



# AHKE Adventure Travel

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Website: [www.bhutanecoventure.com](http://www.bhutanecoventure.com)

-Adventure - Culture - Eco Tours - Buddhism -

## “TWO KINGDOMS, ONE JOURNEY”. (11 days)

**The Kingdom of BHUTAN**, nestling in the heart of the great Himalaya, only opened its gates to foreigners in 1974. It remains the society, where age old culture and traditional life continues as it had been for centuries. With about 69% of population still living in rural Bhutan, farming is still considered an occupation for the majority of Bhutanese. Old aged barter system and close bond within the family often with more then 50 members are common sight.

**SIKKIM** is one of India's smallest, and newest State. Un till 1975 it was another Himalayan Kingdom wedge between another two Himalayan Kingdoms, Nepal and Bhutan on it's west and east, with the vast Tibetan plateau enclosing it on the north. It lay at the foot of the mighty Khangchendzonga, the world's third highest mountain. The state has beautiful land lush landscape, elevation ranges from 244 meters

Two Kingdoms, one Journey Tour takes you throughout some important eastern Himalayan ranges. You start with Bhutan, the last Himalayan Buddhist Kingdom. This is also known as the land of the peaceful Dragon. You will visit beautiful valleys of Paro, Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan, and the picturesque Punahka, Wangdue and sub tropical region of Phuntsoling in South.

From here, you will be driven through the manicured tea gardens to the hill-top town of Darjeeling, which during British India period was used as one of the recreational hill resort. You will still see some British monuments dating back to 19<sup>th</sup> century. After a day of sightseeing around Darjeeling drive to Gangtok , the capital town of Sikkim. In Sikkim visit the famous Rukmtek Monastery - seat of the Black Hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism. From Sikkim, drive to Kalimpong - Tour ends at Bagdogra Airport in India.





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## “DETAIL ITINERARY”

### **DAY 01: ARRIVE PARO**

The flight to Paro is one of the most amazing experiences. On clear days, there are never ending view of some world highest mountains peaks. Hostess will guide you to fill in disembarkation forms. Landing in Paro International Airport is something you will remember of for long time.

You will need to jot down your address in Bhutan as c/o AHKE Adventure Travel. Your visa details will be made available in advance, and in case of any problems, AHK Eco Venture representative will be at the airport to assist you. Otherwise, you will meet your escort right at the exit door dressed in Bhutanese attire.

Paro (2300m MSL) valley is more than beautiful district of Bhutan. It has some historically important monasteries and cultural sites. This beautiful terraced valley is known for Bhutanese red rice and summer fruits and vegetable. Farmers here are much better off, due to easy accessibility to market for their farm produces.

Drive to Hotel and Check in leisure time after the Lunch. Just before the Dinner, your escort will make brief presentation of the whole trip program. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

### **Day 02: PARO**

Today after breakfast hike to Taktsang. The trail is broad and the walk uphill takes you a little more than a 1000ft above the Paro valley. The view of Taktsang monastery built on the cliff is a spectacular sight. It is a great pilgrim site for the Buddhists and also it is one of the most sacred sites in the Himalayan world, a pilgrimage destination for devout Buddhists. For a close look at the cliff-hanging site, hike about 2 hrs up hills to a view points directly opposite the monastery a hilltop filled with prayer flags. From here Taktsang is clearly seen, clinging to a sheer rock wall 3000 ft above the valleys floor, at an altitude of 10,000ft. Beyond the viewpoint, the path is narrow and steep as it climbs to a point above the temple, from where walkers descend to the building itself.

Restoration after a fire in 1998 is now almost completed. The main deity of Taktsang is Dorje Drolo, the wrathful form of Guru Rinpoche, the precious Teacher, also known as Padmasambhava. The great tantric mystic is said to have flown here on the back of a tiger, a manifestation of his consort, Yeshe Tsogyal, when he brought the teachings of the Buddhist Dharma to Bhutan in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The image of Dorje Drolo inside the temple is shown standing on a tiger. There are 13 sacred sites at Taktsang, and several meditation caves in the cliffs above. Many saints have



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meditated here, not only Guru Rinpoche but also Milarepa and the female yogin Machig Labdronma. Here you can meditate awhile before beginning the descent. Nearby there is a teahouse, where you can stop for lunch or a snack. Overnight at hotel in Paro.

### DAY03: PARO-PUNAKHA

Today after early breakfast drive to Punakha via Thimphu across Dochu-la pass (3,088m/10,130ft), from which there is a breathtaking view of the high peaks on a clear day. Until 1955 Punakha served as the capital of Bhutan and it is still the winter seat of the Je khenpo (chief Abbot), visit Punakha Dzong build in the 17<sup>th</sup> century at the junction of Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers. Damaged by fires, floods and earthquake over the centuries, the dzong has recently been fully restored to its original glory

Evening visit to local market. Overnight at the hotel in Punakha.



(Punakha Dzong Entrance)

### DAY 04: PUNAKHA - THIMPHU

After breakfast, drive to Wangdue about 45 minutes from Punakha and the last town on the highway before entering central Bhutan. Wangdue is a typical, bustling small Bhutanese town and its formidable Dzong is the town's most visible feature. In the 17th century Wangdue played a critical role in unifying the western, central and southern regions of the country.

