



WORLD DISCOVERY

HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE

The Kingdom in the Sky



Punakha Dzong (DAY 5)

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. By road to Punakha.

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 thangka paintings and exquisitely woven textiles for which Bhutan is famous. 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 – Punakha. By road via Wangdephodrang 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. Later drive to **Wangdephodrang**, the last town on the highway before entering Central Bhutan. Situated on a ridge overlooking a river junction, the formidable Wangdephodrang Dzong is the town's most visible feature. In the 17th century, 'Wangde' played a critical role in unifying the western, central and southern regions of the country. Also visit the local market. After lunch drive to **Paro**, visiting **Semtokha Dzong** en route. This dzong, built in 1627, is the oldest in Bhutan. It now houses the Institute for Language and Cultural Studies. Arrive Paro and check into the hotel.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 6 - 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 7 – 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 8 – Homeward flight.

Private transfer to the airport for your homeward flight.

Meals included: Full breakfast.