

*Across the Land of the Thunder  
Dragon*



Specially prepared for  
Steppes Travel Clients  
19 Days



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## QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Fly London Heathrow/Delhi
Day 2	Fly Delhi/Calcutta
Day 3	Calcutta
Day 4	Calcutta/Fly Guwahati/Drive Samdrup Jongkhar
Day 5	Drive Samdrup Jongkhar/Trashigang
Day 6	Trashigang
Day 7	Drive Trashigang/Mongar
Day 8	Drive Mongar/Bumthang
Day 9	Bumthang
Day 10	Bumthang
Day 11	Bumthang
Day 12	Drive Bumthang/Gangtey
Day 13	Gangtey
Day 14	Gangtey
Day 15	Drive Punakha/Thimpu
Day 16	Drive Thimpu/Paro
Day 17	Paro
Day 18	Fly Paro/ Delhi
Day 19	Fly Delhi/London Heathrow

## YOUR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Date	Route	Flight No	Check In	Depart	Arrive
Day 1	London Heathrow Terminal 3/Delhi	VS300	08:15	22:00	11:45*
Day 2	Delhi/Calcutta	IC264	16:00	17:00	18:55
Day 4	Calcutta/Guwahati	9W201	09:10	10:10	11:20
Day 18	Paro/Delhi	KB120	07:50	08:50	11:55
Day 19	Delhi/Heathrow Terminal 3	VS301	11:15	13:15	17:55

\* = Arrival the following day

Druk Air flight schedules can change each season.

It is also possible to fly British Airways direct into Calcutta and back out of Delhi. Please ask for details.



# DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

## Day 1

### London Heathrow/Delhi

Depart Heathrow on the Virgin Airways flight to Delhi, flying overnight.

## Day 2

### Delhi/Kolkata

On arrival into Delhi this morning you will be met at the International Terminal and driven to the Trident Gurgaon where you have lunch (payable locally).



Later this afternoon you return to Delhi Domestic Airport in order to catch the IC264 flight to Kolkata, departing at 17:00 and arriving at 18:55. On arrival you will be met and driven to the Oberoi Grand.

Overnight in the Oberoi Grand in a deluxe room on a bed & Breakfast basis.

## Day 3

### Kolkata

This morning you will be met for a half day city tour of Kolkata.

Afternoon at leisure.

Overnight in the Oberoi Grand in a deluxe room on a bed & Breakfast basis.

## Day 4

### Kolkata/Guwahati/Samdrup Jongkhar

This morning you will be collected by your driver and driven to Kolkata Airport for your short flight to Guwahati, Jet Airways flight 9W201 departing at 10:10 and arriving at 11:20.



On arrival in Guwahati, you are met and driven to the Bhutanese Border town of Samdrup Jongkhar where you will spend the night in local lodge accommodation. You will meet your Bhutanese driver and guide at the border and say goodbye to your Indian driver.

Overnight in Hotel TLT in a standard room on a full board basis.

## Day 5

### Samdrup Jongkhar/Trashigang

This morning you continue your journey, 6 hours drive to Trashigang. The road was finished in 1965 and goes from ridge to ridge giving lovely glimpses of the surrounding countryside. The journey provides an amazing contrast to the rest of Bhutan as you leave the wonderfully tropical, dense jungle of India and climb up towards Trashigang.



Trashigang, high up on a mountain, is busier than most other Bhutanese towns. Trashigang is used as a market place for the hill-



people of Merak and Sakten who are known for their exceptional features and costume, which is brightly colored and different from customary Bhutanese clothing.

The 17th century Dzong is built on top of a cliff on the edge of the town. The views from the courtyard of the Dzong stretch across Trashigang's valley and are quite breathtaking. From the parapets it is easy to see why the Dzong was impenetrable to invading armies. Until the recent opening of an administrative center at Yangtse Dzong, Trashigang was the center of all religious and secular activity for the region. The town remains the capital of the east and a growing commercial center.

Overnight at Druk Dhejung in a standard room on a full board basis.

