

THE LAST SHANGRI-LA

Paro - Thimpu - Gangtey and Phobjikha - Punakha - Paro
7 Nights / 08 Days

Travel Proposal

Ref No. 30984



Program Details

Day 01:

Arrive at Paro / Thimpu (55 Kms / 1 ½ hrs)

On arrival, you will be greeted and assisted by our representative and transferred to the hotel. You will receive a Traditional welcome with Tashi Khaddar (White Scarf). Upon arrival in Paro drive to Thimpu.

Thimphu – The capital town of Bhutan and the centre of government, religion and commerce, Thimphu is a unique city with unusual mixture of modern development alongside ancient traditions. Although not what one expects from a capital city, Thimphu is still a fitting and lively place. Home to civil servants, expatriates and monk body, Thimphu maintains a strong national character in its architectural style.

On arrival in Thimpu, transfer to hotel.

Optional: Later in the afternoon, **witness / participate in an Archery match wearing Bhutan's national dress:** 'Gho' for men & 'Kira' for ladies. Archery is the national sport of Bhutan and every village has its own archery range. Using bamboo bows (although modern compound bows are now common in cities) team of archers shoot at targets only 30 centimeters in diameter from a distance of 120 meters. Each team has a noisy crowd of supporters who, as well as encouraging their own side, try to put off the opposition. Archery competition are among the most picturesque and colourful events in the country and are the integral part of all festivities.

Dinner & Overnight at the hotel.

Meals : Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Day 02:

Thimpu

After breakfast, sightseeing in Thimphu valley including visit the following: the **National Library** (Closed on Saturday & Sunday) housing an extensive collection of priceless Buddhist manuscripts; the **Institute for Zorig Chusum** (Closed on Saturday & Sunday) (commonly known as the Painting School) where students undergo a 6-year training course in Bhutan's 13 traditional arts and crafts.

Later visit **Textile and Folk Heritage Museum** (Closed on Saturday & Sunday) a fascinating testimony of the Bhutanese material culture and living traditions.

After lunch, visit **Trashichhoedzong, "fortress of the glorious religion"**. This is the centre of government and

religion, site of monarch's throne room and seat of Je Khenpo or Chief Abbot. Built in 1641 by the political and religious unifier of Bhutan, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, it was reconstructed in 1960s in traditional Bhutanese manner, without nails or architectural plans. Also visit King's Memorial Chorten continuously circumambulated by people, murmuring mantras and spinning their prayer wheels. Construction of this landmark was the idea of Bhutan's third king, his Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk ("the father of modern Bhutan") who has wished to erect 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.

Then, visit the **government-run Handicrafts Emporium** and local crafts shops, to browse through example of Bhutan's fine traditional arts. Here you can buy hand-woven textiles, Thangkha paintings, masks, ceramics, slate and wood carvings, jewellery, interesting items made from local materials

Today enjoy a **meal with a Local Bhutanese Family**. We will take guests to a local Bhutanese Family where guests will enjoy the meal with Local family and will get an insight of Bhutanese way of life and culture.

Dinner & Overnight at the hotel.

Meals : Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Day 03:

Thimpu / Punakha (Approx 75 kms / 03 hrs)

After breakfast drive to Punakha.

Punakha - Punakha served as the capital of Bhutan until and still it is the winter seat of Je Khenpo (the chief abbot). Blessed with temperate climate and owing to its natural drainage from Pho Chhu (male) and Mo Chhu (female) rivers, the Punakha valley produces abundant crops and fruits. There are splendid views of the distant Himalayas at Dochula pas (alt. 3,050m) on Thimphu – Punakha road.

Before reaching Punakha, enjoy visit to

Chimi Lhakhang

The Chimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the centre of the valley, is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kuenley, who in the late 15th century used humour, songs and outrageous behavior 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, if they pray at this temple, they are usually blessed with a child. It is about 30 minute walk across field from the road to the temple.

After visit continue drive to Puankha

On arrival in Punakha, transfer to hotel.

Dinner & Overnight at the hotel.

