



ADVENTURE ASSOCIATES

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ESCAPE TO BHUTAN: THE DRAGON KINGDOM FESTIVAL TOUR & CULTURAL TREK

Journey to one of the world's smallest and most extraordinary countries in the great Himalayas... the "Dragon Kingdom" of Bhutan. Nested between India, Tibet and Nepal, Bhutan is a proud nation of one of the earth's best-preserved ecologies and cultures. Opened up to tourism in during the mid 1980s, Bhutan hosts relatively few tourists each year. The landlocked country is inhabited by two million practicing Buddhists. They greet you with a genuine smile and penetrating personal warmth. The breathtaking countryside scenery is full of thick pine forests, raging wild rivers, mosaics of rich cultivated fields, crafted Bhutanese style farm houses, prayer flags, and fortress like Dzongs and monasteries. Our local guides take us into villages providing expert interpretation of their culture. Visitors stay in local guesthouses, go to remote villages and hidden valleys, and immerse themselves in rare and enchanting encounters. We'll take a look at Bhutanese art forms such as thangka painting, textile weaving, woodcarving, and papermaking. Often you will witness demonstrations of the art forms and creations crafted by Bhutanese artists. You will attend and participate in two festivals, where the Bhutanese gather in celebration wearing their finest clothes and jewelry. Dance rituals are performed in colorful dress and masks. A three-day cultural trek through bamboo and pine forests allows you to witness the fresh air and beauty of the Himalayan foothills. Join us! This is truly an adventure of a lifetime!

Trip Dates: Oct 31 – Nov 17, 2009

Land Costs: \$4295 (-\$400 Discount!)

DAY 1 (Oct 31, 2009)

Los Angeles / Bangkok: Please check in three hours to your scheduled departure. On your own.

DAY 2 (Nov 1)

Arrive Bangkok: On your own.

DAY 3 (Nov 2)

Bangkok to Thimphu (via flight Druk Air arranged by Adventure Associates)

Note: Druk Air flights are available from Delhi, Calcutta, and Kathmandu

Our representative will receive you at Paro Airport. Transfer to Paro for lunch and drive to Thimphu. Check into hotel. Dinner tonight may be hosted by a local family. Overnight: Hotel. (LD)

DAY 4 (Nov 3)

Thimphu to Wangdue/Punakha

After breakfast, we drive to Wangdue. En route, enjoy a short break for tea & coffee at Dochula Pass at 3150 m to view the Eastern Himalayan mountain ranges and walk around the 108 stupas built on the pass. Drive another two hours to Punakha and visit the Punakha Dzong. This is the winter residence of Bhutan's spiritual leader, the Head Abbot, and the Central Monastic Body. The Dzong was built in 1637 A.D. and lies between two rivers known as "Phochu" (Male River) and "Mochu" (Female River). En route to Wangdue, take a short hike to Chhi-Med Lhakhang in the picturesque Lobesa valley, to visit the temple of one of Bhutan's foremost saints, Lama Drukpa Kunley, also known as the "Divine Madman". In Wangdue visit the Wangdue Dzong, perched on a hill between two rivers. This Dzong, which was built in 1638 A.D., also houses the District Administration office and the district monk body. Overnight: hotel. (BLD)

DAY 5 (Nov 4)

Bumthang

Enjoy an early breakfast and depart for Bumthang in Central Bhutan (8-9 hour drive). The drive is through a scenic highway crossing the Pelila Pass at 3420m between Wangdue and Trongsa. You will climb one more pass, Yotongla Pass at 3425m, before reaching Bumthang.

Overnight: hotel.
(BLD)

DAY 6 (Nov 5)

Bumthang/PRAKAR FESTIVAL

After breakfast, drive a short 12km to Chumey Valley to participate in the Prakar Festival. This is a unique village festival celebrated every year in honor of Lama Thukse Dawa, son of the



Treasure Discoverer, Pema Lingpa who lived in Bumthang Valley in the 15th century. Enjoy an evening stroll through Jakar town. Overnight: hotel. (BLD)

Description of the day's program to follow

DAY 7 (Nov 6)

FULL DAY JAMBAY LHAKHANG FESTIVAL

Attend Jambay Lhakhang Festival in the morning. It is organized and performed by the villagers, under the supervision of the local lama, and held in the courtyard of Jambay Lhakhang Temple, located in the heart of Chokor Valley. This is one of the oldest temples in the country, built around the 7th century by the Tibetan King, Songtsen Geombo. The festival focuses on dances that symbolize the fight between good and evil, and it is also a thankful offering to the local deities for the harvest. Besides the various mask dances performed, one can also witness folk dances performed by villagers. There's much gaiety, feasting and celebrating on this day. Guests are invited to join in the celebrations. Overnight: hotel. (BLD)

Short description of the day's program:

The festival starts around 10 a.m.

