

## AUTUMN FESTIVALS

### 10 NIGHTS IN BHUTAN

This itinerary can be used to visit the Thangbi Mani Festival in October or the Prakhar Tsechu and Jambay Lhakang Festivals in October and November. The Black Necked Cranes will be in the Phobjikha Valley in November so an additional night is recommended for November departures.

#### **Day 1: Arrival into Bangkok**

Depart Australia in the mid afternoon and fly to Bangkok, arriving in the late evening. Clear customs and proceed to the Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel for an overnight stay.

#### **Day 2: Bangkok / Paro - Thimphu**

Early check-in for the Druk Air flight to Paro via Calcutta. A spectacular descent through mountainous valleys brings you into the Kingdom of Bhutan. The beautiful airport is your first glimpse of what's ahead. After clearing customs, drive to Thimphu about 1 hour's drive away along a beautiful valley dotted with ancient farmhouses and chortens. An afternoon to attend the Tsechu which is a colourful Buddhist festival of ritual dances attended by people from all over Bhutan, both a cultural and social event. There are also markets for local products and side shows such as archery.

**Overnight: Jomolhari Hotel or similar. Dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant.**

#### **Day 3: Thimphu**

Take in the sights including the National Heritage Museum, the Textile Museum and the Memorial Chorten to Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the third King of Bhutan. Some time this afternoon to visit the weekend markets, an ideal opportunity to meet people and take some great photos.

#### **Day 4: Thimphu - Punakha**

Drive to Wandue passing through Docchu-La at 3140m, where on a clear day you can see the whole Himalayan range. Take a further short drive to the Punakha Valley to visit the magnificent Dzong spanning the Mo Chu and Po Chu rivers.

**Overnight: Zangtopelri Lodge or similar. Dinner at the Lodge**

#### **Day 5: Punakha - Trongsa**

Drive to Trongsa through a series of spectacular valleys and over the Black Mountains. The magnificent Trongsa Dzong, the gateway to central Bhutan, can be seen from over 14kms away. Continue to Bumthang. There are many monasteries and places to visit in the surrounding valleys.

#### **Day 6: Trongsa – Bumthang Valley**

On arrival, after about 4 hour's driving, witness the last day of Thangbi Festival. Some local afternoon sightseeing, time permitting.

**Overnight: River Lodge or similar. Dinner at the Lodge**

### **Day 7: Bumthang Valley**

A full day sightseeing in the Bumthang Valley and take time to visit the Jambay Lhakang Drup for a few hours as well. Dinner at another local lodge.

### **Day 8: Bumthang Valley - Gangtey**

Retrace our steps over the Black Mountains and enter the beautiful Phobjika valley. Spend some time in the valley to visit the Crane Observation Centre and see the Gantey Gumpa, home to one of Bhutan's oldest Buddhist sects. Return to Wangdue Phodrang later in the afternoon. NB: You can elect to stay an extra night here and add one extra day to the tour if witnessing the Crane Festival or if you are a birdwatching enthusiast.

**Overnight Dewachen Lodge with dinner**

### **Day 10: Gangtey - Thimphu**

Morning drive to Thimphu ( approx 5-6 hours). Visit the Local Market ( Saturday and Sunday) and do some shopping if you wish as Thimphu is the best place obtain textiles or religious works. There are many local artisans with shops in town and bookshops and cafes.

**Overnight: Jomolhari Hotel or similar. Dinner at a local restaurant**

### **Day 11: Thimphu - Paro**

Depart for Paro in the morning, leaving time to hike up to the Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery, the most photographed in Bhutan, perched 900m above the valley floor.

**Overnight: Olathong Cottages or similar.** Dinner at the hotel or at a restaurant

### **Day 12: Paro**

A full day in Paro to visit Drukgyel Dzong, the Paro Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang.

NB: Those wishing to shorten their tour can schedule a departure for today

### **Day 13: Paro / Bangkok**

An early rise for your departure for Bangkok to meet the connecting flight to Australia or other parts.

### **COSTS: EX BANGKOK – Inclusive of Druk Airfares – per person**

Twin Share:	USD 4330
Group (min 3):	USD 4060
Single supplement:	USD 490

Journey dates are determined by the festival dates

**INCLUSIONS: REFER TO THE BOOKING CONDITIONS**