## Day 6



### Trashigang

This morning you will be met by your guide and taken on a tour of Trashigang town. Later you are taken to visit Tashi Yangtse and Chorten Kora.

Yangtse Dzong is a half hour walk from the road. A town has developed around Chorten Kora, one of the only two chortens built in a style prevalent in Nepal and the spot where Guru Rimpoche is believed to have had a vision that a temple and chorten would be built. Yangtse offers exciting trekking opportunities and is one of the two locations where the Black-necked cranes migrate. The area is also known for its exceptional woodcraft.

Optionally venture into the Gamri River Area where you take a short hike and return to Trashigang later this afternoon.

Overnight at Druk Dhejung in a standard room on a full board basis.

## Day 7



### Trashigang/Mongar

Today you are met and driven 6 hours to Mongar. The town is small with sprinkling of shops. Mongar, like Trashigang, is built on the side of a hill because valleys in eastern Bhutan are too narrow for towns to develop on the valley floor.

Mongar Dzong is modern compared to others in the kingdom. It was re-constructed by the order of the Third king. Lhuntse is 77 kilometers from Mongar and is one of the most isolated districts in Bhutan. The landscape is spectacular with stark cliffs and gorges and dense coniferous forests. The region notably famed for its weavers and special textiles and fabrics, generally considered to be the best in the country. The Kurtoe region of Lhuntse is also the heartland of the Royal dynasty.

Overnight at Druk Mongar in a standard room on a full board basis.

## Day 8



### **Mongar/Bumthang**

This morning you depart from Trashigang and are driven to Bumthang, approximately a 6 hour drive. The road twists and turns, carrying you over high passes with stunning views. You arrive in Bumthang late this afternoon.

This is one of the most beautiful valleys in the kingdom. It is also the religious heartland where many saints and masters meditated leaving their imprints as sacred places of worship and pilgrimage. Apart from the Dzong at Jakar, smaller monasteries are situated all over the valley. Tales of Padmasambhava dominate these holy shrines. The valley is home to the Jambay and Kurjey Lhakhangs where body imprints of Guru Rimpoche remains preserved upon a rock.

Overnight at the Swiss Guest House in a standard room on a full board basis.

## Day 9



### **Bumthang - Ngang Lhakhang (Start of Trek)**

This morning you begin the Bumthang Cultural Trek, meeting your trek team in the Tangbi Valley.

The trek route takes you along the Chamkhar Chu, a river known for its trout and through the beautiful forest path leading to our campsite below the Gang Lhakhang village "Swan village". Altitude 2,850 m. Distance 11 Kms. Time 4 - 5 hours.

Overnight in a tent on a full board basis.

## Day 10

### **Ngang Lhakhang - Ugyen Choling**

Today backtrack down the opposite side of the river, before turning up a forested valley leading to Phephela pass (3,400 m). The path is not steep, but can be quite slippery from wet leaves. After lunch at the pass, we descend along the long path, through forest, grazing fields, and cross the Tang Chu, another trout filled river to our campsite. Altitude 2,900m. Distance 18 kms. Time 6 hours.

Overnight in a tent on a full board basis.

## Day 11

### **Ugyen Choling - Bumthang (End of Trek)**

In the morning on the way back to Jakar, visit the Member Tso "Flaming Lake" one of Bhutan's a most sacred pilgrimage site where devotees float small-lighted butter lamps on the water.

Overnight at the Swiss Guest House in a standard room on a full board basis.

## Day 12

### **Bumthang/Gangtey**

This morning you are met by your driver and driven west to Gangtey, a journey of approximately 6 hours drive. You drive through Trongsa where you can break your journey and have a rest. Trongsa offers a



welcome rest to travellers. Trongsa is an ancestral home of the present royal family. Trongsa Dzong is an impregnable fortress; the Dzong itself is a labyrinth of temples, corridors and offices holding court over the local community. It is built on many levels into the side of a hill and can be seen from every approach to Trongsa.