Program 1: Dance of Four Mythical Birds (Gingcham). This dance is a dance of blessing.
Costume: Short skirts, bird's masks and swords.

Program 2: Dance of the Black Hats with Drums (Shana Ngacham). This dance symbolizes the victory of religion, which is proclaimed by the sound of drums.

Costume: Long brocade dresses, black hats, drums.

Program 3: Dance of the Black Hats with Magical Daggers (Phurcham). During this dance, the 'Black Hats' are liberating the mind of the evil spirits by killing their body of flesh with the magical daggers. People whistle to chase away the bad spirits. In the meantime, the durdag (white skeleton) brings in piece of cloth on which is a small effigy that symbolizes the evil spirits. After blessing the effigy with alcohol and grains, the "Black Hats" dance while the main dancer kills the evil spirit with his magical dagger.

Costume: Long brocade dresses, black hats, magical daggers (Phurpa).

Program 4: Dance of the Raksha (Raksha Gocham). The Rakshas are the attendants of the Lord of Death and have animal heads. The first one to dance is their chief with a bull mask.

DAY 8 (Nov 7)

Bumthang Sightseeing

Bumthang lies at an altitude 2600m and has an individuality that charms its visitors and separates it from other regions. Comprised of four smaller valleys, the spiritual region of Bumthang is shrouded in religious legend. Here, tales of Guru Padmasambhava and his re-incarnation known as Tertons still linger in most nooks and corners. Bumthang is also known for its woolen material (yathra), which can be seen hanging outside of houses for sale. Visit the Jakar Dzong, 7th century Jambay Lhakhang, Kurjey monastery, and Tamshing and Kunchosum monasteries.

Overnight: hotel.

DAY 9 (Nov 8)

BEGIN BUMTHANG TREK: *(Options available other than trekking. Special arrangements. Inquire.)*

Bumthang to Nang Lakhang (Walking time: 4 to 5 hours)

Our trek starts by following the Chamkhar River up a stream filled with rainbow trout. The hike is very pleasant and weaves up through pine forest and over suspension bridges. The day is such that one can thoroughly enjoy the beautiful countryside. En route, pass through Thangbi Lhakhang before entering "Swan Land" (Ngang Yul) and visiting "Swan Temple" (Nganglhakhang). Swans first inhabited this part of the valley.

Overnight: Camp at 2800m.

DAY 10 (Nov 9)

Ngalhakhang to Tahung (Walking time: app. 7 hours)

The day starts with a gradual climb to Phephela Pass to the highest point of the trek. (3,353M). The trail then winds through one of the most beautifully forested areas of the region, laced in mini bamboo pastures, forests of rhododendrons and mixed conifer. This is a full day of travel, around seven hours of hiking, which allows for many stops along the way to enjoy the natural landscape.

Overnight: Camp in Tang valley.

DAY 11 (Nov 10)

Tahung to via Ugyencholing (Walking Time: 1-2 hours)

Trek to Ugyencholing, which provides a spectacular view of Tang Valley. The Ugyencholing Palace now houses the Family Museum, a place that will transport you to

another world and time. You will view permanent exhibits recreated to capture the ambience of the lifestyle of the Trongsa Penlop (Governor) Tshokey Dorji and his household. After lunch, relax with a stroll through Ugyencholing village. Overnight: Guesthouse in village (Guest house is very simple and comfortable. There are several rooms bedrooms with a main gathering area with a stove. Showers are available.)

DAY 12 (Nov 11)

Ugyencholing to Trongsa

Trek downhill for 45 minutes to meet your transportation and drive to Trongsa. Visit the Yartha Textile weaving center in Chumy Valley en route. On arrival in Trongsa, visit the Trongsa Dzong. This Dzong, built in 1648, is the ancestral home of the Wangchuck Dynasty, Bhutan's royal family. Presently, the Dzong houses the district administrative offices and the monastic center of Trongsa. This is also the investiture site for future kings ascending the Golden Throne of Bhutan. It is constructed in split-levels on a narrow spur and is considered an architectural wonder! After visiting the Dzong, take a short hike to the Watch Tower located directly above it. On display are many interesting weapons of war and armors. Overnight: Hotel.

