

# Bhutan

Adventures



The California Native



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# Bhutan

Travel far away to a very special place, a storybook land where kings and queens still rule the land and castles perched high on cliffs look down upon peaceful valleys. Here, farmers plow their fields as their grandfathers and great grandfathers did—no tractors or other noisy machinery to disturb the serenity of the countryside. This is a land where spirits and other supernatural beings are part of everyday life, where yeti travel invisibly through snow-covered mountain passes and magic is looked upon as historical fact.

Magnificent scenery, friendly people, and a culture completely different from anywhere else on earth—come with us to Bhutan!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee Klein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

December 2016

# Land of the Thunder Dragon

**S**EATED astride a flying tiger, Guru Rimpoche entered Bhutan in the year 747 AD, to conquer demons and introduce Buddhism in this isolated area of the Himalayas. In this far off kingdom, mythology and history intermingle and ghosts, yetis, and demons are part of daily life.

The name Bhutan is probably derived from the Sanskrit word *Bhotant* meaning “the end of Tibet” or *Bhu-uttan* meaning “high land.” The Bhutanese, however, refer to their country as Druk Yal, “Land of the Thunder Dragon,” and the Bhutanese flag, with its rampaging dragon, proudly reflects that.

Bhutan is nestled in the Himalayas between China and India. On its southwestern border is the Indian state of Sikkim. To its north is Tibet. Almost the entire country is mountainous. The southernmost part begins in the humid jungles of India’s Assam Plain, but soon climbs high into the Himalayas.

There is only one airport in the country and that is in Paro, a deep valley at 7,300 feet elevation, surrounded by 16,000 foot mountains. Only one airline flies into Paro, Druk Air, the Royal Bhutanese Airline. The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular in the world. Flying over the Himalayas, the plane descends steeply between snow capped peaks flying through the narrow valley to land at the tiny airport.

Bhutan’s capital is Thimphu (pronounced “Tim - Pu”), a thriving metropolis of around 40,000. The population of the entire country is only 750,000.

The country is a monarchy, ruled by His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, 46 years old. The king was married in 1988 to four sisters and he and his queens have five princes and five princesses.

Being a tiny country sandwiched between two of the largest countries in the world, Bhutan makes it a top priority to maintain its traditional culture. For all business, official, and religious occasions people dress in the traditional costume, men wearing the *gho*, a long attractive robe made out of wool or silk and tied about the waist, and women wearing the *kira*, an ankle length dress made from fine woven fabrics with traditional patterns. School children all wear their school uni-

form *ghos* and *kiras*. The schools, incidentally, are required to teach their students in English as well as the official language which is Dzongkha.

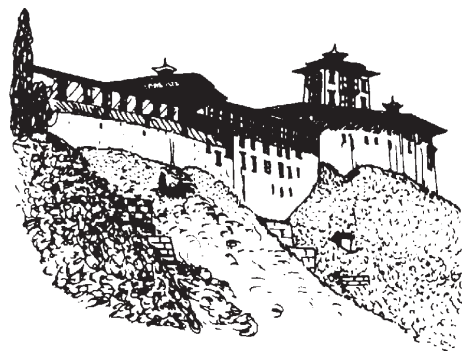
Houses and other buildings in Bhutan are built in the traditional style, as dictated by religion and law. The houses are generally two stories, constructed of wood and mud and elaborately decorated with carvings and paintings of Buddhist symbols. The roofs are made with wood shingles held in place by stones. On the top of every house is a colorful prayer flag.

The major towns are dominated by the *dzong*, a huge white fort which serves as a combination government headquarters and monastery. The system of *dzongs* began in the twelfth century and the newest *dzong* was constructed in 1998. There have been many fires in the *dzongs* over the years due to the hundreds of burning yak butter lamps.

According to the Buddhist religion, when a person dies he is reincarnated. When a great lama dies his reincarnation is identified and the child is taken and educated so that he may continue the good work of his previous incarnations. Lamas may marry, but only in every other lifetime.

On a recent trek in this beautiful country, I was accompanied by a Bhutanese guide, a Tibetan cook, two village lady “wranglers,” and four horses. As we headed up into the mountains, the clean air and pine forests reminded me of California’s Sierra Nevada. Unlike other Himalayan countries, Bhutan’s mountains have not been deforested. Soon, the sight of shaggy yaks grazing in the high meadows, the colorful prayer flags blowing in the wind at the top of each mountain pass, and the red-cloaked monks wandering the dirt paths, reminded me that I had come a long way from California—perhaps I had found the real “Shangri La.”

