



BUMTHANG PRAKER DUCHHOD FESTIVAL TOUR 2007 *(Duration: 21 October – 02 November 2007)*

Introduction

Bhutan a purely Buddhist Himalayan Kingdom is unsurpassed in its scenic majesty and vibrant culture. The kingdom shares with Nepal the world's greatest concentration of Mountains and living heritage of Buddhism. The fifty minutes flight from Kathmandu to Paro can truly be described as a flight into fantasy. During the flight a first hand close up view of Mt. Everest, Mt. Kanchenjunga and many other famous Peaks become a reality. Bi-weekly flights between these two Kingdoms have made travel easier to the long isolated Dragon Kingdom of Bhutan.

Tours to Bhutan are planned to commence on Mondays and Thursdays from Kathmandu. The tour cost is inclusive of all airport transfers, conducted sightseeing tours, full board at hotels and during treks on the twin-bed-sharing-basis. There are direct flights from Calcutta and Delhi bi-weekly and Bangkok weekly and tours/treks can be planned accordingly. Bhutan is one of the few countries in the world still untouched. A paradise for tourist interested in Buddhist culture and philosophy, flora and fauna, trekking and mountaineering. Due to the Royal Government's policy of controlled selective tourism, Bhutan has been receiving less than 5000 tourists annually.

Festivals in Bhutan have a reputation for being raucous, joyous affairs, but they are holy spiritual events with attendees gaining merit for the next life. Tshechus dedicated to Guru Rimpoche are celebrated for several days between three and five according to the location. The highlight are the classical, religious – based dances and in some Tshechus the viewing of the Thongdrel (a huge and sacred thanka). In a few important Dzongs, two large festivals take place each year; a Dromche, which is dedicated to Yeshe Gompo or Palden Lhama, the two main protective deities of the Drukpas.

The most popular of the Tshechus are held in Thimpu, Paro and Bumthang. They mark the busiest time of the year for the tourism industry. The Dzongs come to life with color, music and dancing as valley dwellers and townfolk dress in their finest clothes and join together to exorcise evil spirits and rejoice in a new harvest. Rare masked dances and other rituals are performed in dzong courtyards and temples. Most of the dances date back from before the Middle Ages and are only performed once or twice a year. Each dance has its own spiritual importance and can be performed by monks and lay village elders dressed in bright costumes. Certain festivals end with the unveiling and worship of a huge religious appliques (large thankas) or thondrols which means "liberation on sight" and are embroidered rather than painted. The moment of the unveiling is shrouded in secrecy and creates great excitement among the participants.

Tourists are allowed into the Dzongs to watch the festivals but are not allowed into the inner sanctuaries. Photography should always be discreet. It is generally allowed for photographs to be taken at Tshechus but prohibited at Dromchoes.

The following program is organized to allow visitors to experience Bhutan and participate in one of their most important festival – The Bumthang Praker Duchhod tshechu. Briefed in the program are the festival schedule and sequences of dances at this tshechu. Most dances are the same at other Tshechus, but the sequence varies.



ITINERARY 2007

Oct 21: Kathmandu

(Sun) Arrive Kathmandu. Upon arrival, meet and transfer to the hotel.
Eve: Welcome Dinner
Overnight at the Hotel

Oct 22: Kathmandu / Paro

(Mon) Transfer to airport and Fly Kathmandu / Paro (ETD 14:30 hrs) by Druk air BAe 146-100 series, the only national carrier. The flight offers beautiful mountain views and landscape. On arrival and after visa formalities, met by representatives and transferred to the Hotel.

After Lunch, drive 2 hours to Thimphu which is pleasant one mainly due to the luxurious Japanese transportation and well maintained road through out Bhutan.

Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital city in the world, is a bustling town on the banks of its own river and set gloriously in the hills of its own valley. A regal town. Thimphu is home to the revered Bhutanese Royal family and to several foreign missions and development projects. The capital city has a population of 45,000.

Enroute, visit the Simtokha Dzong which stands on a lofty ridge and is the first Dzong built by the Shabdrung in 1629.

Upon arrival, check into the Hotel.

Dinner and Overnight at the Hotel.

Oct 23: Sightseeing in Thimphu

(Tue) **AM:** After breakfast visit the Motithang mini zoo to see the rare "Takin" the national animal of Bhutan which looks like a moose and drive further down with good views of the Thimphu valley.