DAY 13 (Nov 12)

Trongsa to Phobjikha Valley

Enjoy morning drive to Phobjikha Valley (3 – 4 hours). The drive follows the highway to Wangdue, but at Nobding, we divert onto a 13-km dirt track crossing over the Gangtey Pass (3140 m), and then drop into the Phobjikha Valley, inside Black Mountain (*Pele La*) National Park. This glacial valley is on the northern boundary of Black Mountain National Park, which lies on the northern boundary of the Jowo Durshing mountain range. According to legend, the Gangtey Goenpa was founded by the grandson (the mind incarnation) of Pema Lingpa Gyalse Pema Thinley in 1613 and was later expanded by Tenzin Legpai Dhendup. The Phobjikha valley is one of the roosting grounds of the Black-necked cranes (*grus nigri collies*). Each year in winter, the birds migrate from Tibet and Siberia. Visit the Information Center (run by the Royal Society for the Preservation of Nature) to learn about this rare and endangered bird. At an average elevation of 3000 m, visit village homes and people of Phobjikha to learn the simple lifestyles of these farming people. We hope to have time to visit Gangtey Monastery. Overnight: Guesthouse.

DAY 14 (Nov 13)

Phobjikha Valley to Thimphu

Enjoy a peaceful morning walk within Phobjikha valley before our 5-hour drive to Thimphu. En route, visit the oldest Dzong in Bhutan, the Semtokha Dzong, or stop at an apple farm for refreshment and a brief walk through the orchard. Check in at Hotel. This afternoon, you are free to relax or stroll through Thimphu town. Dinner: local restaurant with Bhutanese host. Overnight: Hotel.

DAY 15 (Nov 14)

Thimphu sightseeing and Paro

Today visit the Thimphu Weekend Open Market. People from all over western Bhutan gather to sell their wares and crafts. Sightseeing in Thimphu with a visit to sites not seen on arrival. (Optional: Indigenous Hospital where treatment in herbal medicine is given. If you are interested you can get one of the traditional physicians to check your pulse for diagnoses! We'll also visit the Textile Museum full of rare and beautiful textiles. Lunch in a local restaurant followed by a shuttle to Paro. Relax and unwind with some free time in Paro town. Enjoy the shops, museum and Bhutanese people. Visit the watchtower, locally known as Ta-Dzong, which houses the National Museum. This seven-floor museum highlights various aspects of Bhutanese culture and history dating back to the 7th century. Overnight: Hotel.

DAY 16 (Nov 15)

Paro (Taktsang Hike)

Granted special permission, hike to the Taktsang monastery. (Horses can be arranged with an extra payment.) The hike takes about 4 hours round trip, past villages and through pine forests. The monastery, whose name means "Tiger's Nest," clings to a huge granite cliff 800 meters from the Paro Valley and was devastated by a fire in 1998. The Royal Government took immediate steps to restore the monastery to its original structure. It is believed that the great saint Padma Sambhava, known as the second Buddha in Bhutan, came here in the 8th century on a flying tigress and meditated in a cave for 3 months, thereby subduing the demons that were trying to stop the spread of Buddhism. The saint then converted the Paro Valley into a Buddhist region. Enjoy a picnic lunch at Taktsang Cafeteria. After lunch, return to Paro, stopping to visit Drugyal Dzong. This Dzong whose name means "Victorious," was built in 1650 A.D. by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, the founder of Bhutan, to commemorate his victory over the Tibetan army. It was one of the fortresses built as a chain of defense against Tibetan invasion. The Dzong was also devastated by fire in 1950, and is under renovation. Enjoy a traditional Bhutanese dinner at a local farmhouse including Ara, the local wine. Overnight: Hotel.

DAY 17 (Nov 16)

Paro to Bangkok (via Calcutta)

Last breakfast together prior to departure. Overnight Bangkok Hotel on your own or continue on with extension. Ask Adventure Associates for extension options. (B)

DAY 18 (Nov 17)

Bangkok: / USA - Los Angeles

Transfer for your flight on your own or have us make other arrangements in Asia. (Transportation and meals on your own.)

NOTE: While as accurate as possible at the time of printing, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of the trip route and activities, rather than an inflexible schedule. The itinerary, hotels and flights are subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. Any additional costs incurred due to circumstance beyond Adventure Associates of Washington's (AAW) control are the responsibility of the individual passengers. AAW does not accept any responsibility for refunds of unused arrangements due to any change in itinerary in any way by clients after the commencement of the journey or strike action prior to departure and while overseas. Prices are subject to change.

| Land Costs | Deposit | RT Flight: BKK - PBH | Single Supplement | 2009 Trip Dates | Group Size | Difficulty | Activities |
|---------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| \$4295 | \$500 (\$200 non-refundable) | \$826 (non-refundable) | \$450 | Oct 31–Nov17 | 6-12 | No Experience Needed | Temples, Trek, Cultural Exchange, Lodges |

Land Package: **\$4295**

Single Supplement (Optional): **\$450**

International Air (including Gov't Tariff): **\$826** (BKK/CCU/PBH/CCU/BKK) Arranged by AA
Approx. International Air: **\$1190** (LAX/BKK/LAX) Arranged on your own

