

Spirit Tours

JOURNEYS OF THE SOUL



Dharma Path to Bhutan

With Rev. Kim Kaiser and Tshering Jamtcho

Located high in the majestic Himalayas and nestled between Tibet and India is the small Kingdom of Bhutan or Druk Yul, the "land of the peaceful dragon."

September 23rd to October 2nd 2012

Itinerary

Sept 23rd Arrive Bangkok (Bangkok City Tour)

Sept 24th Bangkok – Paro- Thimphu

Arrive Bhutan and drive to Paro

The flight from Bangkok into Bhutan will take you over the vast plains of the Indian subcontinent and then over the dense green vegetation of the Kingdom's sub Himalayan ranges. You will get breathtaking views of the worlds highest and most majestic peaks as the plane approaches the Dragon Kingdom's cloud scraping airstrip at the Paro International airport at an altitude of 7330 ft.

Moments before the landing you can catch glimpses of the fertile valley of Paro and the winding Paro Chu (river) and the historical Rimpung Dzong (fortress) more popularly known as Paro Dzong. As you step out of the aircraft, you can catch your first breath of the fresh crisp Himalayan air.

Tshering, our Bhutanese guide, will be there to receive you after you have completed the necessary immigration and visa formalities. We will then have lunch in Paro and we will take a beautiful drive to a remote hotel Ugyen Pendeyling Resort and meditation center. This hotel is surrounded by fields and small country farmhouses. We will stay here our first night in Bhutan.



September 25th Drive to Thimphu and in the afternoon visit the Tshechu Festival

The first part of the journey will follow the Paro river and provide plenty of photo opportunities. After about half an hour's drive you will reach the confluence of two rivers, one flowing from Thimphu and the other from Paro. From the confluence we



will follow the Thimphu river for another hour. As you enter into Thimphu you will see the traffic being controlled by traffic men as there are no traffic lights in the Kingdom.

A booklet containing detailed program for the three days will be provided to all the group members. The Tshechu is a festival in honor of Padmasambhava (one born from the lotus flower) and popularly known as “Guru Rimpochey” the precious teacher. Religious festivals, or Tsechus, are held annually in Dzongs (fortress monasteries) throughout the country. Many outstanding Buddhist saints like Guru Rinpoche in the 8th century, and Pemalingpa, Shabdrung and Dorjilingpa in the 14th to 16th centuries resorted to dances to subdue demons and evil spirits, and to overcome obstacles that were preventing the spread of Buddhism in the high Himalayan valleys.



From the roof of the Dzong, monks blow on a pair of long horns, and the sound of cymbals, drums and trumpets fill the air. These dance festivals revive the people spiritually and in many ways refine them culturally because the dances communicate moral lessons, and both the performer and the observer benefit



from the exchange. The Bardo dances, the main event of the tsechu festival, serve as a reminder to Bhutanese of their future destiny depending on their past and present deeds. The dance of Noblemen and Ladies tells the story of flirting princesses who are punished for their indiscretions. The dance of the Stag enacts the tale of a hunter who was converted to Buddhism and gave up hunting. The Paro and Wangdi Tsechus end with the unveiling of a huge religious Thangka or "Thongdrol" (meaning liberation or enlightenment on sight). Thimphu festival was established by the 4th temporal Ruler, Tenzing Rabgay (1638-1696) in the year 1670, in the 8th month of the Bhutanese calendar, to commemorate the birth of Guru Rimpochey.



September 26th We will visit a local monastery Changangkha Lhakhang and chant with the monks. This temple is an old fortress-like temple and monastic school perched on a ridge above the capital, Thimphu. It was established in the 12th century on a site chosen by Lama Phajo Drukgom Shigpo, who came from Ralung in Tibet. The central statue is Chenresig in an 11-headed, thousand-



armed After breakfast we will revisit the festival for the morning and visit the Thimpu Dzong after lunch we will visit the Thimphu Memorial Stupa, a beautiful landmark built in memory of our late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck Thimphu.(7,600ft) and visit Textile Museum.



We will also have the opportunity to visit the local market where we can see the variety of food of the country, including basket upon basket of fiery chilies, fresh cheese, and mangoes. In

addition, many stalls contain Bhutanese handicrafts and household items. This is perhaps good opportunity for photography and to mingle with locals who come from the nearby villages.

September 27th We will visit a local monastery built in the 12th century for early morning chanting with the monks. There are



enormous prayer wheels to spin and even the prayer books in the temple are larger in size than usual Tibetan texts. After breakfast we will start early for Punakha, the old capital of Bhutan. The journey will take about three hours. It will take you across the Dochula Pass (3050M) with a

spectacular view of the eastern Himalayas. The pass is also marked by 108 stupas dedicated to world peace by Her Majesty the Queen of Bhutan, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck. The descent will take us through subtropical vegetation and into Punakha.



After check in and lunch, we will visit Chorten Nebu monastery high in the hills above Punakha. Built in the 18th century it is a little know treasure. This is an educational institution where young monks can both study traditional Buddhist texts and learn Western subjects.



