



# **BHUTAN**

## **The Dragon Kingdom**

### **THIMPHU TSHECHU**

#### **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.

The following is the sequences of dances at the Thimphu tsechu. Most dances are the same at other tsechus, but the sequence varies.

#### **Fast Facts**

<b>Area:</b>	18,182 sq. mt.
<b>Population:</b>	2 million
<b>Capital:</b>	Thimphu
<b>Government:</b>	Monarchy King Jigme Singye Wangchuck
<b>Religion:</b>	75% Buddhist, 25% Hindu
<b>People:</b>	50% Bhote, 35% Ethnic Nepali, 15% Indigenous or migrant tribes



**Economy:** Largely agrarian  
**Language:** Dzongkha  
**Currency:** Nutrum ( Nu 48.00 = US \$ 1.00)

### Itinerary 2005

**DAY 01:** Arrival by air to Paro airport from Bangkok or Kathmandu met with Representative. Then after drive to Thimpu (2 hrs) and check in to the Hotel.

**DAY 02:** **Participating to the Festivals from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Sept.**

**The Dance of the Four Stage (Sahncham)** This shows how Guru Rinpoche subdued the god of the wind, who created much unhappiness in this world, and rode the stage which was the god's mount. The dancers in the role of stages wear yellow knee-length skirts and masks of homed deer.

**Dance of the Three Kinds of Ging (Pelage Gingsum)** This is the visual representation of Zangto Pelri, the heavenly paradise of Guru Rinpoche, as seen by Pema Lingpa. The dances show how to subdue the demons that are creating obstacles to religion. Although the demons are fleeing throughout the three worlds, the ging (beings that are emanations of Guru Rinpoche) with the sticks can find them thanks to their foreknowledge. They catch them with the hook of compassion, beat them with the stick of wisdom and tie them with the noose of compassion.

The Lord of the cremation grounds bring a box that contains the mind and the body of these demons. Then the ging with the swords purify the atmosphere from evil deeds that are caused by the demons. After the demons have been vanquished, the ging with the drums dance with happiness. For the dance with the sticks the ging wear animal masks and for the dance with the swords and the drums, they wear terrifying masks.

**Dance of the Heroes (Pacham)** When Pema Lingpa arrived at Zangto Pelri he saw Guru Rinpoche sitting among his assistants in the centre of a limitless mandala (mystic geocentric figure) which was made of lines of rainbow beams. This dance is to lead the believers of the human world into the presences of Guru Rinpoche. The dancers wear yellow skirts and golden crowns without a mask. They carry a small bell (dri- Ibu) and a small drum (damaru).

**Dance of the Stag and the hounds ( Shawa Shachi)** This dance represents the conversion to Buddhism of the hunter Gonpo Dorji by the saint Milarapa. It is performed like a play in two parts. The first part takes place the first day and the second part is on the second day of the Thimphu Tsechu. The first part is quite comical: the hunter's servant appears and jokes with the clowns. Then comes the hunter, crowned with



leaves, carrying a bow and arrows and accompanied by his two dogs. The servant jokes very irreverently with his master who before going hunting, must perform some good-luck rituals. The priest who is called performs the ritual in ways contrary to the Buddhist tradition, while the atsaras (clowns) and the servant go on with their jokes.

Dances with Guitar (Dranyeo Charm) this is a cheerful dance to celebrate the diffusion of the Drukpa lineage in Bhutan by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The dancers carry swords and are dressed in a circular headdress and heavy woolen clothes with felt boots, a long black skirt, yellow shirt and brown coat. One dancer carries a guitar called a dranyen.

**DAY 03: Black Hat Dance (Shana)**

The dancers wear brocade dresses, wide-brimmed black hats and black aprons with an image representing the protecting deities whose images are kept in the goenkhang (chapel). The black-hat dancers assume the appearance of yogis who have the power of killing and recreating life. It is believed that the gestures of the dancers' hands are transformed into mudras (sacred mystic gestures) and their feet, which pound the earth, form a mandala. The dancers first build a mandala and then cut the demons into pieces. Thus they take possession of the earth in order to protect it and they dance the special thunderbolt step to impress their power on it.

Because of its importance, the Shabdrung himself used to perform this ritual. This is a ground purification rite also performed for the construction of dzongs, temples and chortens. Its aim is to conciliate the malevolent beings of the ground in order to take possession of the site from them.

**Dance of the 21 Black Hats with Drums (Shaa Nga Cham)** in honor of the victory of religion over the enemies. The black hats beat the great drums of Buddhism. The sound of the drums represents the religion itself, which cannot be represented in any other way because it has no visible form. The dancers wear large black hats, felt boots and a long colorful, brocade dress.

**Kyecham** An accompanying dance is performed by dancers carrying swords and wearing knee-length yellow skirts, bare-feet and animal masks.

**Dance of the Noblemen and the Ladies (Pholeg Moleg)**

This dance depicts events in the life of King Norzang. It is a comical and very crude play rather than a dance.

