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6 DAYS/ 5 NIGHTS BHUTAN

Day 01 Arrive Paro by Druk Air, transfer to Thimphu (55 Km, 1:30 Hours)

The flight to Paro on a clear day is one of the most spectacular of all mountain flights. One can see Mt. Everest, Kanchenjunga, Makalu and other peaks in Bhutan such as Chomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tsering ghang. The first gift from Bhutan will be cool, clean fresh air as you step out of the aircraft. On arrival at Paro airport, received by our representative and transfer to Thimphu, the capital town of Bhutan, the road leads through the Paro valley to the confluence of Paro and Thimphu rivers at Chuzom (confluence). Later in the day take an exploratory walk getting acquainted with the local environment. If time permits visit National Memorial Chorten: a monument for world peace and prosperity. The paintings and statues inside the monument provide a deep insight into Buddhist philosophy. Overnight at hotel in Thimphu.

Day 02 Thimphu

After leisurely breakfast at hotel proceed to a guided tour of Thimphu. Proceed to visit National Library (sat sun, govt holiday closed), which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist texts and manuscripts, some dating back several hundred years, as well as modern academic books mainly on Himalayan culture and religion. Also visit nearby institute for Zorig Chusum (Sat afternoon, sun & govt holiday closed): Commonly known as Arts & Crafts School or Painting School, the Institute offers a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. On a visit, one can see students learning the various skills taught at the school. Drive towards city centre to visit Textile (sat afternoon, sun & govt holiday closed) and Folk Heritage Museum: These museums, both of which opened in 2001, provide fascinating insights into Bhutanese material culture and way of life. Conclude sightseeing with a visit of Trashichhodzong: This impressive fortress/monastery houses Secretariat building, the throne room of His Majesty, the King and various government offices. It is also the summer residence of Chief Abbot and central monk body. Overnight at hotel in Thimphu

Day 03 Thimphu – Punakha (75 km, 3 hrs approx)

After breakfast at hotel, Drive to Punakha across Dochula pass (3080m). In Bhutan, the passes are marked by a large Bhutanese Chorten and prayer flag. Dochula pass offers the most spectacular view over the high peaks of the eastern Himalayas on a clear day. After checking into hotel, proceed to visit Punakha Dzong, a massive structure built at the junction of two rivers. It was the capital of Bhutan until 1955, and still serves as the winter residence of the monk body. Afternoon hike up through fields of chilies, cabbages and rice along the banks of the Mo Chhu to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, a stunning monument recently built by the Queens and consecrated in 1999. Evening can be spent exploring Punakha village located right on the bank of river.

Day 04 Punakha – Paro (125 kms, 4hr drive)

After breakfast visit Wangdue Dzong which is perched on a spur at the confluence of two rivers. The position of Dzong is remarkable as it completely covers the spur and commands an impressive view over both the north-south and east-west. Wangdue district is also famous for its bamboo work, slate & stone carving. Drive back to Paro descending back down from Dochu La, follow the way back up the dramatic Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu river valleys, before crossing through Paro Town towards the north end of the valley. En route visit Simtokha Dzong, the place of profound tantric teaching, this dzong now houses a school for the study of the Dzongkha language. After checking into hotel, proceed to visit Ta Dzong (sun, mon & govt holiday closed), originally built as Watch Tower, it now houses National Museum of the Kingdom and boasts antique thangkha paintings, textiles, weapons & armour, household objects and a rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts. Walk down the trail to visit Rinpung Dzong, meaning 'fortress of the heap of jewels' which has a long and fascinating history. Along the wooden galleries lining the courtyard of the Rinpung Dzong are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore. Before you

enter the dzong you cross a picturesque traditional covered cantilever bridge, locally known as Nemi Zam.

Day 05 Paro

Morning take an excursion to Taktsang Monastery (5 hrs walk), the most famous of Bhutanese monasteries. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery hence it is called "Tiger's Nest". The excursion to monastery takes about 5 hours for round trip. On the way back to Paro, stop at Drukgyel Dzong, a ruined fortress from where Bhutanese warriors fought Tibetan invaders centuries ago. The snowy dome of sacred Chomolhari, "mountain of goddess" looms directly over the Dzong. On the way back to hotel, visit 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo. One of the most sacred shrines in the country, it reflects the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.

Day 06 Depart Paro – Kuala Lumpur

After leisurely breakfast transfer to the airport for flight to onward destination.