Continue on to Gangtey. The Gangtey Valley, an area equally famous as the winter home to the very rare Black-Necked Crane. Experts estimate that fewer than 800 cranes exist in the wild. The majestic birds stay in the valley from November through March.

Overnight in Dewachen Guest House in a standard room on a full board basis.

### Day 13



#### Gangtey Trek

Today you begin your trek. Meet your trek team early this morning and set off on the trail. The trail winds through meadows and fields and then climbs through a mixed forest of juniper, bamboo, magnolia and rhododendron to the Tselela pass (3,320m). Altitude 3,000 m; Distance 14 Km; Time 5 - 6 hours.

Overnight in a tent on a full board basis.

### Day 14

#### Gangtey Trek

A gentle climb this morning leads to the Shobjula pass (3,390 m). The descent leads to a wide valley offering wonderful, big sky mountain views. Distance 16 Km; Time 6 - 7 hours.

Overnight in a tent on a full board basis.

### Day 15



#### Gangtey Trek/Punakha/Thimpu

A short ascent brings us to the Tashila pass (2,788 m). Be sure to fill your water bottle shortly after crossing the pass as the descent is dry. You walk down through an ever-changing landscape into the drainage of the Dhang Chu.

Time permitting visit The Punakha Dzong before meeting your driver and continuing on to Thimpu, the Capital of Bhutan.



Guru Rinpoche blessed the site of Punakha Dzong in the 8th Century, the original dzong was built in 1328 by a saint, and the present dzong was built in 1637 at the junction of two rivers. Until 1955, Punakha served as the winter capital of Bhutan, and even today it is the winter seat of the Je Jhenpo (Chief Abbot).

Overnight at the Taj Tashi in a deluxe room on a bed & breakfast basis.

### Day 16

#### Thimpu/Paro

This morning you'll be taken to visit Thimpu town. You are then driven on to Paro where you stay at the Uma Paro hotel.



Uma Paro is located on a 38-acre hilltop site. It is close to the town of Paro, one of the main cultural centres of Bhutan. There are only 20 rooms and nine villas, surrounded by pines, fashioned by traditionally-trained Bhutanese artisans working alongside Cheong Yew Kwan, architect of Rocky Point at Parrot Cay. In the eight one-bedroom villas enjoy a private spa for in-room massages. The headline two-bedroom villa has all this plus an even greater privilege of space and endless views.

Overnight at Uma Paro in a deluxe room on a B&B basis

#### Day 17



#### Paro

You will be met by your guide this morning for your tour of the Paro Valley. You will be driven up the winding road beside the Pa Chu (chu means river or water) to Satsam Chorten. From this point begin the challenging walk to Taktsang - The Tiger's Nest, where a vantage point directly across a gorge from the temple can be reached in about 2-3 hours.



This magical monastery clings to a vertical granite cliff 600m above the valley floor. Legend says that Guru Padmasambhava flew to a cave on this cliff riding a tiger - hence the name - to meditate. The tiger was actually his favourite consort, Yeshe Tsogyel, whom he transformed to a flying tiger for the purposes of this journey. They meditated in the cave and when the Guru left he instructed that the monastery should be built. Later continue for further sightseeing including the magnificent ruins of Drukyl Dzong and the imposing site of Paro Dzong itself.

Overnight at Uma Paro in a deluxe room on a B&B basis

#### Day 18

#### Paro/ Delhi

This morning you are transferred to the airport for your Druk Air flight to Delhi departing at 08:50 and arriving in Delhi at 11:55.

On arrival in Delhi you are met and driven to the Imperial Hotel in Central Delhi.

Overnight at the Imperial Delhi in a Heritage room on a B&B basis.

#### Day 19

#### Delhi/London Heathrow

Morning transfer to the airport for your return flight to Heathrow with Virgin Atlantic.