The actors are two princes, two princesses, an old couple and the clowns. The princes go to war and leave the princesses in the care of the old couple. As soon as they depart the clowns frolic with the princesses and corrupt the old woman who is also misbehaving. When the princes return, they are scandalized by the behavior and cut off the noses of the



princesses and the old lady as punishment. Then a doctor is called to put the nose back, but the old woman smells so much that the doctor has to use a stick because he does not want to approach her. Finally the princes marry the princesses and everybody is reconciled.

**Dance of the Drums from Drametse ( Drametse Nge Cham)** The learned lama Kuenga Gyeltshen, son of Pema Lingpa, had vision of Guru Rimpoche and his paradise Zangto Pelri during his meditation. The attendants of Guru Rimpoche were transformed into one 100 kinds of peaceful and terrifying deities. They took in their left hand a big drum and in their right hand a drumstick and they performed a dance. Kuenga Gyeltshen came to Drametse Goemba in eastern Bhutan and established the tradition of this dance, which depicts his vision. The Players hold big drums and wear knee-length yellow skirts and animal mask.

**Dance of the stag and the hounds ( Shawo Shachi)** This is the conclusion of the dance staged on the first day and is more serious and religious. Milarapa appears, wearing a long white dress and a white hat, holding pilgrim's staff. He holds his right hand near his ear and sings in a soft voice. The dogs, the stag and the hunter arrive and Milarepa converts them with his song. The conversion is symbolised by a rope that the dogs and the hunter have to jump.

**DAY 04:**

**Dance of the Lords of the cremation Grounds ( Durdag)**

his dance was composed by the Shabdrung, Ngawang mgyal. The dancers represent the protectors of the religion who live in the eight cremation grounds on the external edges of the symbolic Mount Sumeru. They wear short white skirts, white boots and white skull masks.

**Dance of the Terrifying Deities (Tungam)** This dance is performed with the aim of delivering the beings by showing them Zangto Pelri. The costumes are beautiful brocade dresses, boots and terrifying masks. This dramatic dance has a very deep symbolic meaning, namely that a sacrificial murder is performed. First the dancers representing the gods try to enclose the bad spirits in a circle and in a box. Once this is done, Guru Rimpoche, in the form of Dorji Drakp ( fierce thunderbolt ), kills them with a Phorbu ( ritual dagger). He thus saves the world from them and delivers them into salvation at the same time.

**Dance of the Rakshas and the judgement of the Dear ( Magcham)**

This based on the Bardo Thoedrol ( Book of the Dead), a text hidden by Guru Rimpoche and rediscovered by Karma Lingpa in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This is one of the most important dances of the tsechu and is watched carefully by many old people in preparation for their own death.

When all beings die, they wander in the Bardo (intermediate states) waiting to be led by the love of the Buddhas in to the pure fields where no suffering exists. However, the Buddhas assume both peaceful and terrifying forms. Those who didn't adore the Buddhist doctrine do not



recognize the Buddhas in their terrifying form and are frightened and cannot be led into the paradises.

Shinje Chhogyel, Lord of Death, estimates the value of the white and black deeds during the judgment. Also present are the white God and Black Demon who live with every being from birth, and all the helpers who emanate under numerous forms. These include: the ox - headed justice minister; the wild hog headed helper who takes account of the black and which deeds; the khyung-headed bird, who holds a small sword to cut the root of the three poisons ( ignorance, envy, anger) and a big hammer to destroy the rocky mountains of sins; a lion-headed helper holds lasso representing love and an iron chain representing compassion; the fierce bear-headed helper holds the magical noose binding the means and wisdom together and a saw to cut selfishness; a serpent-headed helper holds a mirror reflecting all action; and the monkey-headed helper weighs them on a scale.

All these helpers are called rekshas and they separate the black action from the white actions of all beings. The frightening court of Justice cannot be avoided by the damned beings. But after enduring certain sufferings, their sins are washed away and they are purified. This dance shows everyone that if they devote themselves to virtuous actions, they will be sent immediately to the pure fields and paradises. Then after life, when they have to cross the Bardo and meet the helpers and the assemble of peaceful and terrifying deities, they recognize them as incarnations of Buddha and are delivered from the frightening Bardo.

The dance is like a play and lasts over two hours. First is the long dance of all the rakshas, the helpers of Shinje. Then Shinje himself appears, symbolized by a huge poppet holding a mirror. The White god and the Black Demon enter with him. The judgment begins. The Black demon and his helpers perform a dance. The sinner, dressed in black and wearing a red hat, is frightened and tries to escape but is recaptured each time. From his basket a freshly severed cow's head is taken, implying that the sinner was responsible for killing it. As the judge weighs his actions the White God sings of the merits of the man and the Black Demon expounds the sins. Finally a black strip of cloth symbolizing the road to hell is spread and the sinner sent to hell.

After a general dance everyone sits again. Another man arrives, clad in white and holding a prayer flag and a ceremonial scarf. The same scene is re-enacted and at the conclusion a white strip of cloth, symbolising the road to heaven, is deployed. Fairies elaborately moment. The Black Demon, furious at having lost being, tries to grasp the virtuous man but the white god protects him.

