

Western Bhutan Tour (**Thimphu, Paro, Punakha, Wangduephodrang, Gangtey**)

Day 1: Arrive Paro by Druk Air - Thimphu

Druk Air flight to Paro offers you beautiful view of mountains and landscapes. On arrival and after visa formalities you will be received by our representative and then transfer to Thimphu, the modern capital town of Bhutan.

Then visit, The Largest and Tallest Statue of Buddha in the world, **Buddha Point**.

Evening, stroll around **Thimphu town**. Dinner and overnight stay at Thimphu Hotel.

Day 2: Thimphu

After breakfast visit **Trashichhodzong**, the beautiful medieval fortress/monastery which houses most of the Government's office and King's Throne room. Then visit **National Library** which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist texts and manuscripts. After that visit **Painting School**, famous for traditional thangka paintings. Also visit to **Traditional Medicine Institute** is worthwhile where centuries old healing arts still practiced. Later visit, **Textile and Folk Heritage Museum**, a fascinating testimony of the Bhutanese material culture and living traditions.

After that, visit the **Handicrafts Emporium and local shops** for souvenirs ranging from Bhutan's fine traditional arts, textiles, thangka paintings, masks, ceramics, slate and woodcarvings, jewelers to other interesting items made from local materials. Then drive to **Memorial Chorten**, the stupa built in the memory of Bhutan's Third King who is popularly regarded as Father of modern Bhutan. Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.

Day 3: Thimphu – Punakha, 90 Km, 3 Hours

After breakfast drive to Punakha with a short stop at **Dochula pass** (3,050m) that heralds the most enchanting views of Bhutan. Later visit to **Punakha Dzong**, the 17th century fortress that is the seat of the district administration and the winter residence of the monk body, followed by a stroll of the **local market**. Then visit, **Chimi Lhakhang**. It is situated on a hillock in the centre of the valley, and is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kuenley, who in the late 15th century used humour, songs and outrageous behaviour to dramatise his teachings and due to this also known as 'Divine Madman'. This temple is also known as the temple of fertility. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children and wanting one, if they pray at this temple, they are usually blessed with a child very soon. Overnight at the hotel in Punakha.

Day 4: Punakha (Excursion to Gangtey)

After breakfast drive to Gangtey. Then take a walk around **Gangtey village** and visit **Gangtey Gompa**, the only Nyingmapa monastery in this region. After that explore **Phobjikha valley** which is famous for Black Necked Cranes. The cranes migrate here from Central Asiatic plateau to escape its harsh winters. Then drive back to Punakha. Dinner and overnight at hotel in Punakha.

Day 5: Punakha – Wangdue – Paro

After breakfast, drive to Wangdue and visit the ruins of **Wangdue Dzong** (tragically destroyed by fire in June 2012) and interesting **local market**. Then drive to Paro Valley, once again traversing Dochu La. En-route visit **Semtokha Dzong**, built in 1629 & the oldest fortress of its kind that guarded the Thimphu valley, which today it is a monastery.

If time permit, visit **Ta Dzong**, the National Museum. The museum collection includes ancient Bhutanese art and artifacts, weapons and country's exquisite postage stamps. Then walk down the trail to visit **Rinpung Dzong** situated at commanding height, overlooking Paro valley. This Dzong is symbolic as the religious and secular centre of all affairs of the valley. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 6: Paro

Begin this day with a short drive to the ruined fortress of **Drugyel dzong** which still attracts visitors due to the strategic location of the fort. From this fort Bhutanese repelled several invasions by Tibetan armies. Nearby visit **traditional Bhutanese Farm House** which offers good insight into lifestyle of local people. Then take an excursion to **Taktsang Monastery**, the spot where Guru Rinpoche arrived on the back of a tigress and meditated. The temple is perched on a sheer rock face. The excursion to monastery's view point takes about 5 hours for round trip. While return to Paro town visit enroute **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the oldest and most sacred shrines of the Kingdom. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 7: Paro Depart

After breakfast in the hotel, drive to the airport for flight to onward destination. Our representative will bid you farewell.