**Estimated Cost:** From £4,525 per person, based on two sharing

**Price Includes:**

- International flights from/to Heathrow with Virgin Atlantic
- Domestic flights in India
- One way Druk Air flights from Paro to Delhi in economy class
- All accommodation on a full board basis in Bhutan (except at the Taj and Uma which are on breakfast only, other meals included but at local restaurants) and breakfast in India
- Bhutanese visa fee
- Private transfers with driver
- Sightseeing tours
- Services of a trek team and use of trek equipment (except use of sleeping bag)

**Price Excludes:**

- Any additional drinks/meals
- Local airport departure tax
- Items of a personal nature
- Travel insurance
- Gratuities
- Indian visa costs

**Notes**

**Accommodation:**

With regard to accommodation it should be noted that whilst the best possible accommodation will be provided for the duration of your stay in Bhutan - the facilities and general standards of accommodation are not by any means of the same level that one would find in a five star grade hotel in India. Accommodation generally is much more basic - in some cases - more like a guesthouse than a hotel. Furthermore, around the time of the tsechus, there is much pressure on room availability and those booking closer to the date of departure can find themselves in 'second grade' accommodation or in some cases, private houses. Accommodation standards do not detract from the beauty of the country and, if taken in the right spirit, will not detract from what is essentially a privileged stay in a fascinating kingdom.

**Flight and Sightseeing Schedules**

Clients should note that Druk Air flight schedules and sightseeing arrangements can sometimes be amended at short notice.

With regard to sightseeing, public museums and national monuments/dzongs can sometimes be closed and you should be prepared that you may not see all that is on the itinerary.

**Trekking**

Please bring your own sleeping bags, ground mats and pillows as these will not be provided for you. Please read the section on trekking in the Françoise Pommaret guide book to Bhutan "Himalayan Mountain Kingdom." It is extremely informative. This must be read in conjunction with our own Pre Trip Information document about Bhutan.

## Average Temperature

PLACES	Paro		Thimphu		Punakha		Wangdue		Trongsa		Bumthang		Mongar		Trashigang	
	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Min.
<b>JANUARY</b>	9.4	-5.8	12.3	-2.6	16.1	4.2	17.0	4.3	13.0	-0.2	10.8	-5.1	15.5	8.2	20.4	10.5
<b>FEBRUARY</b>	13.4	1.5	14.4	0.6	19.6	5.3	19.0	7.8	13.9	0.4	10.0	-1.4	15.9	8.3	21.7	11.5
<b>MARCH</b>	14.5	0.6	16.4	3.9	21.2	9.2	22.8	10.4	16.7	4.4	16.2	3.5	20.0	11.6	24.8	14.4
<b>APRIL</b>	17.6	4.6	20.0	7.1	24.4	11.9	26.2	12.9	20.1	6.6	18.7	3.9	22.8	14.0	28.3	17.0
<b>MAY</b>	23.5	10.6	22.5	13.1	27.2	14.8	29.1	17.7	21.0	11.6	21.3	9.5	25.1	17.4	30.0	20.6
<b>JUNE</b>	25.4	14.1	24.4	15.2	31.2	19.5	29.2	20.1	22.2	13.6	22.5	13.5	26.1	19.5	30.7	22.6
<b>JULY</b>	26.8	14.9	18.9	13.4	32.0	21.6	18.4	16.2	25.3	15.3	14.1	10.9	16.1	15.8	31.5	23.1
<b>AUGUST</b>	25.3	14.7	25.0	15.8	31.4	19.8	29.1	20.0	23.8	15.0	23.0	13.7	25.4	19.6	30.2	22.7
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	23.4	11.7	23.1	15.0	29.9	20.4	27.5	19.1	22.6	14.2	21.6	12.1	24.7	19.4	30.0	23.9
<b>OCTOBER</b>	18.7	7.4	21.9	10.4	27.8	18.9	26.1	14.7	21.8	11.7	19.5	5.9	22.7	15.8	29.1	17.7
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	13.9	1.4	17.9	5.0	22.3	13.0	22.6	9.6	19.8	6.4	16.1	-0.5	19.9	11.2	26.1	13.6
<b>DECEMBER</b>	11.2	-1.7	14.5	-1.1	15.0	7.9	19.1	6.3	18.2	2.5	12.3	-2.3	15.7	9.5	23.0	11.6