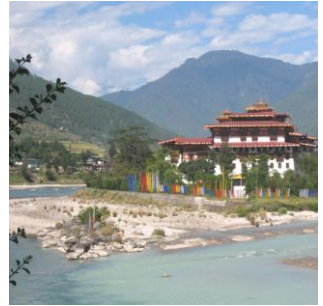
Overnight at Punakha (5,900ft). In the evening, the group we will host group meditation before our dinner together

September 28th



Early this morning we will journey to Sangchen Liendrup Choling nunnery for a morning meditation. This nunnery was built by the King's maternal Grandmother in 2010.

After breakfast we will visit the Punakha Dzong, built in 1637, was once the old capital of Bhutan and is today the winter residence of the Central Monastic Body. The Dzong occupies an important place in the history of monarchy in Bhutan as the first King of Bhutan, King Ugyen Wangchuck was crowned here in 1907.



The Dzong also houses Bhutan's most sacred relic, the Ranjung Kharsapani (the self created image of Avolokitesvara). The inner-most sanctum of the temple houses the Marchen Lhakhang, containing the embalmed body of the Shabdrung, the first secular leader of Bhutan. Today the Dzong also serves as the headquarter to the District Administration.

September 29th Punakha-Paro



Today we will drive through Thimphu, en route to Paro, and stop for lunch at the Karma Cafe. We will also have time to shop, as Thimphu is the shopping mecca for Bhutan. On arrival in Paro, if time permits, you can go for a promenade through Paro Town. Overnight Paro (7,600 ft).

September 30th Local sightseeing in Paro

The day begins with a drive through Paro valley. On a clear day one can see the 24,000 ft domed majestic Jumolhari in the background of the fortress, blessing the Paro valley. It is believed that the goddess Jumo resides on this sacred mountain. Further up the valley you will see the majestic Taktsang (Tigers Lair), clinging onto bare rock face



This morning we will visit Kichu Lhakang, temple which was built in 659 (7th century) by the Tibetan King Tshongtsen Gampo. It is believed he built 108 temples across the Himalayas



and Kichu happens to be one of the last remaining ones. The Jowo Temple of Kyichu is one of the oldest temples in Bhutan, originally built in the 7th century by the Tibetan Emperor Songsten Gampo.

It is considered to be one of the 108 temples he built.

In the 8th century the temple was visited by Guru Rinpoche and it is believed he concealed many spiritual treasures here. Pilgrims turn the many prayer wheels along the walls as they circumnambulate the temple. The fine statues of Boshisattvas and the Buddha are national treasures. The wooden floor of the sanctum is inlaid with turquoise and coral gemstones offered by pilgrims. There is also a chorten that contains the ashes of the great Tibetan Lama Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. The teacher of the Dalai Lama



After lunch visit the National Museum, located in the Ta Dzong originally built in 1656. This is the only museum in Paro and has the country's best collection of ancient Thangkas (religious wall hangings), religious paintings and artefacts, fine textiles, weapons and stamps. It also houses the unique temple of the tree of life, representing the four different sects of Buddhism, as practiced in the country. Overnight Paro.



October 1st

After breakfast, hike to Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery, which is the most famous monastery in Bhutan. Guru Rinpoche, an Indian saint is said to have flown on the back of a tigress from Singye Dzong in Lhuntse to meditate in a cave where Taktsang Monastery now stands. It is perched on the edge of a steep cliff, about 900 meters above



Paro Valley. The hike to reach the viewpoint to the monastery makes for a nice half-day excursion. The climb is about 3 hours up with a stop and a rest stop about 2 hours into the hike. The hike is optional and we will provide alternative activities for the day. In the evening our hotel will offer a hot stone bath before dinner.. Overnight hotel in Paro.



October 2nd Depart Bhutan for Bangkok and connect with flight back to USA

Our guide will help you with the departure formalities at the airport and bid you good bye with traditional Tashi Khadhar.

ABOUT OUR GUIDE



Tshering Jamtsho

Tshering Jamtsho can be rated among the first well-trained tour leaders in the country. He has extensive knowledge in the field of tourism in Bhutan. His knowledge of Buddhism, Bhutanese culture, history and environment has earned him many friends around the globe and through these networks he has also been invited as a guest speaker to speak at the California institute of Integral Studies on Buddhism and local Bhutanese deities.

Tshering has over quarter of a century of experience in the Bhutanese travel industry, Tshering Jamtsho is today one of the leading tour operators in the Kingdom of Bhutan. For every trip, Tshering Jamtsho is personally involved in ensuring that every minute detail relating to travel logistics, travel advisory and special needs of the individual clients is meticulously planned “ In Bhutan the Buddhist culture is integrated into every aspect of daily life, and those fortunate enough to visit describe it as a unique, deeply spiritual and mystical experience.”

Spirit of Bhutan

TRIP INCLUDES :

8 Nights Hotels and all meals in Bhutan
1 night hotel and tour in Bangkok Thailand
Round Trip Air from Bangkok to Bhutan
Guide Services provided by Tshering Jamtsho
Dharma Talks by Rev. Kim Kaiser
Hike to Tiger's nest monastery
Includes Daily tourist fee
All Tours and Transportation

\$4129.00



Spirit Tours
3913 Mayette Ave
Santa Rosa, Ca. 95405
707 566 8078
jim@Sprit-Tour.com
www.Spirit-tour.com