

# TOUCH THE DRAGON

## 7 NIGHTS IN BHUTAN

(Incorporating the Paro Tshechu)

The festival is held according to the lunar calendar and is held in March or April.

Fly to Bangkok, the day prior if you wish. We can book the Novotel at the airport in readiness for the very early flight to Paro.

### **Day 1: Paro**

Early check-in for the Druk Air flight to Paro. 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 and visa control you are met by your driver and guide and transferred to your hotel to settle in. Visit the Dzong, where the Tshechu will already be in progress and the National Museum housed in a 12th century watchtower. The festival lasts for 4 days allowing people from all over Bhutan to attend. Traditional songs and dances all well known to the locals are repeated over the several days of the Festival. A picnic atmosphere pervades and everyone wears their finest clothes. Don't be surprised to find yourself sitting down for a chat and some tea. There are also markets for local products and side shows such as archery and gambling.

**Overnight: Olathong cottages or similar. Dinner in a local restaurant, 2 nights**

### **Day 2: Paro**

After breakfast drive to Drukgyal Dzong, the ruined fort, which once defended this valley from repeated Tibetan invasions. We then drive to Shari to hike up to the Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery, the most photographed in Bhutan, perched 900m above the valley floor. This is a challenging walk and half of it can be done on pony back if you wish. The remainder of the afternoon and evening is free to relax. Dinner at the hotel. An early night is recommended you will be woken at 2 am. Remember to dress very warmly!

### **Day 3: Paro - Thimphu**

Optional 2 am rise to witness the unfurling of the Thongdrol. This large and beautifully appliquéd 'Thanka' scroll known as a Tongdrol is exhibited for a few hours, at day break of the final day of the festival, enabling the people to obtain the blessing, that this most holy scroll confers on all who witness it. The whole event is a fabulous spectacle with monks chanting, a constant cacophony of cymbals and horns and incense smoke swirling through the pre dawn in the Dzong courtyard. Return to the hotel at 6 - 7am. After breakfast drive to Thimphu, the capital (1.5 hours) and check into the hotel. Then visit Sangaygang, high above the city, a forest of prayer flags affording a beautiful view over Thimphu. The day's sightseeing includes the Painting School and the National Heritage Museum, the Textile Museum and the Memorial Chorten to Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the third King of Bhutan.

**Overnight Jomolhari Hotel or similar: Dinner in a local restaurant, 2 nights**

#### **Day 4: Thimphu**

Morning hike to Dorje Dra Goemba, offering great views of the Thimphu Valley. Enjoy a picnic lunch. The remainder of the afternoon is free to wander around Thimphu or just relax. Thimphu offers some good shopping for textiles, thankas and silver jewellery.

**Dinner in a local restaurant or at the hotel.**

#### **Day 5: Thimphu - Punakha**

Drive towards Wangdue passing through the Docchu-La Pass at 3140m, where on a clear day you can see the whole Himalayan range. Continue on to Punakha to check into our accommodation. After a late lunch visit the Dzong which spans the Mo Chu and Po Chu rivers. Time permitting also visit a temple built for the 5th King by his mother.

**Overnight: Zangtopelri Lodge or similar. Dinner and overnight at the lodge**

#### **Day 6: Punakha - Gangtey**

Continue your journey over the Black Mountains and enter the beautiful Phobjikha valley. Spend some time in the valley to visit the Crane Observation Centre and see the Gantey Gompa, home to one of Bhutan's oldest Buddhist sects. If time permits an afternoon hike will be scheduled. Spend the night in the valley in a newly built traditional Bhutanese guest house. The valley is solar powered to protect the crane's environment.

**Overnight: Dewachen Lodge, 2 nights with dinner at the lodge**

#### **Day 7: Gangtey - Paro**

Retrace your steps and return to Paro via Wandgue and Thimphu. Lunch in a local restaurant, followed by some free time for shopping and browsing. You can purchase beautiful textiles and Buddhist Thankas. Reach Paro in the late afternoon for your last night.

**Overnight: Olathong cottages or similar. Dinner in a local restaurant**

#### **Day 8: Paro**

An early departure for the airport to fly to Bangkok and thence to Australia.

#### **Prices ex Bangkok: Inclusive of Druk Airfares – per person**

Twin Share:	USD 2950
Group (min 3 people):	USD 2725
Single supplement:	USD 290

This tour as with all others can be extended to include more time in Bhutan.

**INCLUSIONS: REFER TO THE BOOKING CONDITIONS**