

WORLD PEACE TOUR TO THE HIMALAYAN KINGDOM of BHUTAN

with Sacred Himalaya Travel



Day 1: Bangkok to Paro

Flying on Druk Air, the National Airline of Bhutan, we'll have a spectacular view of the great Himalayan peaks, and catch our first glimpse of Bhutan. Descending into beautiful Paro valley at 8,000 feet, we land in a world apart.

Crystal clear Himalayan air, the scent of pines, a beautifully crafted traditional airport and the greetings of Bhutanese in their distinctive centuries-old style robes, will signal that our journey, rare in time, place and spirit, has begun.

We'll be warmly received by our Bhutanese guide, and drive to your hotel overlooking scenic Paro valley. After lunch and a Welcome Celebration, we'll take a leisurely tour of the National Museum, located in the old Ta Zong watch tower above the small rural town of Paro. Later we'll walk to Rinpong (Paro) Dzong, a monastic "fortress on a heap of jewels." We cross a traditional wooden bridge fluttering with prayer flags. Prayers ride the wind to the river below to bless all beings along the river's journey. We may join locals to watch on-going archery matches under a grove of shade trees. With only the sound of wind, bird song and ever present laughter, we'll be welcomed into the magic of Bhutan. Over night in Paro.





Day 2: Excursion to Taksang (Tigers Nest)

We will spend much of the day on a hike to Taksang Monastery, the most famous monastery in Bhutan. Taksang means "Tigers Nest" so named because Guru Rimpoche reportedly flew to the site on the back of a flying tiger late in the 9th century. Between blue pines and a bluer sky, the monastery perches miraculously on a cliff nearly 2,700 feet above Paro's valley floor. If you decide to ride rather than walk, we can arrange for a pony. We'll break along the way at a small tea house. We'll offer and light a butter lamp in the temple, before we descend in distilled afternoon light to spend the night in Paro.



Day 3 :Drive to Thimphu, Peace Offering

After breakfast, drive to Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan. A two hour drive winds along a river valley, past small villages and traditional farm houses. Reach our hotel with time to relax. After lunch, we can visit the National Institute

for Zoric Chusu, the Traditonal Painting School, where students learn Bhutan's 13 traditional arts and crafts, among them embroidery, sculpture and painting. See the National Library where scrolls wrapped in silk boxes keep ancient Buddhist texts. At the Voluntary Artists Studio, chat with creative young

Bhutanese as they work. If time, take milk tea at a local cafe around the warmth of a bukhari wood stove.

We'll end our day at Drubthob Goenpa, now Zilukha Nunnery, located just above Thimphu. We may arrive as the nuns practice their long Tibetan trumpets in a sun filled courtyard. The nuns, by special arrangement, will help us make a peace offering for all sentient beings. From Zilukha we have great views of the town and Tashi Chhoe Dzong. After dinner, on your own to explore small downtown Thimphu, where local people gather in the evenings on the main street to shop and chat outside brightly painted store fronts.



Day 4: Sightseeing around Thimphu, Day hikes

For those who love to rise early and exercise, join Thimphu enthusiasts to scamper up a trail above town to a stand of prayer flags high on a hill. A great chance to puff along beside locals, share conversation in the dawning light and take in an amazing full valley view before a hearty breakfast with our later risers.

After breakfast, our day starts with a visit to the National Memorial Chorten, the most visible religious structure in Thimphu, built to honor the memory of the 3rd King. The statues inside reflect both peaceful and wrathful aspect of Buddhist deities. Older people often spend all day here, circling the chorten, chanting and socializing. Options to visit traditional weavers, a hand made daphne-flower paper factory, and a handicrafts shop. Afternoon is free to wander Thimphu: shop, meet new friends, or perhaps walk along the clear Wang Chuu river.



Day 5: Drive to Phobjikha: Gangtey Monastery & Black Neck Cranes

Our drive to Phobjikha takes approximately 5 hrs. From Thimphu the road climbs steeply through forests of pine, hemlock, spruce and bright with rhododendron. From Dochula Pass at 9800 feet, you'll have a breathtaking panoramic view of the





Himalayan ranges: magnificent mountains so vast many remain un-named.