Meals : Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Day 04:

Punakha

After breakfast enjoy visit of Punakha including following:

Punakha Dzong

Built strategically at the junction of Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers in 1637, by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to serve as the religious and administrative centre of the region, Punakha Dzong has played an important role in Bhutan's history. Damaged by four catastrophic fires and an earthquake, the Dzong has been fully restored by the present King. The Dzong is open for visitors during Punakha festival and in summer months when the monk body moves to Thimphu.

Excursion to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten

A beautiful hike takes one to the regal Khamsum Yuelley Namgel Chorten, which was built to remove negative forces and promote peace, stability and harmony in the changing world. The Chorten dominates the upper Punakha Valley with commanding views across the Mo Chhu and up towards the mountainous peaks of Gasa and beyond.

Dinner & Overnight at the hotel.

Meals : Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Day 05:

Punakha / Paro (125 Kms – 4 ½ Hrs drive)

After breakfast drive to Paro

Afternoon in Paro visit **Ta Dzong**, the National Museum of the Kingdom Originally built as Watch Tower since 1967 it is serving as the National Museum of the country and holding fascinating collection of art, artifacts, thangka paintings and Bhutan's exquisite postage stamps.

Afterwards, walk down a hillside 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.

Later visit nearby visit traditional **Bhutanese Farm House** which offers good insight into lifestyle of local people.

Dinner & Overnight at the hotel

Meals : Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Day 06:

Paro

After breakfast take an excursion to **Taksang Monastery**, the most famous of Bhutanese monasteries. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery hence it is called "Tiger's Nest". The excursion to monastery takes about 5 hours for round trip.

Later drive north of Paro valley to ruins of **Drukgyel Dozng**. 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.

Rest of the day is at leisure.

Dinner & Overnight at the hotel

Meals : Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Day 07:

Paro

Optional: LIGHT 108 BUTTER LAMPS AT THE SACRED KYICHU LHAKHANG - A blessing ceremony with the lighting of 108 butter lamp in one of the Bhutan's oldest temples dating back to the 7th century is an experience of a lifetime. The Butter Lamp or karme represents the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance. The lighting of butter lamps is an offering of light to the deities and is one of the most common means of increasing one's merit. It also helps to focus the mind and aid meditation. The sacred and incredibly beautiful Kyichu Lhakhang is located a 20-minute drive down the valley and is a tranquil and appropriate location for this ritual.

After breakfast, drive along a rough road to 16th-century **Neyphug monastery** where some sixty orphans are homed. (roughly 7 km dirt road taking about 45 min of drive). This relatively unknown and rarely visited Monastery is about 7 kilometers deep into the mountains over Paro Valley. The monastery is a beautiful, peaceful place but is in very poor conditions and in need of restoration.

The school is led by Neyphug Trulku Rinpoche, the founder of the school. In 2005, he returned to Bhutan as Professor of Buddhism and saw much suffering among the poor. Daily life is rugged and those living in remote areas have little means of support, surviving under extreme poverty and threats of chronic illness.

Rinpoche came across many orphans and abandoned kids whose parents could not afford to take care of them. Their desolate conditions, helplessness and hopelessness touched him deeply and inspired him to start a school.

A game of Khuru with orphans and residing monks can be a heart-warming experience.

(Khuru is a traditional game played in Bhutan. It is similar to dart but the size of the dart is bigger than the usual plastic dart with metal tip. "Khurus" are carved out of hard-wood and there is no restriction on the weight or the size to be played).

Later return to the hotel.

Rest of the day is at leisure to visit the local markets.

Optional: Prior to dinner enjoy privately arranged traditional mask dance & cultural show.

All Bhutanese art, dance, drama and music have its roots in the Buddhist religion. The music of Bhutan is an integral part of its culture and plays a leading role in transmitting social values. Traditional Bhutanese music includes a spectrum of subgenres, ranging from folk to religious song and music. Dances are performed wearing ornate costumes and masks; the each aspect dance has a symbolic meaning.

Dinner and Overnight in the hotel.

Meals : Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Day 08:

Paro Departure

After breakfast, transfer to the Airport to connect flight for onward journey / back home.

Meals : Breakfast/--/--

End of Services