Also visit the Memorial chorten built in the memory of the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. Also visit the Tashichhodzong, the main secretariat building which houses the throne room of His Majesty the king of Bhutan and it is the country administrative head quarters and houses of the legislative body. The National Assembly lies deep in the valley in all its grandeur.

Later continue to visit the Painting School and the new Drukthob nunnery temple. Some free time can be spent in the market towards the evening.

Dinner and Overnight at the Hotel.

Oct 24: Thimphu / Punakha

(Wed) **AM:** Drive 4 hours to Punakha crossing the Dochula pass at 3100 meters which is reached in about 2 hours from Thimphu. On a clear day, the eastern Himalayan ranges including the highest mountain in Bhutan Mt. Gangar Punsum 7520 meters can be seen. The drive from the pass is downhill all the way, dropping to the lower and warmer valleys of Lobesa.

Upon arrival at Wangdi, check into the Hotel Zangto Pelri or similar.

Lunch at the Hotel.

PM: Sightseeing tour of Punakha.

Punakha which served as the old capital of Bhutan. Here one visits the Punakha Dzong. This remarkable fortress is built between two rivers and has survived many glacial floods



and fire. Every year during the month of February a procession known as the Punakha Serda takes place to commemorate the victory over the Tibetans.

Dinner and Overnight at the Hotel.

Oct 25: Drive to Bumthang

(Thur)

Bumthang situated at an altitude of 2600m, has an individuality that charms its visitors and separates it from other regions. Comprised of four smaller valleys, the deeply spiritual region of Bumthang is shrouded in religious legend.

Here tales of Guru Padmasambhava and his re-incarnation known as Tertons still linger in most nooks and crannies. It is also known for its woolen material (yathra) which can be seen hung outside of houses for sale. The Sightseeing tours include a visit to the Jakar Dzong, 7th century Jambay Lhakhang, Kurjey monastery, Tamshing and Kunchosum monastery. This sightseeing is a round trip affair so it is more interesting if done on foot.

Dinner and Overnight at Karma Tobden Guest House.

**Oct 26: Bumthang Festival – Jambay Lhakahang Drup / Praker Tse
(Fri) (Note: We will participate in program for Day 02 of the festival)**

09.30 am : Arrival and reception of the chief guest
10.00 am : Starting ceremony
10.15 am : Starting of day one function

Mask dance

1. Shinji Yab Yum Cham
2. Negl Cham
3. Peling Ging sum (3-different dance of Peling)
4. Durdag

1.00 – 2.00 pm : LUNCH BREAK

2.00 pm till evening : 1. Shana Ngacham (Black hat drum dance)
2. Pa cham (Dance of the warrior)
3. Atsaras Acho Phento drama

Dinner and Overnight at the Hotel.

**Oct 27: Bumthang Festival – Jambay Lhakahang Drup / Praker Tse
(Sat) (Note: We will participate in program for Day 03 of the festival)**

8.30 AM : Atsara cham, Dralha Pangtoy
9.00 AM : starting of the day two function (mask dances)

1. Shazam cham (Rain deer dance)
2. Shana Phurcham (Black hat dance)
3. Durdag (lord of the cremation ground)

1.00 pm : LUNCH BREAK

2.00 pm : Mask dancing continues

1. Ging, Tsholing cham
2. Tsechu Ging cham (Ter Cham)
3. Drametse Nga-cham



4. Pholay, Molay cham

Dinner and Overnight at the Hotel.

Oct 28: Bumthang- Gangtey Gompa

(Sun) After breakfast, drive to Gangtey Gompa valley or Phobjikha Valley which is situated at an altitude of 2800 meters. The only Nyingmapa monastery, the Gangte Gompa in western Bhutan is located here on a ridge overlooking the green expanse of the Phobjikha valley. There are no telephones and because of the concerns of wildlife, there is no electricity in this sparsely populated valley which lies snowbound during the height of winter and everyone, including the monks, shifts to winter residences in Wangdue Phodrang during December and January.

This beautiful valley is the home to the rare Black Necked Cranes migrating from the Tibetan plateau to escape the harsh winter. Currently there are 200 to 300 cranes residing in this valley and the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) is taking every measure to ensure the safety of the Cranes. While the cranes reside in the winter valley for 4/5 months the village folks are not allowed to make loud noises or fish in the river that runs through the valley.

