



## ***THE BEST OF THE DRAGON***

***Duration 11nights / 12 days***

### **Introduction**

**Bhutan** a purely Buddhist Himalayan Kingdom is unsurpassed in its scenic majesty and vibrant culture. The kingdom shares with Nepal the worlds 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 Delhi bi-weekly and Bangkok weekly and tours 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.

### **TOUR ITINERARY # 4:**

Day 01 : Transfer to airport and fly Katmandu / Paro by Druk air BAe 146-100 series, the only national carrier. The flight offers you beautiful view of mountains and landscapes. On arrival and after visa formalities, met by representatives from Bhutan and transferred to the Kichu Resort. The late afternoon / evening time at leisure.

Dinner and Overnight the Kichu Resort.

Day 02 : AM : Sightseeing tour of Paro. 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 a clear day, Mount Chomolhari 7320 meters can be seen towering over the dzong. 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 Wangchuck. 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 serves as the administrative center and school for monks. Walk further down crossing the traditional bridge into Paro town.

Evening : Drive 2 hours to Thimphu which is a 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, five miles from the Thimphu stands the Simtokha Dzong on a lofty ridge and is the first Dzong built by the Shabdrung in 1629. The Tashichhodzong, the main secretariat building which houses the throne room of His Majesty the king of Bhutan and it is the country administrative headquarters and houses of the legislative body. The National Assembly lies deep in the valley in all its grandeur.



Dinner and Overnight at Hotel Druk or River view.

Day 03 : AM : Sightseeing tour of Thimphu visiting the Indigenous hospital where traditional old art of healing is still practiced, Art & Craft school, National library, Royal goldsmith workshop and Handicraft centers.

PM visit the Memorial chorten built in the memory of the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, 15 century Changangkha monastery, Motithang mini zoo to see the rare "Takin" national animal of Bhutan and drive further down with good views of the Thimphu valley. Also visit the new Drupthob nunnery temple and some free time can be spent in the market.

Dinner and Overnight at Hotel Druk or River view.

Day 04 : After breakfast, drive 3 hours to Wangduephodrang via Punakha crossing the Dochula pass 3100 meters. On a clear day, one can see the eastern Himalayan ranges including the highest mountain in Bhutan Mt. Gangar Punsum 7520 meters. The drive from the pass is all the way downhill dropping to the lower and warmer valleys of Lobesa. Visit the Punakha Dzong which served as an old capital of Bhutan. 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. Proceed 45 minutes to Wangduephodrang and view the Dzong from outside and stroll around the market area. Check into Wangdi Kichu Resort.

Dinner and Overnight at The Wangdi Kichu Resort.

Day 05 : Full Day excursion to the Gangtey Gumpa valley at an altitude of 2800 meters. The only Nyingmapa monastery in western Bhutan is located here. This beautiful valley is also 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. Explore the fascinating glacier valley and return to the Resort.

Dinner and Overnight at The Wangdi Kichu Resort.

Day 06 : Today will be a long drive almost 6 / 7 hours crossing 3 passes over 3000 meters. The route offers magnificent views of the Himalayas and beautiful landscape through scattered hamlets and forest of rhododendrons and pine. Picnic lunch will be served at the 18 century Chendebji chorten. After one and half hour drive after lunch, arrive at a small town known as Trongsa meaning new village. The town mainly consists of fresh Tibetan refugees but the most impressive of all is the Trongsa Dzong. The whole of eastern Bhutan was controlled from this fortress during the mid 17th century. Visitors are not allowed inside the building. Proceed another 2 hours to Bumthang visiting the Chume weaving center.

Dinner and Overnight at Karma Tobden Guest House.



Day 07 : 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.

Day 08 : A Day excursion is Organized starting with a 2 hours drive to the Ura village. Here one visits the new Ura monastery. Enroute, visit the Mebartso meaning burning lake. Stroll around the village and return back to the Guest house.

In the evening, a walk is organized to visit the swiss farm where apple juice, cider, cheese etc... are made.

Dinner and Overnight at Karma Tobden Guest House.

Day 09 : Drive back to Wangduephodrang.  
Overnight at Wangdi Kichu Resort.

Day 10 : Drive for about 3 hours to Lobesa. At Lobesa take a short walk through farm houses and fields to Chimme Lhakhang. This monastery was built in the 15 century and dedicated to the famous Lam Drukpa Kunley or divine mad man. He is one of the most famous saints in Bhutan and his temple is visited mostly by childless couples. Arrive for lunch at Thimphu and then drive to Paro visiting the oldest building in Bhutan, the Simtokha Dzong. The Simthokha Dzong, (the oldest Dzong in Bhutan) was built in 1627 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. In 1961, the third King turned the Dzong into a centre for traditional studies for law students who would be trained as a Dzonkha Teacher. It now serves as a Buddhist university.

Dinner and Overnight the Kichu Resort, Paro.

Day 11 : Day hike to Taktsang monastery. (Horses can be arranged with an extra US \$ 5/-). The hike which is all the way uphill takes about 2 to 3 hours through villages and pine forests. The monastery which clings to a huge granite cliff 800 meters from the Paro valley was devastated by fire in 1998 but the Royal Government has taken immediate steps to restore the monastery to its original structure. It is believed that the great saint Padmasambhava came in the 7<sup>th</sup> century on a flying tigress and meditated in a cave for 3 months. The demons were subdued who were trying to stop the spread of Buddhism and converted the Paro valley into Buddhism. During the end of the 17 century a monastery was built on the spot where the saint mediated and it is a pilgrimage site for every Bhutanese to visit once in their life time. Stroll back to Resort.

Dinner and Overnight the Kichu Resort, Paro.



Day 12 : Transfer to airport to board the flight to Katmandu. Upon arrival, meet and transfer to the hotel.

**\*End of Arrangements \***