



## THE HIMALAYAN SPLENDOUR

8 days / 7 nights

### Day 1

Paro-Thimphu 55kms – approx 1½ hours

On arrival at Paro airport, you will be met by our representative and driven to Thimphu, the modern capital town of Bhutan. Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.

### Day 2

Thimphu

Today's full day of sightseeing in Thimphu valley includes:

- National Library; it holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist texts, manuscripts, modern academic books and printing blocks for prayer flags.
- Institute for Zorig Chusum; commonly known as Painting school, the Institute was established in 1971 by Royal Government of Bhutan to preserve invaluable heritage and promote traditional arts in Bhutan.
- Textile & Folk Heritage Museum; a fascinating testimony of Bhutan's living traditions.
- Memorial Chorten; the beautiful stupa built in the memory of Bhutan's third King. The paintings and statues inside the monument provide a deep insight into Buddhist philosophy.
- Trashichoedzong; the beautiful fortress/monastery, which houses Secretariate building, King's Throne room and other government's offices. It is also the summer residence of Chief Abbot.
- Handicrafts Emporium; it displays wide assortment of beautifully handwoven and crafted products.

Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu. B

### Day 3

Thimphu-Trongsa 200kms – approx 6 hours

After breakfast drive to Dochula pass (3,080m). If the weather permits, you can see a range of high Himalayan peaks towards the northeast. The following peaks can be seen from this pass on a clear day; Masagang (7,158m), Tsendagang (6,960m), Terigang (7,060m), Jejegangphugang (7,158m), Kangphugang (7,170m), Zongphugang (7,060m), a table mountain that dominates the isolated region of Lunana – finally Gangkar punsum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m.

Continue to Wangduephodrang town in time for lunch. From Dochu-la pass, it is a long, winding descent into the Wangduephodrang valley, which is about 1,700m below the pass. Continue on to Trongsa across Pele-la pass (3,300m/10,830 ft), the traditional boundary between east and west. The pass is marked by a large white chorten prayer flags. There is an abrupt change in vegetation at this point, with mountain forest replaced by high altitude dwarf bamboo. Stop en route at Chendbji Chorten, patterned on Kathmandu's Swayambhunath Stupa, with eyes painted at the four cardinal points. It was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Lama Shida from Tibet, to cover the remains of an evil spirit that was subdued at this spot. Arrive at Trongsa late afternoon and check into the lodge for the night. B

#### **Day 4**

#### **Trongsa-Bumthang 68kms – approx 3 hours**

After breakfast visit Trongsa Dzong. Like almost all towns in the Kingdom, this Dzong architecture dominates the entire Trongsa horizon dwarfing the surrounding buildings. Built in 1648, it was the seat of power over central and eastern Bhutan. Both the first and second King ruled the country from this ancient seat.

Drive to Bumthang over the Yutong-la pass (3,400m/ 11,155 ft). The road winds steeply up to the pass, 28kms from Trongsa, then runs down through coniferous forest into a wide, open cultivated valley known as the Chumey valley.

On arrival in Bumthang, check in at your lodge. After lunch, visit to Kurje Lhakhang, where saint Padmasambhava subdued a local demon and left his body imprint on a rock. Also visit the Jambey Lhakhang (7th century temple), Tamshing Lhakhang (housing some of the oldest wall paintings in Bhutan) and Jakar Dzong (administrative center of the region). This afternoon free time to stroll around the village, visit the little handicrafts shop at the entrance to the town, and perhaps take refreshments at a local restaurant. Overnight at the lodge in Bumthang. B

#### **Day 5**

#### **Bumthang-Punakha 205kms – approx 7 hours**

After breakfast, further explore the fascinating valley of Bumthang. Then proceed to Punakha, stopping along the way at Trongsa for lunch. Visit Wangduephodrang Dzong and town en route to Punakha, which we will reach late afternoon. Overnight at the hotel in Punakha. B

#### **Day 6**

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

Morning visit Punakha Dzong, a massive structure built at the junction of two rivers. Punakha was Bhutan's capital until 1955, and Punakha Dzong still serves as the winter residence of the central monk body. Bhutan's first King, Ugyen Wangchuck, was crowned here in 1907. The fortress has withstood several damages from fire, earthquake and flood over the centuries. The latest flood, in October 1994, caused great damages to the fortress but miraculously spared its most holy statue. Also visit Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten, the newly built stupa.

After lunch, drive to Paro en route visit Simtokha Dzong. This dzong, built in 1627 is the oldest in Bhutan. It now houses the Institute for Language and Culture Studies. Overnight at the hotel in Paro. B

#### **Day 7**

#### **Paro**

After breakfast take an excursion to Taktsang Monastery, the most famous of Bhutanese monasteries. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery hence it is called "Tiger's Nest". The excursion to monastery takes about 5 hours for the round trip. Later drive up the valley Drukgyel Dzong, built in 1647 by the Shabdrung to commemorate the Bhutanese victory over the Tibetans in war of 1644.

This afternoon visit Ta Dzong, once a watchtower, built to defend Rinpung Dzong during inter-valley wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ta Dzong was inaugurated as Bhutan's National Museum in 1968. Afterwards, walk down a hillside trail to visit Rinpung Dzong. Built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the first spiritual and temporal ruler of Bhutan, the Dzong houses the monastic body of Paro, the office of the Dzongda (district administrative head) and Thrimpon (judge) of Paro district.

Evening visit Kyichu Lhakhang, built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo. Overnight at the hotel in Paro. B

#### **Day 8**

#### **Paro**

After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight. B

