



## ON THE DRAGON TRAIL

7 days / 6 nights

### Day 1

### Paro

On arrival at Paro airport you will be met and transferred to the hotel. This evening take an exploratory walk around the main street. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

### Day 2

### Paro

***Paro is a most picturesque valley, with quaint hamlets clustered amidst terraced paddy fields. The town still maintains tradition by way of its architecture and simple way of life.***

After breakfast drive up the valley to Drukgyel Dzong or 'the Fort of Drukpa Victory'. In former times, the Bhutanese repelled invasions by Tibet from this fortress. Though largely destroyed by fire in 1951, the ruins still present an imposing sight. On a clear day, there is a splendid view of Bhutan's sacred mountain, Chomolhari from the approach road to Drukgyel Dzong. Also visit a traditional Bhutanese houses in the village nestled below the dzong.

Continue to Taktsang Monastery also known as Tiger's Nest. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche, the father of the Bhutanese strain of Mahayana Buddhism, arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery. Taktsang was severely damaged by fire in year 1998 and now has been restored in its original grandeur.

On the way back to Paro visit Kyichu Lhakhang, established in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and one of the two oldest shrines in the kingdom (the other is in Bumthang), reflecting the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan. Overnight at the hotel in Paro. B

### Day 3

### Paro-Punakha 125kms – approx 4 hours

In the morning visit Ta dzong, formerly a watchtower and now housing the National Museum. Ta Dzong holds a unique and varied collections, ranging from ancient armour to textiles, thangka paintings, stamps, coins, and natural history. Then walk down a hillside trail to visit Paro Dzong (Rinpung Dzong), built in 1646 during the time of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. It now houses Paro's monk body and the offices of the civil administration.

After lunch proceed to Punakha across Dochu-la pass (3,088m/10,130 ft). The highest point on the road is marked by a large Bhutanese Chorten and prayer flags fluttering on the hill. On a clear day, there is a breathtaking view over the high peaks of the eastern Himalayas from this spot. Overnight at the hotel in Punakha. B

***Until 1955, Punakha served as the capital town of Bhutan and it is still the winter seat of the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot). Visit Punakha Dzong, built by Shabdrng Ngawang Namgyal in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and situated at the junction of Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers.***

#### **Day 4**

#### **Punakha-Wangduephodrang-Thimphu 90kms – approx 3 hours**

After breakfast drive to Wangduephodrang and visit the Dzong, which is perched on a spur at the confluence of two rivers. The position of Dzong is remarkable as it completely covers the spur and commands an impressive view both up and down the valley. Wangdue district is famous for its bamboo work, stone carvings, and slate, which is mined up a valley, a few kilometers from the town.

After lunch drive to Thimphu, a small charming city sandwiched in the heart of Himalayas. Thimphu's charm is not only embedded in its wealth of museums or places of historic interest but visitors wander along the main street and into shops, all of which are decorated in traditional style. Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu. B

#### **Day 5**

#### **Thimphu**

Today's sightseeing in Thimphu valley includes,

- National Library, which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist texts and manuscripts, some dating back several hundred years, as well as modern academic books mainly on Himalayan culture and religion;
- Institute for Zorig Chusum (commonly known as Painting School) where students undertake a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan;
- Textile and Folk Heritage Museum: These museums, both of which opened in 2001, provide fascinating insights into Bhutanese material culture and way of life.
- National Memorial Chorten: The building at this landmark was envisaged by the third king, as a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is both a memorial to the Late King ('the Father of modern Bhutan') and a monument to world peace. The paintings and statues inside the monument provide a deep insight into Buddhist philosophy.
- Trashichhoedzong: This impressive fortress/monastery houses the Secretariat building, the throne room of His Majesty, the King and various government offices. It is also the summer residence of Chief Abbot and central monk body.
- Handicrafts Emporium: This government-run enterprise displays a wide range of beautifully hand-woven textiles and craft products. It also carries a small collection of books on Bhutan, Buddhism and Himalayan culture.

Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu. B

#### **Day 6**

#### **Thimphu-Phuentsholing 180kms – approx 6 hours**

After breakfast drive to Phuentsholing en route visiting Simtokha Dzong, the oldest fortress of the Kingdom built in 1627, which now houses the School for Buddhist studies. The Thimphu / Phuentsholing road was built in 1962 by Dantak, the Indian Border road organisation. The drive on this route is very pleasant with numerous scenic spots.

Just before arriving into Phuentsholing, visit Kharbandi Gompa. This beautiful monastery, situated in a garden of tropical plants and flowers was built by the Royal Grandmother, Ashi Phuntsho Choedron in 1967. There is a splendid view of Phuentsholing town and the Indian plains from the monastery garden. Overnight at the hotel in Phuentsholing. B

#### **Day 7**

#### **Phuentsholing**

After breakfast you will be met by our Indian representative and driven into India. B