We descend through lush forests to the fertile valley of Punakha and Wangdi Phodrang. As we cross the bridge we'll see the imposing fortress of Wangdi Dzong. Then east to Lawala Pass at 9,950 feet. Traveling

through alpine dwarf bamboo we enter broad Phobjikha Valley to visit Gangtey Monastery. We can see fine Bhutanese craftsmanship as carpenters reconstruct this sacred site, now under renovation. Over night in the quiet valley of Phobjikha under the crackle of a zillion stars and wake to the call of cranes.



Day 6 :Explore Great Mountain Passes: Phobjikha to Bumthang

Before breakfast you can take a short walk to spot Black Necked Cranes nesting in their winter roosting grounds. Endangered cranes leave the Tibetan plateau for Bhutan each year. According to local belief, the birds are sacred beings that come back to our world to help other souls to enlightenment. By legend , they are reincarnated souls of Lamas that come to pay homage to the monastery of Gangtey Gompa. When they first return, its said, the cranes circle the Monastery three times before landing in the wetlands below.



After breakfast, you'll understand the mountainous geography of Bhutan and the greeting: "Are you going up? Are you going down?" as we climb and descend two great passes. Crest Pele La pass at 10,989 feet. Yaks often graze along the

roadside. We'll stretch out at Chendebji Chorten.

Catch a long view across Trongsa valley to the huge fortress of Trongsa Dzong where we'll stop for lunch. Reach Yotola pass at 11,200 feet then descend down to Tsungney village where we stop to watch weaving of brightly patterned woolen cloth (yatra). Arrive at Choekor valley to spend the night in Bumthang.



Day 7 :Bumthang sightseeing, sacred temples, village walk

Bumthang has an individuality that charms its visitors and separates it from other regions. The deeply spiritual region of Bumthang is shrouded in religious legend. Choekor is the holiest of four valleys and many Bhutanese from all over the country visit here on pilgrimage to pay their respects. We'll visit Jampey Lakhang and Kurjey Lakhang. Crossing a foot bridge, take a short hike through scattered and clustered villages, and be picked up by car at the trail's end. For the rest of the day wander around Chamkhar bazaar. We can arrange for traditional hot stone baths. Over night with very friendly hosts at a small lodge.



Day 8: Trongsa

After a hearty breakfast with local buckwheat pancakes, drive to Trongsa traveling up through pine to hemlock and bamboo. Crossing Yotola Pass, we'll have incredible views over snow capped mountains. In Trongsa, check in to the hotel for a short break. After lunch walk to the village bazaar and to Ta Zong, the ancient watch tower, overlooking the Trongsa valley. If you think you can still do it, then walk back to the hotel. Tonight we'll sleep above a valley that falls away far below.





Day 9: Trongsa Dzong, Drive to Punakha

Start the day with a visit to the majestic Trongsa Dzong perched so high on a mountain it's said the clouds float below it. Over looking Mangde River, this fortress houses 26 temples, administrative and judiciary offices of Trongsa district, as well as being home for 350 monks. Dzongs serve as both civil and monastic administration headquarters for each district. Drive on to the fertile green-gold fields of Punakha valley. Ready for the festival tomorrow!



Day 10: Feb 22 Attend Punakha Dromche Festival



At the impressive Punakha Dzong or "Palace of Great Happiness," we're lucky to join a local, sacred festival, celebrated annually by the people of Punakha.

Known as Dromche, it's dedicated to two main protector deities of Bhutan: Yeshe Gampo (mahakala) and Palden Lhamo (female deity). This festival is not a pageant or entertainment but a serious religious ceremony that's performed to seek the protection and happiness of the villagers and all sentient beings. A highlight is the dance of the Pazaps and an offering to the spirits of the river.



Schools and offices are closed so all villagers may come in their finest clothes and happiest spirits.



Day 11: Dromche Festival / Day hike

In the morning rejoin the ongoing festival. After lunch hike to Chimi Lakhang on a small hill top. This temple is dedicated to a great yogi of the 14th century known as Drukpa Kuenly, or popularly called the "Divine Madman." It is believed that this temple blesses women who seek fertility.



