

# MOUNTAIN KINGDOM

Bhutan

ITINERARY

TOUR PREPARATION

PRICING & ACCOMMODATIONS



Date

**November 5 – 18, 2019**

Price

**\$6,900**

Duration

**14 DAYS**

Availability

**Open -  
Guaranteed****BOOK NOW**

## About This Tour

Bhutan is a remote place of remarkable natural beauty with a pristine and intact environment and a friendly, tradition-bound people. For the discerning international traveler who has been everywhere, Bhutan may just be the final frontier. This tiny kingdom, barely the size of Switzerland, zealously sequestered itself from the rest of the world for centuries. It only opened the doors to limited tourism in 1974.

Travel to Bhutan is really an exploration of traditions and a culture that has been preserved through the centuries. In Bhutan we are not going to see some display or cultural park that has been created for tourists. Rather, we will be sharing a true life experience with the Bhutanese. This tour involves some hiking and travels to several new locations that we haven't seen on previous tours. Come with us through a doorway to a world unlike anything you've ever experienced before.

## Tour Highlights

- Visit the Paro Dzong and Watchtower
- Tour Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, and experience its exciting weekend market
- Observe the Jakar Festival and Black-Necked Cranes Festival
- Fly to the central Bumthang region
- Learn about the special powers of the "Divine Madman"
- Hike to the dramatic "Tiger's Nest" monastery
- Be amazed at spectacular views of the Himalayas

