continued.

Choose between a 2 hour round trip hike to the monastery viewpoint or a longer 5 hour, and more strenuous hike, into the monastery itself. Tigers Nest clings impossibly to a cliff of rock at 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. Take lunch at the viewpoint cafe which offers good Bhutanese vegetarian dishes.

This afternoon visit Kyichu Lhakhang – one of Bhutan’s oldest and most beautiful temples, boasting an orange tree that perpetually bears fruit, before choosing a further visit to Paro town or spending the rest of the afternoon relaxing at the hotel.

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

### Tuesday 18 October:

#### Day of departure.

Morning departure from your hotel to Paro Airport for your onward flight.



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