Day 12: Punakha to Thimphu

After breakfast, back to Thimphu. Lunch at Dochula Café, another chance to view the astonishing Himalayan ranges and scout for snow leopard prints. Once in Thimphu visit the weekend market where Bhutanese from remote regions come to sell their products. Stacks of oranges, strings of dried cheese, red chilies and a rainbow of produce. Antique textiles, Buddhist items and handicrafts are for sale. Fortune tellers read futures. Freely wander Thimphu. Evening catch up with friends.



Day 13: Explore Paro, Old Ruins, Day Walk, Farewell Celebration

A two hour drive to Paro. After lunch visit Kichu Lakhang. Then on to Paro's upper valley and the ruins of the Drukgyal Dzong which was destroyed by accidental fire and left in ruins. An evocative reminder of great victories, explore the ramparts and village. On a clear day experience an unforgettable view of the "Goddess" Mt. Chomolhari 23,998 feet. Afternoon free to stroll the streets of Paro. Our last night in Bhutan, step out



for a quiet moment under a sky brimming with stars. Share a Farewell Celebration, stories, song.



Day 14: Depart to Bangkok

We say goodbyes to Bhutan today and board a flight for Bangkok for onward destinations. We hope you'll carry this gentle kingdom in your heart: may it bring peace to you and others. Have a safe journey home.

For more information please contact: wendy@sacredhimalayatravel.com

Departure Dates & Net Package Cost per Person.

Tour: 14 days , 13 nights in Bhutan

Trip Limit : 12 guests

Group size	2-3 person	4 & above	Single supplement	Dates
Cost US \$ *	3,460	3,040	350	Feb 13-26.

*Costs largely reflect Bhutan's National Policy for a fixed tariff/per day tourist rate. The Royal Government has adopted a very cautious approach to the development of tourism in an effort to avoid the negative impacts of tourism on their culture and pristine environment. All tourists must travel on a pre-planned, prepaid, guided package tour, or custom travel program. Tourism supports the Kingdom of Bhutan and its citizens as a portion of all tourist fees goes directly to the government.

*Rates are subject to change

Tour Cost Includes:

Greeting and orientation in Bangkok the night before travel to Bhutan with Sacred Himalaya Travel International Trip Leader.

13 nights twin sharing accommodations in Bhutan lodging

Full meals while in Bhutan.

Expert leadership with Sacred Himalaya Travel English speaking Bhutanese guide and International trip leader.

All transportation, sightseeing, taxes and monument fees in Bhutan.

Cost Excludes:

Air fares and excess baggage, Bhutan visa fee \$35 and bank wire fee, hotel in Bangkok, laundry, phone calls, travel insurance, beverages and personal expenses, tips for Bhutanese guide and driver, and religious site offerings.

Airfare Notes:

Airfare Bangkok-Paro-Bangkok = \$750 per person is not included in package cost. Must be paid along with total tour fees as required by Bhutanese National Tourism regulations and to secure reservations on Druk Air. Visas must be approved before Druk Air will allow boarding. **Visitors to Bhutan need to finalize their travel plans as soon as possible.**

Tour participants should be advised as per Bhutan's regulations total payment of tour cost, Druk airfare and visa fee (\$35) must be submitted in advance. Fees should be paid as soon as possible to secure your reservation. We strongly recommend payment 4-6 months ahead of the tour starting date.

Airfare to Bangkok from point of origin, is not included in package cost: Participants are responsible to arrange their own tickets to and from Bangkok. We can arrange hotel reservations for our guests and will host an orientation the night before in Bangkok at our favorite hotel, before our early morning departure to Paro, Bhutan.

Lodging in comfortable hotels in Paro, Thimpu, Phobjikha, Bumthang, Trongsa, and Punakha. Reminiscent of mountain lodges and beautifully Bhutanese, with hand painted designs, wood panels and thick quilts. All have hot running water, electricity, and western style bathrooms. Meals are deliciously prepared traditional Bhutanese and Indian dishes suitable for Western tastes.

Insurance: We advise participants to purchase their own travel insurance. We ask that you sign a limits and liability waiver on confirmation of your booking.

Note: This is a sample intended to give you a general idea of the likely trip schedule. Numerous factors such as weather, tour conditions, group options and the physical condition of participants, may dictate itinerary changes either before departure or while on tour. We reserve the right to change this schedule in the interest of the trip participants safety, comfort and general well being.