**\* UNESCO World Heritage Sites**

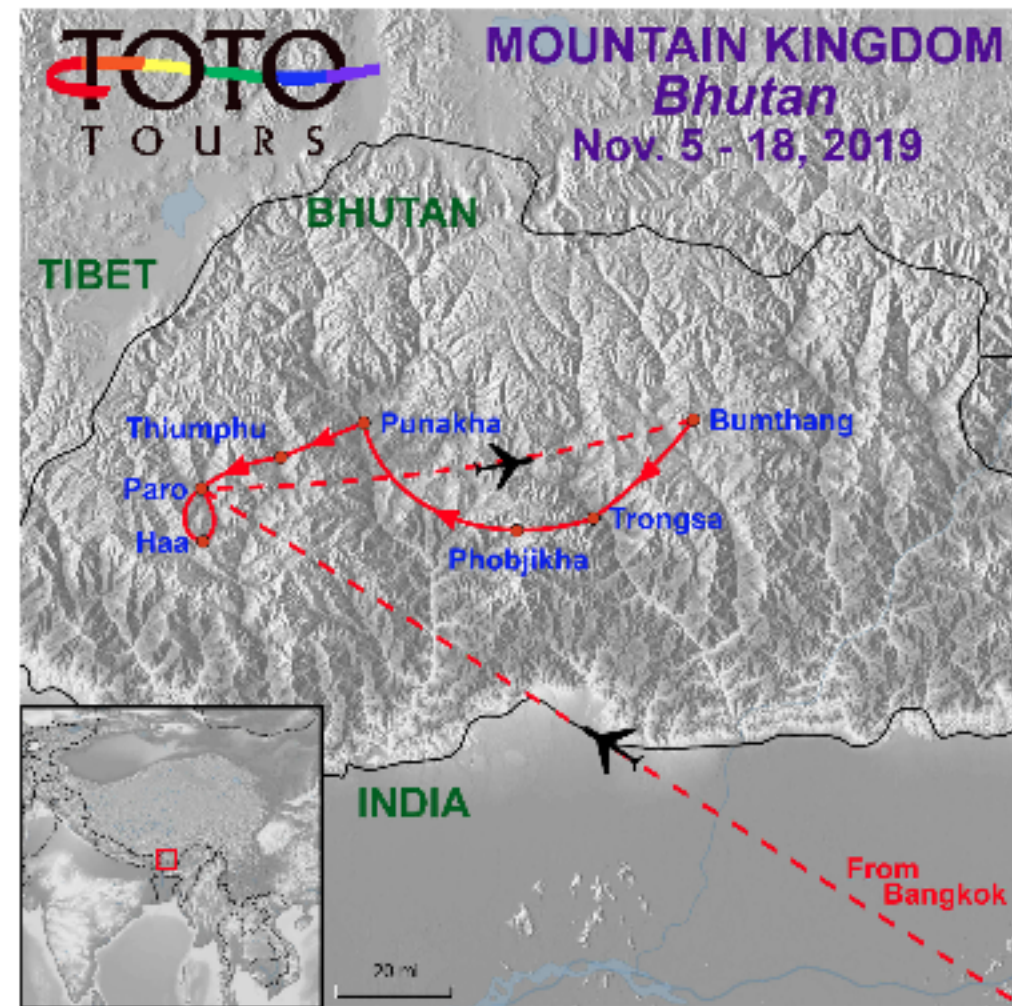


## ITINERARY

*Tuesday, November 5, 2019*

### Fly from Bangkok to Paro

Tour services commence in Bangkok very early today when we meet at the airport to catch our early morning flight to Paro, departing at 5:00am and arriving in Paro at 8:20am. You will need to check in for the flight at least 2 hours before departure, which means arriving at the airport no later than 3:00am today. We encourage you to arrive a day or two early into Bangkok to recover from jet lag and to avoid having any unexpected travel delays impact your Bhutan tour. For convenient access to the airport for our early morning check-in, we recommend you stay at the **Novotel Airport Hotel**. Our flight to Paro crosses the Himalayan Mountains, affording spectacular views of the jagged peaks, including the sacred Jumolhari and Jichu Drake in Bhutan. On arrival our representative greets us and provides a panoramic overview tour of Paro. We will visit Drugyal Dzong ruins with a view over the town, and the Ta Dzong Museum. Once our hotel rooms are ready for check-in, we'll settle in and relax after our very early start this morning. Dinner and overnight at our hotel in Paro. *(Welcome Dinner included)*



Tour Map - Click to Enlarge

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*Wednesday, November 6, 2019*

## **Fly to Bumthang**

We drive to Paro airport for our domestic flight to Bumthang Valley. This 45-minute flight gives us spectacular views of the long east-west lateral highway as the plane glides above the highway and the border with Tibet in the north. On arrival we explore Chamkhar Town where we will be spending two nights to enjoy the Jakar Festival. *(All Meals)*



Fly from Paro to Bumthang

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*Thursday, November 7, 2019*

## Jakar Festival

We spend today enjoying the Jakar festival dances and celebrations with locals of Bumthang and nearby villages. The festival is in honor of the teachings of Guru Rinpoche who came to Bhutan in 746 AD and introduced Buddhism. The mask dance festival is believed to bless onlookers, cleanse sins, and bring good fortune. People of all ages dress up in their best attire and come to witness the festival. It is a good opportunity to mingle with the locals. Overnight in Chamkhar. *(All Meals)*



Jakar Festival Dancer



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*Friday, November 8, 2019*

## Transfer from Bumthang to Wangdue

Today we drive to Wangdue. Along the way we stop at Trongsa to visit the Trongsa Dzong - the biggest dzong in Bhutan. At one time it was the seat of power over central and eastern Bhutan. On the road again, we gradually ascend to Chendebji Chorten where we stop for lunch and then continue to Pele la Pass (10,989 feet). With an alpine environment of rhododendrons and dwarf bamboo, the pass is the boundary between West and East Bhutan. During clear weather, you can view the high, snow-capped peaks. We stop at the summit for photos and then descend through a subtropical forest and arrive at our resort for the next two nights. Overnight in Wangdue. *(All Meals)*



Trongsa Dzong

*Saturday, November 9, 2019*

## **Metsina / Punakha**

Today we drive to Punakha. En route we stop at Metsina and hike through rice paddies and up to the Chimi Lhakhang Temple. This temple is dedicated to the great Yogi of 14th century known as Drukpa Kuenley, or the "Divine Madman," who is believed to bless women who seek fertility. We will see plenty of sacred phallus! Continue driving to Punakha and on arrival visit the Punakha Dzong which is stunningly situated in between the male and female rivers like an anchored ship. This evening we return to our hotel in Wangdue. *(All Meals)*



Punakha Dzong



*Sunday, November 10, 2019*

## **Village Hike / River Rafting**

We transfer to Punakha this morning and check in at a lovely resort. Later we take a hike to a local village. The village is reached by crossing a suspension bridge, which is the longest in Bhutan. We have an opportunity to explore the village farmhouses and learn about their architecture and the lifestyle of those who live here. A traditional lunch will be served in one of the farmhouses with Bhutanese butter tea and “ara” a local wine. After lunch we drive through other villages to reach Samdhingka (put-in) where our rafting crew will be waiting. We take an exhilarating raft adventure on the Pho Chu River with stretches of Class II and IV rapids. We raft downstream in gorgeous mountain scenery past villages, sandy embankments and continue until we reach the placid section of the river below the Punakha Dzong. Overnight at our resort in Punakha. *(All Meals)*