Airport codes:

LAX – Los Angeles; BKK – Bangkok; DEL – Delhi; CCU – Kolkata/Calcutta;
KTM – Kathmandu; PBH – Paro

A FEW IMPORTANT DETAILS ABOUT YOUR TRIP...Read carefully

Included in your Trip Fee: Standard accommodations (twin share); full meals board (BLD) = Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner; transfers, ground transportation; sightseeing with a national English-speaking guide and entrance fees; Bhutan visa authorization; Tourism Development Fund (TDF); Royalty and taxes to Bhutanese government; Tented camp, camping gear, porters and ponies, guide, and full board on trek.

Not Included in your Trip Fee: Tourism Development Fee (TDF) \$10; Visa fee (\$20), airport departure tax (approx. \$20 - *inquire to see if tax is paid with ticket purchase), international airfare and any accommodations en route (i.e. Bangkok), meals not mentioned, camera/video fees at monuments, tips, travel/medical/evacuation insurance and items of a personal nature. Optional: single supplement fee of \$450.

How Strenuous is the trek: It is not a strenuous hike. We are out for two nights and the three days. The long day is in the middle, but we travel at a very comfortable pace and the pass is around 11,000 feet. The last day is shorter. We'll enjoy a wonderful museum that afternoon and enjoy lodging in the adjoining guest the monastery and museum. This overlooks the most fertile valley in Bhutan.

Bhutan Lodging, Infrastructure and Roads: Bhutan is a developing country. Resources at times, cannot match tourism pressures and demands. Your host country is very accommodating and will do everything to assist in a wonderful experience. However, there may be unexpected adjustments to the travel itineraries. Accommodations in some locations may be simpler than in others. Individual rooms may be warmed by fire or there are main heated gathering areas. Bedding is very warm. Electricity is generally available along with warm showers. Roads may be under construction and cause short delays. Roads are two-lane and follow the landscape. We are visitors and our intrigue has opened the doors to amazing kingdom. Travel with an open mind. Expectations need to be flexible.

Do I need a Visa for travel to Bhutan: Yes, if you have not received a visa application from us, call the office to request one via email. Complete the visa application and email or fax to Adventure Associates along with the visa fee of US\$20. This fee is collected in advance for processing. You will receive a clearance letter close to your departure date, once your visa has been processed.

Travel & Trip Insurance: We strongly recommend that travel insurance be purchased immediately following your registration. The time and expense that you have put into planning and paying for your trip warrant protection through the purchase of travel insurance. Our primary interest in the Access America travel Insurance package is that it covers "emergency medical transportation" - this is important when traveling and preparing for the unexpected. Emergency services are very costly. This coverage is very inexpensive in comparison. The insurance also protects you and your money from late cancellations, accidents or illness in remote areas, loss of baggage, airline flight changes and other unexpected delays. The particular program we recommend (Access America) will cover "preexisting" conditions, if you purchase full coverage within fourteen (14) days following your registration or flight purchase. Information available upon request.

Transportation/Flight Arrangements: Upon your registration, Adventure Associates will work closely with you on your individual flight plans. Certain programmed activities are dependant on flight schedule - you should verify your flight itinerary with Adventure Associates **before** purchase. Druk Air flight arrangements will be done by Adventure Associates.

How to Register: If you have not downloaded an application form from our website, please contact our office for a complete registration packet. Complete the application form and return it to our office along with the appropriate deposit. Upon receipt of your application, we will send you a confirmation and final details about your pre-trip preparation. For immediate confirmation, you may charge your deposit to Visa, Master Card or American Express by phone or fax.

Payment Schedule: We accept checks, Visa, MasterCard, and American Express.

Druk Air flights, once purchased, are non-refundable

\$500 deposit due at time of registration (\$200 non-refundable)

\$1200 due six months prior to departure

Final payment due two months prior to departure

Cancellation & Refund Policy

If you must cancel prior to departure, the following fee will be assessed based upon our receipt of your written cancellation request:

Days Prior to Departure (trip destination)

90 or more \$200

60 to 89 \$500

45 to 59 50% fee

1 to 44 100% fee

Itineraries are subject to change.

No partial refunds are possible for any unused portion of your trip.

Penalties on airline tickets are subject to the individual air carrier's rules and regulations. Departure is defined as the date of the first flight, or the trip departure date as indicated on our Trip Schedule, whichever comes first.

Once a trip has been confirmed medical circumstances will not be considered as exceptions to our cancellation policy. However, if you have purchased a comprehensive Travel Insurance plan that covers cancellation, you may be able to retrieve some of the funds.



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