

VISIT BHUTAN: LAND OF THE THUNDER DRAGON

April 7 – 18, 2019

with Larry Robinson
Board Member, Center for Climate Protection

Beneficiary organization:

center for
climate
protection

This very special tour of Bhutan, the world's only carbon negative country and the last Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas, will provide insight into:

- » The people and their livelihoods— some lodged in the 16th century and some as current as today;
- » Geography— from the temperate midlands into the foothills of the Himalayas, across rivers and through forests;
- » An amazing culture— the unique aspects of Tibetan Buddhism and its manifestations in all Bhutanese life;
- » Stunning arts and architecture— from exquisite mandalas on walls and thankas to the arrangement of buildings in an ancient monastery, the beauty of Bhutan will astound you;
- » The emerging government— how does this small constitutional monarchy focus on Gross Domestic Happiness, balancing the needs for modernization and economic growth with the urgency of environmental protection, while hovering between political and economic giants China on the north and India to the south?

"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."

— Cristiane St. Jean, Montreal, Quebec

Join us to learn the answers first hand.

Meet with government officials and religious leaders and speak with everyday Bhutanese people. Travelers will walk to villages, hike through rice paddies and native vegetation, climb hillsides to visit ancient fortress/monasteries and be immersed in a land both foreign and welcoming.



Itinerary:

Day 1 April 7: BKK- Paro

Our late morning flight from Bangkok will cross the Himalayas and offer a spectacular approach into Bhutan's Paro Valley. There we will meet our guide and drive to the capital Thimphu where we will spend the night.

Day 2 April 8: Thimphu

We will drive up the beautiful Thimphu Valley to the headwaters of the Thimphu River. Here we will hike to Tango Monastery, home to Bhutan's University of Buddhist Studies. After lunch we will visit the spectacular Golden Buddha shrine and monastery high on a hill overlooking the city. Over dinner we will meet with one of Bhutan's leading lamas for a discussion of Tibetan Buddhism and the Gross National Happiness Project.

Day 3 April 9: Thimphu-Punakha

Our drive to Punakha takes us over 10,300 foot Dochu La Pass and offers us a magnificent view of the eastern Himalayan peaks. Along the way we will stop at the Lemperi Botanical Gardens for lunch before continuing our descent into the Punakha Valley where we will spend the night.

Day 4 April 10: Punakha

In the cool of the morning we will hike through rice fields and a village to visit the legendary Chimi Lhakhang, also known as the “temple of fertility,” founded by Lama Drukpa Kunley in the 15th century. Kunley was the embodiment of the “crazy wisdom” tradition. In the afternoon we will drive to the ancient capital of Bhutan, the Dzong of Punakha. We will spend the night in Punakha.

Day 5 April 11: Punakha-Phobjikha Valley

Rising through hillsides covered with rhododendrons in full bloom, we will cross the 11,000 foot Pele La Pass and descend to the wide Phobjikha Valley, winter home to the endangered Black Necked Crane. Here we will visit the Gangtey Monastery. Our hotel this night is on a promontory overlooking one of Bhutan's few glacial valleys.

Day 6 April 12: Phobjikha- Trongsa

Our drive today will take us through the beautiful Black Mountains to Trongsa, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family. If the weather gods favor us we will get a view of Jomolhari, Bhutan's highest peak. We will spend the night in Trongsa.

Day 7 April 13: Trongsa- Bumthang

In the morning we will tour the Trongsa Dzong fortress and monastery and the adjacent museum which offers an excellent concise history of Bhutan and of Tibetan Buddhism. Our route today takes us over the 11,200 foot Yutong La Pass before descending into Chumay Valley, the first of the four Bumthang valleys. We will spend the night in the town of Jakar, Bumthang. This area is the cultural and spiritual heart of the country.

Day 8 April 14: Bumthang - Domkhar Tshechu

We will have the rare privilege of witnessing and participating in the Domkhar Tshechu, one of the most important religious festivals of Bhutan.

Day 9 April 15: Bumthang-Chokor Valley hike

Today will be spent strolling through the Bumthang-Chokor Valley, visiting the Jambay Lhakhang and the Kurje Lhakhang, two of the most ancient and sacred of Bhutan's temples.

Day 10 April 16: Bumthang-Paro

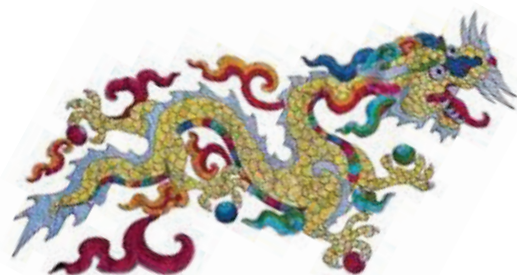
Today we take a short domestic flight (with spectacular views) back to Paro. Here we will visit the National Museum and several sacred sites. Those who want to can also wander around the town of Paro for some souvenir shopping.