Rafting the Pho Chu River



*Monday, November 11, 2019*

## **Gangtey and the Black-Necked Crane Festival**

This morning we drive to Gangtey to attend the Black-Necked Crane Festival with the people of Phobjikha and nearby villages. The festival comprises a variety of cultural shows and mimicry of the crane dance, depicting the graceful character of the cranes. After lunch, we set out for an exploratory hike in the Phobjikha Valley and its villages, passing close by the crane roosting habitats. At this time of the year, you can see cranes that have migrated from Tibetan plateau. You will also visit the Crane Information Centre, which instructs about cranes, their annual migration, and the valley environment. This evening we return to our resort in Punakha for the night. *(Breakfast)*



Phobjikha Valley

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*Tuesday, November 12, 2019*

## Drive to Thimphu

After breakfast, begin the drive to Thimphu via Dochula Pass, where we have lunch. Then we continue driving to Thimphu and upon arrival visit the School of Arts and Crafts (also known as the Institute for Zorig Chusum) and Folk Heritage Museum. Later in the evening visit the Majestic Tashichodzong. Overnight at our hotel in Thimphu. *(All Meals)*



Memorial Chortens at Dochu La Pass



*Wednesday, November 13, 2019*

## Thimphu

This morning we visit the King's Memorial Chorten, built in memory of the third King of Bhutan who reigned from 1952-1972. Other place include Kuenselphodrang, where a giant Buddha statue is located, the zoo which contains the national animal of Bhutan (the takin), and the nunnery temple. After lunch, we visit the popular Weekend Market, the largest vegetable market in the country. You can see the enormous variety of foods grown in this country, including basket upon basket of fiery chilies, fresh cheese, and fruits. In addition, many stalls contain Bhutanese handicrafts and household items. This is a good opportunity for photography and to mingle with locals who come from the nearby villages to sell their farm products, and to buy some souvenirs. This evening enjoy free time to explore Thimphu town on your own. Overnight at a hotel in Thimphu. *(All Meals)*



Giant Buddha Statue in Thimphu

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*Thursday, November 14, 2019*

## **Return to Paro**

This morning we drive to Paro. Sightseeing in Paro includes the Rinpung Dzong, meaning "fortress of the heap of jewels". It has a long and fascinating history. Along the wooden galleries lining the courtyard of the Rinpung Dzong are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore. We then visit Kyichu Lhakhang, the oldest temple in the country built by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo in 8th century. In the afternoon take some time to explore Paro town and do more souvenir shopping. Overnight at a hotel in Paro. ***All***

***Meals***



Paro Dzong



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*Friday, November 15, 2019*

## Haa Valley

Today we take an exciting drive to Haa via Chele La Pass, which is at 13,087 feet elevation. The pass is dotted with colorful Buddhist prayer flags and offers incredible vistas into the valleys below. From the pass, drive downhill for about 26km through the forests of blue pine, fir and oak and arrive at Haa, a picturesque remote valley, which has only recently been opened to tourists. We will spend some time this afternoon hiking in the Haa Valley. We'll be getting acclimatized to the higher altitude and preparing for an even more adventuresome hike tomorrow. Spend the night in Hatoey village at a traditional house converted to a modern lodge. *(All Meals)*



Photo stop in Chele La Pass

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*Saturday, November 16, 2019*

## **Chele La Pass**

This morning we return to Paro via Chele La Pass again. From the pass we will walk along the ridges, each higher than the last. You can see stunning views of Mount Jumolhari and Jichu Drake on your right and Mount Kanchenjunga in Sikkim, the world's third highest mountain, on your distant left in clear weather. If you wish to be more adventurous, you can go up to the highest ridge, Kungkarmo which stands at about 13,780 feet – the spot for sky burials. Take a well-deserved rest and enjoy the spectacular views of the Himalayas. Later we hike back to our vehicle and drive to Paro. *(All Meals)*



