



## Programme

### Day 1: Arrival

Your arrival in Bhutan is an unparalleled experience as the flight circles over the dramatic valley below. The transfer to Thimphu is approximately 1 ½ hours. Upon arrival and following lunch, you will have the choice to visit the National Memorial Chorten, National Textile Museum, Folk Heritage Museum, and National Library with time to stroll the main street for some interesting Himalayan artefacts or textiles. *(overnight: Amankora in Thimphu)*



### Day 2: Tour of Thimphu

This morning you will head to the north end of the valley to view Trashi Chhoe Dzong, the seat of Bhutan's government and royal office, and pay a visit to Pangri Zampa, two 16<sup>th</sup> century buildings that now house a monastic training school for astrologers. At the head of the valley, should you wish to stretch your legs, a short hike will take you to Cheri Goemba, the monastery where the first monastic body was established in the Kingdom. Back in town you may visit a few of the capital's cottage industries ranging from traditional paper making to hand rolled incense. *(overnight: Amankora Thimphu).*

### Day 3: From Thimphu to Gangtey

Today see an early departure for a dramatic drive over the high mountain pass of Dochu La and on to the Phobjika Valley. Sights on the way include one of Bhutan's first fortress monasteries, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Simtokha Dzong, and ancient wall paintings at the Hongtsho Goemba monastery. The journey continues over the 3,050m mountain pass where on a clear day, towering Himalayan peaks are easily visible. The descent down through the Punakha



Valley along the Kingdom's only east-west highway continues through the scenic village of Wangdi. The highway follows the scenic Dang Chhu before climbing through forests of bamboo and oak, and just before crossing the Pele La pass, a small side road splinters off to the hidden Phobjika Valley. On arrival you will have time to visit the striking Gangtey Goemba, sitting at the head of the valley, and perhaps stroll through the quaint Gangtey village. *(overnight: Amankora in Gangtey).*

### Day 4: Exploring Phobjika Valley

The morning will begin with a visit to the Black Neck Crane Center and depending on the season, a viewing of breeding cranes. Various walks or mountain bike rides through this magnificent valley can then be arranged. Soak up the beauty of the valley from the Lodge or return to the revered Goemba for a possible audience with the Trulkul, should he be in residence, for a relaxing cap to the day. *(overnight: Amankora in Gangtey)*

### Day 5: Phobjika to Bumthang

Today's memorable journey to Jakar (Bumthang) is filled with dramatic landscapes of terraced farmland, deep river valleys and precariously perched farmhouses viewed from the only east-west highway that has been ingeniously carved out of the mountain face. Following a brief stop at Chendebji Chorten, which is believed to cover the remains of a demon spirit, you will carry on to what was the original home of the royal family. Upon reaching Trongsa you may stroll the quaint village and perhaps visit the Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home to Bhutan's monarch where novice monks recite mantras or practice on sacred horns, flutes or drums. The drive to Bumthang takes you over the picturesque Yotong La and down into the Chhume Valley, home of Bhutan's famous Yatra weaving. Here you will have a chance to browse the traditional textiles and see the weavers create their intricate handiwork. (*overnight: Amankora Bumthang*)



### Day 6: Explore Bumthang Valley

This morning you will explore our neighboring palace, Wangdichhoeling, home to the 2<sup>nd</sup> King, and the auspicious prayer wheels next door. Heading up valley, you will take in the grand Kurjey Lhakhang, considered one of Bhutan's most auspicious monuments, which was once the resting place of Guru Rimpoche, and Jambay Lhakhang, home to the early winter festivals that draw thousands of Bhutanese for their annual blessings. Heading back into town and across the Bumthang Chhu, enjoy a visit to the sin alleviating Tamshing Monastery followed by quick visits to the valleys unique cottage industries: Red Panda Brewery, Bumthang Cheese/Dairy Facility and the Bumthang Distillery, home to numerous distinctive spirits. (*overnight: Amankora Bumthang*)



### Day 7: Explore Tang Valley – Bumthang District

Explore further in Bumthang with an excursion to the beautiful Tang Valley. This seldom-visited valley offers several off-the-beaten path lhakhangs and monasteries, along with the museum at Ogen Chhoeling Palace. A short hike leads to a well-maintained Palace which houses various valuable artifacts. Stop for a traditional picnic with breathtaking views of the pristine surroundings along the way. (*overnight: Amankora Bumthang*)

### Day 8: Bumthang to Punakha

Begin the day with an early departure for the Punakha Lodge. Upon entering the Punakha Valley, stop to stretch your legs for a short walk through the valley floor to the Chimi Lhakhang, an auspicious fertility monastery built by the Divine Madman in 1499. (*overnight: Amankora Punakha*)

### Day 9: Explore Punakha Valley

Your day in Punakha Valley begins with a hike up thru fields of chillies, cabbages and rice along the banks of the Mo Chhu to the upper end of the valley to the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, a stunning monument recently built by the Queens and consecrated in



1999. Returning through the valley, you will have plenty of time to take in the impressive Punakha Dzong, home to the remains of Bhutan's first ruler, Shabdrung Nawang Namgyal, and the winter residence of the monastic order's leader and his entourage of monks. A picnic lunch will be served on the banks of the Punak Chhu at a vantage point of the stunning Dzong and confluence of the Mo Chhu and Pho Chhu. Following lunch, a quick drive will take you to the village of Talo where you will walk the stunning, quiet grounds of the village temple

and perhaps visit the home village of the Kingdom's four Queens. Further hikes or valley excursions can be organized. (*overnight: Amankora Punakha*).

### Day 10: From Punakha to Paro

After descending from Dochu La, you will follow your way back up the dramatic Wang Chu and Paro Chu river valleys, before crossing thru Paro Town towards the north end of the valley. Here, set in a pine forest, you will find the Amankora lodge and its spa. In the afternoon, there is an opportunity for a quick stroll to the nearby ruins, a visit to some of the valley's oldest and holiest religious monuments or a ramble down Paro's main street. Evenings at Amankora may include informative lectures on the history, religion, flora and fauna of the region or a intriguing movie on the Himalayas. (*overnight: Amankora Paro*)

### Day 11: Paro Valley Exploration

The day starts with a visit to the National Museum, housed in the Ta Dzong (watchtower). Here, an engaging collection of artefacts provide a wonderful introduction to the rich culture and heritage of the Kingdom. Just a short walk downhill lies the dominating Paro Dzong, a fine example of Bhutanese historic architecture. From the Dzong, the tour crosses Nyamai Zampa, a traditional cantilevered bridge, and town temple built in 1525, to view ancient wall paintings. Paro activities involve a picturesque picnic, or a visit to a traditional farmhouse for lunch with a local family. The afternoon will begin with a hike to view one of Bhutan's most revered monuments, the Taktshang Goemba, more commonly referred to as the "Tiger's Nest". The four to five hour



return trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched on a cliff face 900m above the valley floor. (*overnight: Amankora in Paro*).

### Day 12: Departure Day:

Early morning transfer to airport.