



WORLD DISCOVERY  
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

## Explore Bhutan



Novice monk

### 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. On reaching Thimphu drive up to a viewpoint overlooking the valley, before visiting the **Takin Research Centre** for a glimpse of Bhutan's endangered (and distinctly odd-looking) national animal. Continue to the imposing **Tasichho Dzong**, the main secretariat building which houses the throne room of the King of Bhutan. There should be time to wander through the streets of Thimphu before checking in at your hotel.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 4 - Thimphu. By road to Punakha.

Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital in the world, is the Bhutanese seat of government. Begin the morning with a visit to Thimphu's colourful **Weekend Market**. Close to the market is the stadium, where you can usually see an **Archery Match** in progress (archery is Bhutan's national sport). Sightseeing today will include 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. You will also visit the **National Library**, which houses an extensive collection of Buddhist literature, with some works dating back several hundred years. In the early evening, drive over Dochu-la pass (3,088m/10,130ft) to Punakha and check in to your hotel.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 5 - Via Wangdephodrang to Trongsa.

After an early breakfast 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 onwards, reaching **Wangdephodrang** in time for lunch. Continue on to Trongsa across the **Pele-la Pass** (3,300m/10,830ft), the traditional boundary between east and west Bhutan. The pass is marked by a large white chorten and prayer flags. There is an abrupt change in vegetation at this point, with mountain forest replaced by high altitude dwarf bamboo. Arrive at Trongsa in the late afternoon.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 6 - Trongsa to Bumthang.

After breakfast there will be a visit on foot to the 17th century Trongsa Dzong before you set off for **Bumthang**, a journey of about 3 hours, over the **Yutong-la Pass** (3,400m/11,155ft). The road winds steeply up to the pass, then runs down through coniferous forest into a wide, open, cultivated valley known as the Chumey Valley. Arrive in Bumthang in time for a late lunch. In the afternoon, visit **Tamshing Monastery** (housing some of the oldest wall paintings in Bhutan), and **Jakar Dzong** (administrative centre of the region). Stroll in the village, visit the little handicrafts shop at the entrance to the town, and perhaps take refreshments at a local restaurant.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 7 - Bumthang.

A day of further visits in the beautiful Bumthang region. You can decide in discussion with your guide how you want to spend the day. There are many fine monasteries and temples in the area, the most impressive being **Jampey Lhakhang**, one of the most ancient in Bhutan (7th century) and the important temple complex at **Kurjey Lhakhang**. Bumthang is also the ideal destination to do some walking and you may want to incorporate a 2 or 3 hour walk into your schedule.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 8 - Bumthang to Punakha.

Return westwards along the central highway to Trongsa, where you will be served lunch in a local restaurant famous for its cuisine. Visit the imposing **Wangdephodrang Dzong** and take a look at the small town before continuing to **Punakha**, which you will reach in the late afternoon.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 9 - Punakha to Paro.

Punakha served as the capital of Bhutan until 1955, when the seat of government moved to Thimphu. Originally situated on the riverbank and dominated by the towering walls of **Punakha Dzong**, the township was relocated to a safer site a few kilometres down the valley after extensive flooding in the early 1990s. At the same time, extensive renovation work was undertaken on Punakha Dzong itself, which is now a breathtaking and glorious sight as you first glimpse it from the road. Although four catastrophic fires and an earthquake in past times destroyed many historic documents, Punakha Dzong still houses many sacred and historic artefacts. After the visit take a short walk, passing by quaint village houses, to **Chimi Lhakang**, built by the famous 'Divine Madman', Drukpa Kuenley; the monastery is a famous pilgrimage site for infertile women who wish to bear children. In the afternoon return to Paro and check into the hotel.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 10 - 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 11 - Taktshang Gomba (the Tiger's Nest).

On your final day in Bhutan you will enjoy a walk up through pine forest to view Bhutan's most famous site, Taktshang Gompa, better known as '**Tiger's Nest Monastery**', a sacred pilgrimage site where according to legend the great tantric mystic Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tiger and brought the teachings of Buddha to Bhutan. The monastery clings to a cliff soaring nearly 1,000 metres above the valley floor at an altitude of 3,300 metres. A slow ascent by foot will bring you in about an hour to the Taktsang cafeteria directly opposite the monastery (horses can be provided for those who don't want to walk up, but not for the return downhill journey). There is an impressive view of the monastery from here. From the cafeteria, for those who wish, it is another 30 to 40 minutes around the valley's edge to reach the monastery itself. It is possible to enter the monastery but a permit needs to be arranged in advance by your guide.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 12 – 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 13 – Homeward flight.

Private transfer to the airport for your homeward flight.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

