

BHUTAN & NEPAL 10 days

Itinerary:

Day 1 : Arrive Paro - Thimphu (L / D)

Upon arrival at Paro International Airport meet your guide and start your tour with the National Museum. Next visit the Rinpung Dzong, built in 17th century to defend the valley against Tibetan invaders. The dzong is now used as an administration centre and school for monks. Then drive towards Thimphu. On the way see Tachogang Temple or the "Temple of the hill of an excellent horse" Continue to Thimphu valley, and visit the Memorial Chhorten built in 1974 in memory of the Third King. Later drive to Kuensel Phodrang where you can see probably the tallest Buddha in the world and have a great view of Thimphu valley. Continue to the Takin Preserve, which houses the national animal, the Takin. In the evening discover the Tashichhodzong its history dates back to the 13th century, and houses the royal throne room.

Meals: Lunch, Dinner **Lodging:** Tam Tashi Hotel

Day 2 : Thimphu (B / L / D)

After breakfast visit the Bhutan Post known for its world famous stamps before you walk to the Textile Museum to get an understanding of the beautiful hand woven Bhutanese textiles. Some of the museum's gems are the pearl robe from Tsamdrak Goenpa, crowns of Bhutan's Kings, Namzas and other accessories worn by the Royal Family. Later visit the National Library, a treasure trove of priceless Buddhist manuscripts. Then continue to The National Folk Heritage Museum to get an insight into the typical Bhutanese way of life. The museum building itself is one of the star exhibits, a restored three-storey traditional rammed mud and timber house that resembles the average rural household in the Wang area during the mid-19th century complete with typical household objects of that period. Further see the Institute for Zorig Chusum also known as the Painting School, the Institute offers a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. On a visit you see students learning the various skills taught at the school.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Lodging:** Taj Tashi Hotel

Day 3 : Thimphu - Punakha (B / L / D)

After breakfast start your drive to Punakha, via the Dochula pass, it takes you through the scenic Paro Chi and Wang Chhu river valleys on to the high mountain pass of Dochula. From there see some of the highest peaks in Bhutan, Kang Bum, Masang Gang, Gangkhar Puensum and many more. Later visit Druk Wangyel Chhorten, built by the Queen Mother for the peace and stability of the country. The 108 Khangzang Namgyal Chhortens are a new landmark for travelers as they cross Dochula, the first mountain pass into the interior of the country. Then visit Chimi Lhakhang, a temple located on a hillock in the centre of the valley below Metshina. It was built by Ngawang Chogyel in the 15th century after the 'divine Madman' Drukpa Kuenlay built a small chorten there. The temple is believed to bless couples unable to have children and many people from around the world visit this holly site seeking its blessings.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Lodging:** Uma Punakha Hotel



Day 4 : Punakha - Wangdue - Paro (B / L / D)

After breakfast visit the impressive Punakha Dzong, the second of Bhutan's dzongs. It is the winter residence of the monastic order's leader and his entourage of monks. Built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal inside the Dzong is the set of the 108 volumes of Kanjur – the holy book of the Drukpa Kagyu lineage, written in gold. Bhutan's most treasured possession is the Rangjung Kharsapani, a self created image of Chenrigzig which is described by Shabdrung as a treasure as vast as the sky. Later visit Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chhorten, a three-storey chhorten built by Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck in 1999 for the protection of the country. It stands on a beautiful hillock called Ngezergang about 6 miles from Punakha. Drive to Wangdue and scroll around the town before heading back to Paro for overnight.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Lodging:** Uma Paro Hotel

Day 5 : Paro - Tiger nest hike (B / L / D)

After an early breakfast drive up to the starting point for hike up to the Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's nest). Enjoy the stunning view of the monastery, where Guru Padmasambava landed on the back of a tiger in the 8th century and meditated for three months. The monastery was later built in this holy place in 1692 by Gyalse Tenzin. Later drive to Drukgyal Dzong (fortress) now in ruins, which were built in 1646 by Shabdrung. Then experience Kyichu temple one of the 108 temples built in the 7th century by the Tibetan King Songsten Gampo. Bless your prayer flags here and take part in a Buddhist ceremony for your health and well-being. Next is the visit to a farmhouse to see how Bhutanese people live. The houses have usually three stories; ground floor used for cattle, top floor is used for drying hay and the family lives in middle one. Enjoy the overnight stay at farmhouse including a Hot-stone-bath; it is a popular form of medication practiced in Bhutan.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner **Lodging:** Farmhouse

Day 6 : Paro - Kathmandu (B)

After breakfast your guide will escort you to the airport for your flight to Kathmandu. Upon arrival in Kathmandu transfer to your hotel to relax from your flight

Meals: Breakfast **Lodging:** Hyatt Hotel

Day 7 : Kathmandu sights (B)

After breakfast start your visit of Kathmandu, the capital of the Kingdom of Nepal. First is the temple of the Living Goddess who acknowledges the greetings of the devotees from the balcony of her temple residence. Continue to Swayambunath before continuing to Pattern. The ancient city (Lalitpur) stands on a raised ground 5 km southeast of Kathmandu. The main attraction here is Durbar Square with Hiranya Varna Mahaviha, the three storied golden pagoda of Lokeshwar (Lord Buddha) built in the 13th century. Rudra Varna Mahavihar, the unique Buddhist monastery has a fine collection of images and statues in metal, stone and wood. Krishna Mandir built in the 16th century, Jagat Narayan Temple, an imposing temple of Lord Vishnu and Machhendra Nath Temple built in 1508 AD.

Meals: Breakfast **Lodging:** Hyatt Hotel

Day 8 : Kathmandu - Dhulikhel (B)

After breakfast drive towards Dhulikhel. En-route sightseeing tour of Bhadgaon, also known as Bhaktapur meaning city of devotees. Visit the Durbar Square with its array of temples overlooked by the Palace of 55 windows built by King Bupatindra Malla. The Nyatapola Temple, also built by King Bhupatindra Malla, is the best example of Pagoda style. Later arrive in Dhulikhel, famous for its vantage location in viewing the Himalayan ranges from Cho Oyu in the east to Himalchuli in the west. Dhulikhel.

Meals: Breakfast **Lodging:** Dhulikhel Mountain Resort

Day 9 : Dhulikhel - Kathmandu (B)

After breakfast drive to Namobuddha by Jeep. Then hike down to Panauti. Afterwards drive back to Kathmandu. Namobuddha is east of Kathmandu valley located on the top of the hill. The Later hike down to Panauti, probably the best preserved Newar town after Bhaktapur. A leisurely walk through this tiny village will reveal its antiquity. A must is a visit to the 14th century AD Hindu temple of Shiva locally known as Inderswor Mahadev. The wooden struts supporting the temple are a splendid example of wood carving of that era.

Meals: Breakfast **Lodging:** Hyatt Hotel

Day 10 : Kathmandu - Departure (B)

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your international return flight.

Meals: Breakfast