Views from Chele La Pass



*Sunday, November 17, 2019*

## Tiger's Nest Monastery

Today's activity is one of the highlights of the tour – the hike to Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery. It is Bhutan's most famous monastery. It is breathtaking, situated at 10,400 feet and perched on the edge of a steep cliff about 3,000 feet above the Paro Valley. Guru Rinpoche is said to have flown on the back of a tigress from Singye Dzong in Lhuntse to meditate in a cave where Taktsang Monastery now stands. Lunch is served in the Cafeteria Restaurant, located about halfway up the mountain. After having explored the monastery, we hike down to the valley floor. We celebrate our fantastic tour in Bhutan with a Farewell Dinner this evening, and one more overnight stay at a hotel in Paro. *(All Meals)*



Toto Group at Tiger's Nest Monastery

*Monday, November 18, 2019*

## Departure

Enjoy a relaxing morning at our beautiful hotel until check-out time. After lunch, we drive to the Paro Airport to catch our flight back to Bangkok, Thailand. Departure time is 4:10pm, arriving in Bangkok at 9:50pm. Tour services end with our landing in Bangkok. Schedule your departing flight from Bangkok no earlier than 2:00am on Tuesday, November 19. If you need to extend your stay in Bangkok in order to take a flight the next day, we recommend that you book the **Novotel Airport Hotel** directly. *(All Meals)*



Farewell to Bhutan



## TOUR PREPARATION

**Entry Requirements** - Passport (minimum validity of six months) and visa required. You will receive your visa upon arrival at the Paro Airport. We make all arrangements for this service, and the price is included in your tour cost. Instructions will be provided closer to departure. Just be sure now that your passport will be valid until May 19, 2020. If not, you will need to get it renewed.

**Immunizations & Health** - None are required, but it is highly recommended that you get a tetanus booster if you have not done so in several years. We recommend that you read the CDC's [Health Information for Travelers to Bhutan](#).

**Exit Requirements** - There is currently no separate departure tax required of visitors leaving Bhutan other than that included with the cost of your airline ticket.

## MAKING TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS TO BANGKOK, THAILAND

On this tour, international airfare is NOT included. You will need to get a round-trip international air ticket to Bangkok. We encourage you to work with Steven Goldberg at Frosch Travel in Chicago, who can get you the best flights at the best price for this itinerary. You will need to arrive in Bangkok before 2:00am on November 5. Book your return flight from Bangkok after 2:00am on November 19.

### Steven Goldberg / Frosch Travel

Toll-Free in USA: 1-800-323-1276

International guests, please call +1-312-371-9686

Email: [steven.goldberg@frosch.com](mailto:steven.goldberg@frosch.com)

When calling, please identify yourself as a Toto Tours participant. If you leave a message on Steven's voice mail, he will return your call promptly. He will be happy to discuss your travel plans and help you decide when to purchase your ticket for the best rate.

NOTE: The recent trend in travel is for travelers to finalize their plans much closer to departure time than was customary in the past. While we try to be as flexible as possible we often must turn away last minute registrants because we relinquish hotel space and air reservations 8 – 12 weeks prior to departure! Please keep this in mind when making your travel plans.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

One of the secrets to enjoyable travel is packing light. This tour encompasses many climates and the weather will range from warmer in the lower valleys to cold in the high mountains. Instead of packing everything to cover any situation, we recommend taking layers of lighter clothes you can easily put on or take off, depending upon the conditions encountered. They can easily be laundered and reused. Please limit yourself to one suitcase and a carry-on bag. In November, the average daily temperature can range between 40 to 70 degrees in various locations.

## Suggested Packing List:

- Proof of citizenship. Passport required.
- Warm jacket, gloves, wool hat, scarf.
- Sunglasses, sun hat with tie-on.
- Sunscreen, lip balm, insect repellent.
- Sweater or fleece to add a layer for additional warmth.
- Assortment of pants, shirts, t-shirts to layer.
- Socks and underwear for 12 days.
- Long underwear (if you get cold easily).
- Waterproof hiking / trekking shoes.
- Personal toiletries.
- Camera, lots of digital memory, extra batteries.
- Ziploc Bags (sandwich size for documents, gallon size for wet items or toiletries).
- Electrical Adapter. In Bhutan the power plugs and sockets are of type D, F and G. The standard voltage is 230 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz. [Click here](#) to see examples and obtain more information.
- A good book for the long flights.



# MONEY MATTERS

The Ngultrum is the national currency of Bhutan (the code is BTN when looking up exchange rates). ATMs are not available in Bhutan, and credit cards are only accepted between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, so we encourage you to bring plenty of cash and exchange into local currency as needed. Use credit cards whenever possible to conserve your cash. [Click here](#) to see the current exchange rate.

