



JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF PEACEFUL DRAGON

5 days / 4 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-Punakha 75kms – approx 3 hours

Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital city in the world, is the seat of government. This bustling town is home to Bhutan's royal family, the civil servants, and foreign missions with representation in Bhutan. It is also the headquarters for a number of internationally funded development projects.

Morning visit to Trashichhodzong, the beautiful medieval fortress/monastery which houses most of the Government's office and King's Throne room. It is also the summer residence of Je Khenpo, the Chief Abbot. Proceed to the National Library, which houses an extensive collection of Buddhist literature, with some works dating back several hundred years. Visit the nearby Institute for Zorig Chusum (commonly known as the Painting School), where a six-year training course is given in the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan.

After lunch, visit the National Memorial Chorten. This landmark was originally envisaged by Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk (the father of modern Bhutan), who wanted to erect a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it serves both as a memorial to the Late King and as a monument to peace. Visit the government-run Handicrafts Emporium and privately owned crafts shops, which offer a wide range of handcrafted products, including the splendid thangka paintings and exquisitely woven textiles for which Bhutan is famous. Also visit the folk Heritage and National Textile Museums, a fascinating testimony of Bhutan's living traditions. In the early evening, drive Dochu-la pass (3,088m/ 10,130 ft) to Punakha. Overnight at the hotel in Punakha. B

Day 3

Punakha-Wangduephodrang-Paro 150kms – approx 5 hours

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 kilometers down the valley, consequent upon 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 site 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 artifacts and also the embalmed body of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal.

Later drive to Wangduephodrang, the last town on the highway before entering Central Bhutan. Situated on a ridge overlooking a river junction, the formidable Wangduephodrang Dzong is the town's most

visible feature. In the 17th century, Wangdue 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 Simtokha Dzong en route. 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 4

Paro

The valley of Paro contains a wealth of attractions. In the morning, visit Ta Dzong, once a watchtower, built to defend Rinpung Dzong during inter-valley wars of the 17th century, Ta Dzong was inaugurated as Bhutan's National Museum in 1968.

Then walk down the 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.

After lunch, drive up the valley to view the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong. 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. Overnight at the hotel in Paro. B

Day 5

Paro

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