After lunch drive to the nation's capital, Thimphu, a small, bustling city in the heart of the Himalayas. Thimphu charm comes not only from its wealth of museums or places of historic interest, but also from the strong national character of its architectural style. A stroll through this lively town and into its shops reveals an interesting combination of tradition and modernity. Afternoon at leisure, and overnight stay at a hotel in Thimphu.



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## DAY 05: THIMPHU



Today's after breakfast sightseeing in Thimphu valley includes visits to: National Memorial Chorten: The building of this landmark was envisaged by the third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, as a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is both a memorial to the late king ('the father of modern Bhutan'), and a monument to world peace. The painting and statues inside the monument provide a deep insight into Buddhist philosophy;

National Library, which holds a vast collection of Buddhist texts and manuscripts, some dating back several hundred years, as well as modern academic books mainly on Himalayan culture and religion:

Institute for Zorig Chusum (commonly known as the Painting School) where students undertake a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan:

National Institute of Traditional Medicine (outside only), where the medicinal herbs abundant in the kingdom are compounded and dispensed, and traditional medical practitioners are trained:

Folk Heritage and National Textile Museums: These museums, both of which opened in 2001, provide fascinating insight into Bhutanese material culture and way of life. Handicrafts Emporium: This government-run enterprise displays a wide range of beautifully hand-woven textiles and craft products. It also carries a small collection of books on Bhutan, Buddhism and Himalayan culture.

After that drive to Dodeyna and do a hike to Tango Monastery. The drive of 20 kms till the end of the road offers varieties of scenes. The Old Palace (for view only and no entry) where our present king was born in the year 1955 can be seen, the farming village of Begana and Kabjisa and the temples on the hill -slopes. Lama Gyalwa Lhanampa founded the Goemba in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.



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The present building was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the 'Divine Madman' in the Western Bhutan Chapter. Visible from the road, above pine forest. Overnight at hotel in Thimphu.

### **DAY 06: THIMPHU - PHUENTSHOLING**

Today after breakfast drive down to Phuentsholing, en route visiting Simtokha Dzong, built in 1627 and the oldest fortress of the kingdom. It now houses the institute for language and cultural studies. The Thimphu-Phuentsholing road was built in 1962 by Dantak, the Indian border roads organization. The drive on this route is very pleasant with numerous scenic spots. Just before arriving in Phuentsholing, we will stop to visit Kharbandi Gumpa, a temple built in 1967. It houses large statues of Shakyamuni, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and Guru Rinpoche.

Overnight at the hotel in Phuentsholing. Your tour with Bhutan Travel Bureau ends this evening. You will be handed over to our Indian counterpart tomorrow morning for exit from Bhutan and onwards travel to the Indian hill stations and Sikkim

### **DAY 07: PHUENTSHOLING - SILIGURI/DARJEELING**

After breakfast drive to Siliguri, passing through lush green tea garden en route. Siliguri is the gateway to north-eastern India, and the main transit point for visits to Darjeeling, Sikkim, Bhutan, eastern Nepal and Assam. After lunch in Siliguri, drive to

Darjeeling via the Mahananda wildlife sanctuary. Overnight at the hotel in Darjeeling.



**(Chili is important part of Traditional meal)**



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## DAY 08: DARJEELING

In the early morning enjoy the sunrise from Tiger hill. The early start to the day is worth it, as the view from this place is indeed unforgettable, as the first rays of the sun touch the mountain peaks, and colors change from grey to pink to a luminous gold. Everest, the world's highest peak is visible from Tiger hill, but being 170 km away does not stand out as strikingly as the much closer Kanchenjunga.

Then visit Ghoom monastery, built in 1850 by Lama Sherub Gyatsho, a monk from Mongolia. It is a Tibetan monastery where ancient birch bark manuscripts are carefully preserved. Later visit the Himalayan mountain institute, the house of the late Tenzing Norgay, the Sherpa who with Edmund Hillary made the first ascent of Mt. Everest in 1953. In the evening, visit the Tibetan Refugee self help centre, which produces and sells a wide range of Tibetan artifacts and curios.



(Darjeeling Toy Train)

Here you can see Tibetan craftsman making traditional items such as carpets, woolen and leather boots, and woodcarvings. The centre was established in 1954 to rehabilitate refugees who had fled Tibet with the Dalai Lama in the wake of the Chinese invasion. Overnight at the hotel in Darjeeling.



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## **DAY 09: DARJEELING - GANGTOK**

After breakfast drive to Gangtok. Later sightseeing in Gangtok includes a visit to the beautiful Enchey Monastery, approached from an avenue lined by hundreds of multi-colored prayer flags. Then visit the Institute of Cottage Industries where you can watch young students being taught the traditional art of thangka painting, and also weaving, wood carving and carpet making. Also visit the Institute of Tibetology, which is housed in a beautiful building constructed in traditional Tibetan style, with murals and decorated pillars. Overnight at the hotel in Gangtok.



**(Part of Darjeeling Town)**

## **DAY 10: GANGTOK - KALIMPONG**

Morning excursion to the famous Rumtek Monastery, which was rebuilt in the 1960s as the headquarters of the Karma kagyupa School of Buddhist, then drives to Kalimpong. In the evening, visit a Gelugpa monastery, and also visit the Bhutanese monastery and one of the flower nurseries for which Kalimpong is Famous. Overnight at the hotel in Kalimpong.

## **DAY 11: KALIMPONG/BAGDOGRA AIRPORT**

After breakfast drive to Bagdogra airport for flight to onward destination.