Day 11 April 17: Paro - Tiger's Nest hike

Today we will undertake a hike to the most sacred pilgrimage site in Bhutan: Taktsang Lhakhang or Tiger's Nest. Visible from across the valley, this stunning monastery clings to a vertical cliff above the valley floor. It is said that making this pilgrimage guarantees one a fortunate rebirth.

Day 12 April 18: Paro-Bkk

We have an early morning departure for Bangkok. If the weather is clear we will have an unforgettable view of Mt. Everest and the high peaks of the Himalayas.



“The two most memorable weeks of my almost 75 year life. Beauty, wonder and mystery at every turn. The elevation of sight and soul was constant. The company of fellow-travelers continues to enrich the rest of my life.”
-Thomas O’Leary



Additional Trip Option: The Jomolhari Loop

April 18-24, 2019

Jomolhari Loop is the shortest of the Jomolhari trekking routes, which are the most popular treks in Bhutan. With altitude differences of 2,500m and nearly 5,000m it offers a wide range of landscapes, fauna and flora. The highlight of this trek is the spectacular view of Mount Jomolhari from Jomolhari Basecamp (Jangothang). Trekkers who want to avoid high passes and high altitude can choose an easier version of the Jomolhari Loop by retracing their steps from Jangothang (see days 1-2), while still having the majestic impressions of Mount Jomolhari.

Itinerary:

Day 1: April 18 Sharna Zampa - Thangthangkha

Distance 22 km, 7-8 hours, 770 m ascent, 10 m descent, camp altitude 3,610 m. On this long day, the trail continues with lots of small ups and downs. After going uphill through the river valley the valley finally narrows gradually to a mere path which descends to a meadow where we will camp.

Day 2: April 19 Thangthangkha – Jangothang

Distance 19 km, 5-6 hours, 480 m ascent, camp altitude 4,080 m. If you did not see Mt. Jomolhari the previous evening, you will still have a chance to get a great view early this morning. This morning the trek continues up the Paro Chhu valley which widens into patches of alpine meadow.

Day 3: April 20 Jangothang Halt

The rest day in Jangothang provides plenty of possibilities for day hikes with great views of lakes and snow capped mountains such as Jomolhari and Jichu Drake. There are good chances to spot some blue sheep on the upper slopes of the valley. Jangothang is a perfect environment for your acclimatization.

Day 4: April 21 Jangothang to Soi Yaktsa

Distance 16km, six to seven hours, 810m ascent, 1,090m descent, camp altitude 3,800m. The trail leads to a last settlement in the valley and drops to the Paro Chhu. Passing the lake of Tshophu (4,380m) you will climb up steeply to Bhonte La pass at 4,890 m, the highest point of this trek route.

Day 5: April 22 Soi Yaktsa to Thombu Shong

Distance 11km, four to five hours, 720m ascent, 340m descent, camp altitude 4,180m. The trail climbs 100m over a ridge to drop to another stream then. After crossing the Takhung La pass (4,520m) you descent to Thombu Shong, three yak herder huts with your campsite next to them.

Day 6: April 23 Thombu Shong to Gunitsawa Village

Distance 13km, four to five hours, 200m ascent, 1,650m descent, camp altitude 2,850m. Crossing Thombu La pass (4,380m) you will finally reach Gunitsawa where you can be collected to drive to Paro or you may decide to stay at the campsite, Sharna Zampa.

Day 7: April 24 Paro - Bangkok

Depart to the Paro international airport for your onward flight to Bangkok. End of Bhutan Tour.



Details

Bhutan Tour cost is \$4,995 per person. With additional Jomolhari Loop, cost is \$6,995 per person. Single travelers pay an additional charge of \$500.00.

Included in our cost:

- » All meals and lodging in Bhutan.
- » All transportation in Bhutan.
- » Air transportation from Bangkok to Paro, Bhutan
- » A \$1,500 tax-deductible contribution made to the Center for Climate Protection, the trip's beneficiary organization, to offset your carbon footprint from air travel.

Not included in the price of the tour:

- » International Air Fares between your home and Bangkok.
- » First night's stay at Bangkok hotel.
- » Tips, souvenirs, beverages, and laundry.

RESERVATIONS

A deposit of \$500.00 by September 30, 2018 reserves your place on the tour. The first 15 individuals will be accepted as tour participants and anyone number 16 and after will be assigned to a waiting list. Your deposit guarantees that we can guarantee tour arrangements. Final payment of the balance on the tour cost is due no later than December 1, 2018.

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