PM: Explore the fascinating glacier valley and if time permits, a visit to the small **Norsang** carpet factory is interesting as well as a fascinating one.

Dinner and Overnight at the Guest House.

Oct 29: Gangtey Gompa to Punakha

(Mon) After breakfast, return to Punakha.

Dinner and Overnight at Punakha.

Oct 30: Punakha to Thimpu to Paro

(Tue) After breakfast we set out towards the Dochula pass and then descend to Thimpu. After a quick lunch we proceed to Paro through beautiful scenic countryside following the bank of the river.

Upon arrival, check into the Hotel Olathang or Similiar.

Dinner and Overnight at the Hotel.

Oct 31: Paro Sightseeing

(Wed) **AM:** Proceed through the beautiful valley to the watch tower or locally known as Ta-Dzong. It was converted into the National museum in the 1960s by the third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. The seven floor museum highlights various aspects of Bhutanese culture and history dating back to the 7th century. A short walk downhill takes one to the Rinpung Dzong which means "the fortress of the heap of jewels". It was built in 1645 and serves as the administrative center and school for monks. Walk further down crossing the traditional bridge into Paro town. This Dzong has many important temples where one can meditate for hours.

Later return to the Hotel.

PM: Visit the Kyichu Lhakhang.

The Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo built this temple in the 7th century. It is said that a huge demoness lay across the whole Himalayan Region during those time and was preventing the spread of Buddhism dharma. To subdue this demon, King Songtsen Gampo decided to build 108 temples, which would be placed on all the different points of



her body. Kyichu was built on her left foot. Later Guru Rimpoche also visited and meditated here. This temple has a huge statue of Lhasa Jho which is considered as important as the one in Lhasa, Tibet.

Also visit the ruined fortress of Drugyel dzong which still attracts visitors due to the strategic location of the fort. The fort defended the Paro valley from the Tibetan invasion from the north in the early 17th century. On clear day, Mount Chomolhari (7320 meters) can be seen towering over the dzong.

After the sightseeing tours, return to the Hotel.

Dinner and Overnight at the Olathang Hotel or Similar.

Nov 01: Paro / Kathmandu

(Thur) After and early breakfast, drive to the airport for the 1 hour flight to Kathmandu. Upon arrival, meet and transfer to the Hotel.

The rest of the day is free.

Overnight at the Hotel.

Nov 02: Depart Kathmandu

(Fri) Day free until final departure transfer to the airport for onward flight.

**** End of Arrangements ****



**COST FOR
BUMTHANG FESTIVAL 2007
(Duration: 12 nights / 13 days)**

**THE COST STATED BELOW IS NETT PER PERSON ON TWIN SHARING BASIS
AND BASED IN US DOLLARS:**

NO OF PERSONS		1	2	3	4 & above
NETT PER PERSON	US\$	2835	2680	2628	2375
Single Supplement	US\$	340	340	340	340

THE COSTS INCLUDE:

- Arrival and departure transfers in Kathmandu.
- 2 nights stay at the Hotel Shangri-la OR Similar in Kathmandu with breakfast.
- Welcome dinner at a typical Nepali restaurant
- Hotel / Airport and Airport / Hotel transfers in Katmandu pre and post Bhutan Tour.
- Airfare for sector Kathmandu / Paro / Kathmandu of US\$ 400.00 per person
- 10 nights /11 days Bhutan tour (as per itinerary) inclusive of accommodations on twin room sharing basis at the hotels / Guesthouses and Camping arrangements with support staff on full board basis (inclusive of all meals) including hot beverages as tea, coffee and some light snacks,
- All transfers, sightseeing tours and drives in a private deluxe car/van/coach accompanied by a local English speaking guide.
- Bhutan Tourism Development Fee of US\$ 10.00 per person.
- Bhutan Visa fee of US\$ 20.00 per person
- Porterage tax and tips to porters at hotels and airports.

THE COSTS EXCLUDE:

- International airfares
- Meals apart from breakfast and Welcome Dinner in Kathmandu
- Sightseeing tours
- Nepal entry and re-entry visa fees.
- International Airport Departure taxes at the airports of Katmandu (US\$ 25.00 approx) and at Paro (US\$ 8.00 approx.) per person.
- Meals other than as specified.
- Items of a personal nature such as; bar bills, alcoholic beverages, laundry, telephone calls, extra mileage, souvenirs, tips and gratuities to guides, drivers, etc.

SACRED
SUMMITS
