

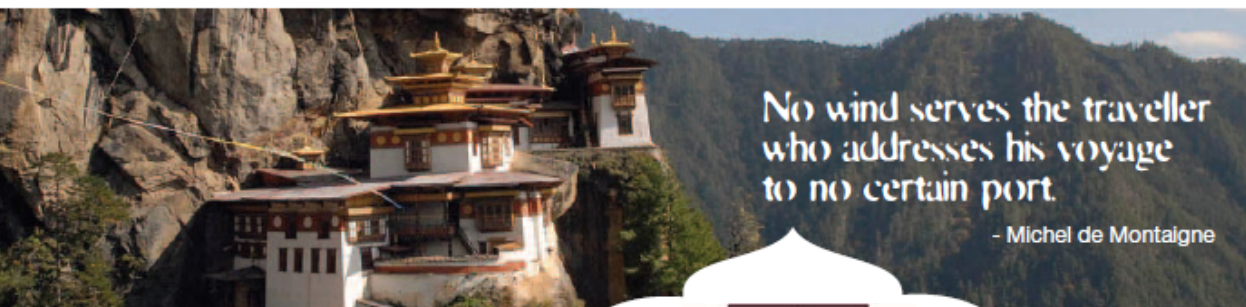
Bhutan West to East

Take an in-depth look at Bhutan's stunningly diverse natural and cultural heritage on this **touring style** journey. We visit the key provincial centres and make easy short and part day walks, excursions to wildlife sanctuaries, nature reserves and monasteries. At Thimpu we will experience 'Tsechu', the annual religious festival conducted in the ancient courtyard of the fortress. At the end of the trip our route takes us across the Assam border to Guwahati.

Visit Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Phobjikha, Trongsa, Bumthang, Mongar, Trashigang, Samdrup Jongkhar, Guwahati.



Length of trip	19 days.
Accommodation	Hotels, Guesthouses.
Meals included	Yes
Travel Style	Coach.
Escort	SRA tour leader for more than 6 travellers. Local English speaking escort for 6 or less travellers.
Sightseeing and entry fees	Included
Maximum group	12
Commences	Paro 22nd September 2012
Concludes	Guwahati 10th October 2012
COST	NZ\$8,900 based on twin share. Single Rm Sup NZ\$1015 <i>(prices subject to change)</i>



Itinerary at a Glance :

Sat, 22 September 2012 **Arrive Paro** (2200m)
Transfer to Hotel. This afternoon relaxed sightseeing— including ancient monasteries, Paro Dzong (fortress) and the city centre.

Sun, 23 September 2012 **Paro**
Sightseeing today to Taksang (Tigers Nest) monastery, one of the most venerated religious sites in the Himalayas. The complex is perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the floor of the Paro valley. Its a 2hr gradual uphill walk through pine and oak forests. Dinner tonight at our host's ancestral farm house.

Mon, 24 September 2012 **Paro**
Sightseeing today to Chelila pass (3900m) the highest road in Bhutan with panoramic views of Mt. Jhomolhari, the sacred mountain. From the pass we plan to walk (3 hrs) through alpine vegetation of dwarf rhododendrons, juniper, gentians and edelweiss. We visit a Nunery before returning to our vehicles to drive back to Paro.

Tue, 25 September 2012 **Drive to Thimphu** (2300m)
This morning, a short drive to Thimpu, Bhutan's capital. We have three days here with lots of sightseeing options including museums, markets, arts and crafts, walks, city sightseeing and dinner with a local family.

Wed, 26 September 2012 **Thimphu**
One of the highlight of our visit will be Thimphu's annual religious festival held in the ancient courtyard of the Thimphu dzong (fortress). Locals from all walks of life dress in their traditional clothes for the festival—the dzong comes to life with colour, music and mask dances which are performed by monks as well as lay people.

Thur, 27 September 2012 **Thimphu**
Full day sightseeing and festival activities

Fri, 28 September 2012 **To Punakha** (1400m)
Depart for drive to Punakha (76km), en route cross Dochu La (3000m) with panoramic views of the Himalayas and walk in the Royal Botanical Park. Evening walk through the rice fields to visit to Chimmi Lhakhang (monastery).

Sat, 29 September 2012 **Punakha**
Visit the Punakha Dzong and 'Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel chorten', perched on a hilltop surrounded by pine forests. It takes about 45 mins to walk through rice fields to the chorten. This evening stroll along the river to observe birdlife.—we may see the rare White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*), occasionally seen along the glacial rivers.

Sun, 30 September 2012 **To Phobjikha** (2900m)
A short drive today; enroute visit Wangdue Phodrang town. At Phobjikha we will visit the Gatey Monastery overlooking the valley. Option to walk to our hotel from the Monastery via an easy trail through the marshland.

Mon, 01 October 2012 **To Trongsa** (2180m)
This morning visit the Crane Observation Centre before driving to Trongsa (approx 3hrs) The route crosses the Black Mountains via the Pela La (3420m). Before arriving in Trongsa we plan to walk along an ancient trail alongside the river, crossing a traditional cantilever bridge to the Dzong – an easy 2 hr walk.

Tue, 02 October 2012 **to Bumthang (Jakar)** (2580m)
Visit Trongsa Tower Museum before driving to Bumthang (68k). Cross the Yotong La (3425m), and stop in local villages en route. Bumthang is surrounded by blue pine forest and is one of the most sacred places in Bhutan. We have three days in Bumthang and plan a mix of sight-seeing including the town centre, ancient monasteries and pilgrim sites.

Wed, 03 October 2012 **Bumthang**
Full day sightseeing in Bumthang.

Thur, 04 October 2012 **Bumthang**
Today we plan to visit Tang Valley (1½hr drive) and the Ogyen Choling Museum. This family owned museum showcases many ancient items all excellently displayed and interpreted. Return to Bumthang with time en route for short walks through rural villages.

Fri, 05 October 2012 **To Mongar** (1600m)
Today's drive takes us over the Thrumshing La (3750m) which marks the ecological boundary of east and west Bhutan. Stops en route including Thrumshingla National Park.

Sat, 06 October 2012 **Mongar**
Today we visit Khoma village. It's possible to drive to the village, but we plan to walk for 1 hr from the river to the village – a lovely walk. Khoma is famous for traditional textile weaving.

Sun, 07 October 2012 **To Trashigang** (1070m)
The drive today will take 3-4hrs, crossing the Kori La (2400m). Our route is through broadleaf forest rich in birdlife. It is possible to spot the endangered Rufous necked hornbill in this area so we'll have plenty of stops.

Mon, 08 October 2012 **Trashigang**
Relaxing day in Trashigang to visit the town area and the dzong (fort).

Tue, 09 October 2012 **To Samdrupjongkhar** (300m)
Drive to the south east of Bhutan to Samdrup Jongkhar (180km) We'll make stops en route as we pass through forests and villages. We also pass Bhutan's only University, Sherubtse University.

Wed, 10 October 2012 **To Guwahati and conclude**
Short drive to the Bhutan/India Border. Continue to Guwahati airport (140k) where the trip concludes.

Link to :

HEARTLAND RAJASTHAN

Get a rewarding insight into India's 'Land of Palaces and Princes' on this *touring style* journey that highlights Rajasthan's opulent palaces and imposing forts, natural diversity and fascinating culture. Colourful bazaars, pink palaces, glistening marble mausoleums and the diverse wildlife at India's best known tiger

reserve, Ranthambore National Park, are combined to make this short journey into Rajasthan's 'golden triangle' a memorable experience.

Visit Delhi, Agra, Ranthambore, Jaipur, Jhodpur, Udaipur, Jaisalmer.