



WORLD DISCOVERY
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

Bhutan in Style



Thimphu Monks

DAY 1 - Depart UK.

DAY 2 – Arrival in Kathmandu (Nepal).

On arrival in Kathmandu you will be met by a representative of World Discovery outside immigration and customs. You will then be taken by private car direct to your hotel.

DAY 3 – Fly to Paro. Drive to Thimphu.

Transfer to the airport for the morning flight to **Paro**, gateway to Bhutan. In clear weather, Druk Air's flight to Bhutan provides a wonderful view of the Himalayan scenery, culminating in an exciting descent past forested hills into the kingdom. On arrival at Paro airport, you will be met by a World Discovery representative. On completion of airport formalities, there will be an interesting drive of about 2 hours' duration to **Thimphu**, the capital of Bhutan. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 4 - Thimphu.

Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital in the world, is the Bhutanese seat of government. Morning visit to **Tashichho Dzong**, the main secretariat building which houses the throne room of the King of Bhutan. Proceed to the **National Library**, which houses an extensive collection of Buddhist literature, with some works dating back several hundred years. Visit (outside only) the **National Institute of Traditional Medicine**, where the medicinal herbs abundant in the kingdom are compounded and dispensed. After lunch, visit the **National Memorial Chorten** dedicated to Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck ("the father of modern Bhutan"). Completed in 1974 after the king's untimely death, it is both a memorial to the late king and a monument to peace. Spend some time visiting craft shops offering a wide range of handcrafted products, including the splendid thangkha paintings and exquisitely woven textiles for which Bhutan is famous.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 5 – Thimphu. By road to Punakha.

Further sightseeing in Thimphu in the morning. After lunch drive up to the **Dochu-la Pass** (3,088m/10,130ft) from where on a clear day you can view the glory of the high Himalayan peaks including Gangkar Puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m. Continue to Punakha for your 2 night stay.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 6 – Punakha.

Punakha was Bhutan's capital until 1955, and **Punakha Dzong**, a massive structure built at the junction of two rivers, still serves as the winter residence of the central monastic body. Bhutan's first king, Ugyen Wangchuck, was crowned here in 1907. The fortress has withstood damage from fire, earthquake and flood over the centuries. The latest flood, in October 1994, caused great damage to the fortress but miraculously spared its most holy statue. As well as viewing the Dzong, make a short excursion of about an hour to the **Temple of the Divine Madman**, also known as the temple of fertility. In the afternoon enjoy a moderate hike to Khamsum Valley Namgyel Chorten about 45 minutes away.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 7 - Drive to Gangtey.

In the morning drive through dense forests of oak and rhododendron trees to the town of **Gangtey** (Phobjikha). In the afternoon explore the glacial valley of Phobjikha which is famous during the winter months for **black-necked cranes**. The cranes migrate here from the Central Asiatic plateau to escape its harsh winters (roughly October to February). Your visits will include the **Gangtey Gompa**, the only Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan. This extensive complex consists of the central monastery and outlying monks' quarters, meditation centres, schools and a small guesthouse. The Prayer Hall is built in Tibetan style with 8 great pillars and is one of the largest in Bhutan. Overnight in Gangtey.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 8 – Gangtey to Paro.

A long journey today as you return westwards and re-cross the Dochu-La Pass to reach **Paro** in the afternoon. Take a tea break at Dochu-La and also walk around the 108 stupas built by Her majesty the Queen of Bhutan.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 9 - Paro.

The valley of Paro contains a wealth of attractions. In the morning, visit **Ta Dzong**, a former watchtower which is now Bhutan's National Museum. Afterwards, walk down a hillside trail to visit **Rinpung Dzong**, which has a long and fascinating history. After lunch, drive up the valley to view the ruins of **Drukgyel Dzong**, 18 km. from Paro town on the north side of the valley. It was from here that the Bhutanese repelled several invading Tibetan armies during the 17th century. Also visit **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the oldest and most sacred shrines of the kingdom. In the evening, visit a traditional farmhouse for an opportunity to interact with a local family and learn something of their lifestyle. Later on, take an evening stroll along the main street, and perhaps visit a few handicrafts shops, or take refreshments at a local café or bar.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

Day 10: Fly to Kathmandu. Special 6-course Nepali dinner.

After breakfast, drive to Paro airport for the flight to Kathmandu. The rest of the day is at leisure. In the evening you will be taken to the unique Dwarika's Kathmandu Hotel for a special farewell banquet.

Meals included: Full breakfast, dinner.

DAY 11 – Homeward flight.

Private transfer to the airport for your homeward flight.

Meals included: Full breakfast.