**DAY 05: Dance of Tamshing is Bumthan ( Bumthang Ter Cham)**

On the occasion of the consecration of the Tamshing Monastery in Bumthang, Pema Lingpa had a dream and composed this dance to depict what he saw. The dance is performed in white, peaceful-looking, masks



and knee-length yellow skirts and the dancers carry a little bell and drum. When this miraculously discovered dance is performed, all the earth demons in the country are appeased and the Gods rejoice.

**Dance of the Lords of Cremation Grounds ( Durang)** The same as the dance performed on day three.

**Dance of Ging and Tsholling ( Ging dang Tsholing)** On the occasion of the consecration of the Samye Monastery in Tibet, guru Rimpoche initiated this dance to show the people Zangto Pelri. When the ging and Tsholing perform this miraculous dance, they demonstrate their magical powers in order to discourage the demons.

The ging wear orange skirts which hang like a skin, terrifying black and orange masks with a flag on top, and hold a big drum. They represent the assembly of heroes, deities and fairies ( Khandroma) as well as the various male and female terrifying deities. On the outside dance the tsholing, who represent the protectors of religion, wearing long colourful dresses and terrifying masks.

The dance is a ceremony of purification before the arrival of Guru Rimpoche. People whistle to chase away bad spirits and the ging hit everybody on the head with their drumsticks to chase impurity out of the body. After having destroyed the evil spirits (symbolised by an effigy in a black box), the tsholing are chased away by the ging who then stay alone to beat their drums and perform a victory dance.

**Dance of the Eight manifestations of Guru Rimpoche (gere Tshen) Gyed)** The eight different forms of Guru Rimpoche are represented in this dance. With Guru Rimpoche are represented in this dance. With Guru Rimpoche are his two consorts, Mandarava on the right and Yeshey Tshogyal on the left.

The dance is a play and a dance at the same time. People believe in the manifestation of Guru Rimpoche during the dance. Guru Dorji Drakpo enters first, dressed in a colourful brocade dress and wearing a terrifying red mask.

The eight manifestations enter as follows: Tshokye Dorji in a brocade dress, a peaceful-looking blue-green mask and carrying a small thunderbolt; Loden Chogsey in a red brocade dress, peaceful whitish mask, carrying a small drum and a bowl; Padmasambhava, wearing a red and yellow monk dress, white mask and tall red hat; Guru Rimpoche, himself, under a canopy, wearing a golden mask ( he has khandroma as attendants, symbolized by small children with white masks); Shaya Senge wearing a red and yellow monk dress, Buddha-like mask with blue hair, and carrying a bowl; Padma Gyalpo a a red brocade dress, orange bearded-mask with white tufts of hair, carrying a small drum and a mirror; Nyima Yoezer wearing a golden brocade dress, yellow bearded-



mask with blue brocade dress and terrifying blue mask, followed by his retinue who also wear frightening blue masks.

Guru Rimpoche sits under a canopy, followed by Shakya Senge, while all the other manifestations dance turn by turn as people rush to be blessed by Guru Rimpoche. When a manifestation finished his dance, he joins the others sitting with the Guru.

Then appear 16 fairies who sing and perform two dances in front of the Guru and his manifestations. They dance, first holding drums, carved, bone-ornaments. After these dances, everybody goes out in a long procession.

**Day 06: Thimphu**  
AM: Sightseeing tour at Thimphu  
PM: Drive to Paro.

Upon arrival, check into the Hotel.

Dinner and Overnight at the Hotel.

**Day 07: Paro / Kathmandu**  
After and early breakfast, transfer to the airport to board the flight to Kahtmandu. Upon arrival, meet to representative from Sacred Summits and transfer to the Hotel.

**" End of Arrangement"**

***COST FOR  
THIMPHU TSHECHU FESTIVAL TOUR  
(Duration: 6 nights / 7days)***

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

<b>NO OF PERSONS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2/3</b>	<b>4 and above</b>
<b>NETT PER PERSON US\$</b>	<b>3614</b>	<b>3182</b>	<b>2820</b>



Single Supplement    US\$    xx    300    300

**THE COSTS INCLUDE:**

- Hotel / Airport and Airport / Hotel transfers in Katmandu pre and post Bhutan Tour.
- 5nights / 6ays Bhutan tour / trek (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.
- Airfare for sector Kathmandu / Paro / Kathmandu of US\$ 400.00 per person
- Bhutan Tourism Development Fee of US\$ 10.00 per person.
- Porterage tax and tips to porters at hotels and airports.

**THE COSTS EXCLUDE:**

- Hotel arrangements, meals and any other services apart from the two transfers in Kathmandu.
- Nepal entry and re-entry visa fees.
- Airport Departure taxes at the airports of Katmandu (US\$ 10.00 approx) and at Paro (US\$ 8.00 approx.) per person.
- Items of a personal nature such as; bar bills, alcoholic beverages, laundry, telephone calls, extra mileage, souvenirs, tips and gratuities to guides, drivers, etc.
- Bhutan Visa Fee (US\$ 20.00) per person payable in cash upon arrival at the Paro airport.

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