



DAY 1: APRIL 3, BANGKOK-PARO

We depart early in the morning to fly to Paro, Bhutan, passing near some of the highest peaks in the Himalayas and

descending into the scenic Paro valley. In the afternoon we will visit Paro Dzong, an ancient watch tower that houses the amazing National Museum of Bhutan, a perfect introduction to this enchanting place. **Overnight in Paro.**

DAY 2: APRIL 4, PARO TSHECHU (FESTIVAL)

We will join the locals to watch the annual festival of Paro. Monks and lay persons perform masked dances dressed in elaborate silk costumes; dancers depict the power of compassion to the haunting sound of trumpets, cymbals, flutes and drums. Residents dress in their finest traditional clothes; families and friends greet one another and seek divine blessing on these holy days. **Overnight in Paro.**

DAY 3: APRIL 5, PARO TSHECHU AND THIMPHU

In the wee hours of the morning, we observe the unfurling of a giant thanka, an awesome spectacle. In the afternoon we drive to Thimphu, capital of Bhutan, where, after sight seeing, we will meet some high level Bhutanese officials over dinner who will answer questions about the country and share their insights. **Overnight in Thimphu.**

DAY 4: APRIL 6, THIMPHU-PUNAKA

Today we see more sights, including potentially the National Memorial Chorten, Buddha Point for a panoramic view of the Thimphu valley, the mini-zoo to see the takin, unique national animal of Bhutan, the Folk Heritage Museum and Painting School to see how the ancient crafts still thrive in this culture.

We drive to Punaka over the breath-taking Dochu la (over 12,000 foot pass) with vast panoramas and dense wooded areas. We visit Punaka Dzong, sitting on a spit of land at the confluence of two rivers, the Mo (male)

and Pho (female). To enter, we cross a colorful, sturdy suspension bridge. Giant prayer wheels flank the entrance. An architectural wonder, buildings contain 100-foot long sandalwood beams, intricately carved doors, columns, window frames and lintels. Each interior courtyard unfolds into another, slowly revealing 21 temples, complete with exquisite thankas (religious scrolls) and massive statues of religious figures. **Overnight in Punaka.**

DAY 5: APRIL 7, PUNAKA-TRONGSA

We head east over another high pass to Trongsa, ancestral home of the ruling dynasty. Trongsa dzong, the largest in Bhutan, where the monarchy began, will provide lessons aesthetic, historic and spiritual. The Ta Dzong museum houses cultural artifacts and traditional armor. **Overnight in Trongsa.**

DAY 6: APRIL 8, TRONGSA-BUMTHANG

We proceed to Bumthang, the spiritual heart of the country. The road winds steeply up to Yutung La, then descends through dense coniferous forest. The valley harbors some of Bhutan's oldest palaces, Buddhist temples and monasteries, as well as barley fields, apple groves and meadows. **Overnight in Jakar, Bumthang.**

DAY 7: APRIL 9, BUMTHANG

We visit the 16th century Tamshing Lhakhang (temple) containing ancient Buddhist wall paintings, the 7th century Jambay Lhakhang and the Kurje Lhakhang, one of the most sacred places in the kingdom where patron saint Guru Rimpoche meditated, the 16th century Tang Ugyen Chholing Palace has a museum describing traditional rural life; the pool of Mebartso (The Lake of Fire) where Pemalingpa (founder of the Nyingmapa sect) is said to have found treasure hidden by Guru Rimpoche. **Overnight in Bumthang.**

DAY 8: APRIL 10, BUMTHANG-PHOBJIKHA

We begin our return trip with a visit to Phobjika Valley where we may visit the 16th century Nyingmapa monastery and, if we are most fortunate, will see the rare, majestic black-necked cranes where they winter before returning to Tibet. **Overnight in Phobjikha.**

DAY 9: APRIL 11, PHOBIKHA-WANGDUE

Passing through steep valleys whose upper hillsides are covered with red, pink and white rhododendron blossoms, we retrace our way across Pele la to the town of Wangdue. **Overnight in Wangdue.**

DAY 10: APRIL 12, WANGDUE-PARO

Another day of glorious spring time scenery, perhaps misty, with vistas of Himalyan peaks appearing and disappearing in haunting splendor. We re-enter Paro for our final great adventure, the hike to the Tiger's Nest. **Overnight in Paro.**

DAY 11: APRIL 13, PARO

This will be one of the high points of the trip, the hike to Paro Taktshang Monastery, known as Tiger's Nest. The monastery perches at 10,000 feet on the edge of a steep cliff, requiring a two-hour hike on a well-maintained trail through oak, pine and rhododendron forest festooned with fluttering prayer flags. Legend states that Guru Rimpoche flew to this cliff mounted on a flaming tigress in the 8th century. A tea house now welcomes visitors part way up the hill.

Returning from Taktsang we may visit the ruins of Drukgyel dzong, build in the 1650's as a fortress to guard the Paro valley. **Overnight in Paro.**

DAY 12: APRIL 14, PARO-BANGKOK

We board our plane to depart the jewel-like Paro Valley and return to Bangkok over the roof of the world, the majestic Himalyan peaks.

“This trip to Bhutan was pure delight! Our knowledgeable guides covered the cultural, historical and religious aspects and Larry gave us spirituality, poetry, and group spirit, deepening and anchoring the experience in our life: priceless.”
— CHRISTIANE ST. JEAN, MONTREAL, QUEBEC