Tipping in Bhutan: We will offer a group tip to guides and drivers, and more details will be provided before departure.

# THE TOTO SPIRIT

Toto Tours provides Adventure Travel Experiences as differentiated from tours in the traditional sense. Adventure Travel allows (even encourages) you to be an active participant. Adventurers can be identified by certain traits. They are:

- fun-loving optimists who have a sense of humor and accentuate the positive;
- good natured realists who are willing to accept situations as they exist;
- undaunted by the unexpected, like occasional delays or bad weather;
- willing to forego some of the amenities we normally take for granted;
- eager to try new things & test limits;
- punctual;
- not whiners!

Bhutan is one of our favorite destinations in the world. This is definitely a bucket-list tour that you won't want to miss! If you have any questions, please send an email to [tototours@gmail.com](mailto:tototours@gmail.com).

# Travel Insurance

We recommend you purchase travel insurance with Travel Guard to cover for unforeseen events prior to and during your trip. Please follow the link below or call us for more information.

**Travel Guard<sup>®</sup>**

**LEARN MORE**

**Cover your trip with a Travel Guard  
travel insurance plan.**



### Tour prices per person

**Price:** \$6,900 in double occupancy hotel accommodations.

**Private Room:** \$800 additional, for a total tour price of \$7,700. (Paying a single supplement is not required. Toto Tours will try to match you with a roommate if you are traveling alone and prefer to share a room. If this is not possible, a single supplement will be applied to your reservation before the final payment date.)

**Deposit:** \$1,000

(Due at time of registration for the tour. May be paid with a credit card.)

**Remaining Balance (main tour):** \$5,900 double / \$6,700 single

**Remaining Balance Due:** August 16, 2019 (80 days prior to departure) (Full payment required with reservation form if enrolling after this date.)

**Note:** The tour price does not include bank service charges for processing credit card payments, and assumes that the balance of the tour price will be paid by check. If you would like to pay the final balance with a credit card, a 4% service charge will be applied. Let us know if you wish to pay by credit card, and we will adjust your invoice accordingly.

**Included:** 13 nights hotel accommodations; hotel breakfasts daily plus Welcome & Farewell Dinners; ground transportation in climate controlled motorcoach; round-trip flight from Bangkok, Thailand to Paro, Bhutan; one internal flight from Paro to Bumthang; sightseeing activities, entrances and meals as listed in the itinerary. This is a fully guided and escorted tour.

**Not Included:** International round-trip airfare to Bangkok, Thailand (BKK); hotel services in Bangkok; hotel transfers in Bangkok; ground transportation for sightseeing on your own (taxis, local guides, etc.); meals and optional activities not specifically listed in the itinerary; camera fees; alcoholic beverages; insurance; laundry, telephone calls, faxes, or any other expenses of a personal nature. Tips to drivers and guides and other conveyance attendants are not included; tipping guidelines for our group tips will be provided prior to departure.

**Flight Upgrade to Business Class:** There are about a dozen Business Class seats on our international flight from Thailand to Bhutan. It is possible to upgrade to Business for \$150.00 round trip. Please indicate your desire for this upgrade by checking the appropriate box on your reservation form. The upgrades will be sold in the order the requests are received, depending on remaining availability.



## ACCOMMODATIONS

Bhutan offers generally modest but clean hotels. We have selected the best available hotels in each location. Bhutan's local hospitality is, however, an insight into a society where tourism may be a new venture, but where visitors are greeted with true warmth and friendship. Our hotels are as follows, with links provided:

Click hotel name to read description

- Paro (2 nights, 5 & 14 November): [Tashi Namgay Resort – 3\\*](#)
- Bumthang (2 nights, 6 & 7 November): [Yugharling Resort – 4\\*](#)
- Wangdue (2 nights, 8 & 9 November): [Kichu Resort - 3\\*](#)
- Puhakha (2 nights, 10 & 11 November): [Kunzangzhing Resort – 4\\*](#)
- Thimphu (2 nights, 12 & 13 November): [Norkhil Boutique – 4\\*](#)
- Haa (1 night, 15 November): [Soednam Zhingka Heritage Lodge – 3\\*](#)
- Paro (2 nights, 16 & 17 November): [Le Meridien Riverfront – 5\\*](#)