**Lee Klein**



# *Exploring Bhutan*



*Our Bhutan Explorer trips are the best way to discover this unique country. You'll visit its exotic cities and beautiful countryside, discover its culture and history, and meet the friendly Bhutanese people. All of our trips are fully guided by a professional English-speaking Bhutanese guide. They include all meals, lodging, admissions, and transportation within Bhutan. Best of all, they are exclusive—the group is limited to you and your companions. The trips are available from February thru May and August thru November.*

## 7-day Bhutan Explorer

This trip is perfect for those who want to visit Bhutan but only have a week to spend.

**1st Day:** Arrive in Paro then transfer to Thimphu, the capital.

**2nd Day:** Tour Thimphu, the nation's capital, and visit its temples, Dzong, monasteries, craft schools, and the national library.

**3rd Day:** After breakfast travel along the winding mountain road to Wangdue and visit the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong. Founded in 1638, this massive fort, monastery and government administrative center sits on a high ridge which commands the valleys and river below.

**4th Day:** Travel north to Punakha, at one time Bhutan's capital city. Built in 1637, The Punakha Dzong suffered many fires and earthquakes over the years. Walking across the cable suspension bridge over the Mo Chhu River, you'll enter the massive wooden gates of the dzong to visit its courtyards, monastery, and chapels.

**5th Day:** Return along the mountain roads, past clear fast-running rivers, terraced valleys and small villages to the town of Paro, located in a broad rice-terraced valley beside a willow lined river.

**6th Day:** Visit the many sights of Paro—The National Museum, The Rinpung Dzong, and the ruins of the Drugyel Dzong, built in 1649 to control the road to Tibet, it was destroyed by a butter lamp fire in 1951. As an alternative, you may choose to spend the day hiking up to the Paro Taksang Monastery (also known as the "Tiger's Nest") where according to legend, Guru Rimpoche flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger.

**7th Day:** Depart from Paro airport.

### Price per person:

February–May, August–November:	Three or more persons	\$1790*
	Two persons	\$2010*
	One person	\$2080*

\* Prices and itinerary subject to change without notice.

**Call 800-926-1140 or 310-642-1140 for information or reservations.**

## 10-day Bhutan Explorer

This trip is the same as our 7-day Bhutan Explorer, but in addition, we visit the beautiful valley of Bumthang, the religious heartland of Bhutan, where we can visit some of the kingdom's most ancient Buddhist temples and monasteries.



**1st Day:** Arrive in Paro then transfer to Thimphu, the capital.

**2nd Day:** Tour Thimphu, the nation's capital, and visit its temples, Dzong, monasteries, craft schools, and the national library.

**3rd Day:** After breakfast travel along the winding mountain road to Punakha and visit the beautiful Punakha Dzong built at the confluence of two rivers. Then on to Wangdue Phodrang to visit the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong. Founded in 1638, this massive fort, monastery and government administrative center sits on a high ridge which commands the valleys and river be-

low. Spend the night in Punakha.

**4th Day:** Drive through the mountains and villages to central Bhutan and the district of Bumthang. Here are located some of the kingdom's most precious and ancient Buddhist sites. Spend the next two nights in Bumthang.

**5th Day:** Explore the sights of Bumthang—the Jamgay Lhakhang (temple), where in 746 A.D. Guru Rimpoche meditated in a cave and left a print of his body; the Kurjey Lhakhang, built in 700 A.D. and considered to be one of the most sacred temples in Bhutan; the 17th century Jakar Dzong (the Dzong of the White Bird), overlooking the Chhokor valley; and some of the local cottage industries.

**6th Day:** Return to Wangdue to spend the night and more sightseeing in the evening.

**7th Day:** Return along the mountain roads, past clear fast-running rivers, terraced valleys and small villages to the town of Paro, located in a broad rice-terraced valley beside a willow lined river.



**8th Day:** Spend the day visiting the many sights of Paro—The National Museum, The Rinpung Dzong, and the ruins of the Drugyel Dzong, built in 1649 to control the road to Tibet, it was destroyed by a butter lamp fire in 1951.

**9th Day:** This day will be spent hiking up to the Paro Taksang Monastery (also known as the "Tiger's Nest") where according to legend, Guru Rimpoche flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger.

**10th Day:** Depart from Paro airport.

**Price per person:**

February–May, August–November:	Three or more persons	\$2690*
	Two persons	\$3020*
	One person	\$3120*



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## 11-day Bhutan Explorer

This trip is the same as our 10-day Bhutan Explorer but also visits the city of Trongsa. Located in the middle of the country, between high mountain passes, Trongsa is the ancestral home of the royal family. The crown prince of the royal family becomes the *Penlop*, governor, of Trongsa before being crowned king.

**1st Day:** Arrive in Paro then transfer to Thimphu, the capital.

**2nd Day:** Tour Thimphu, the nation's capital, and visit its temples, Dzong, monasteries, craft schools, and the national library.

**3rd Day:** Drive through the mountains and villages to central Bhutan and the city of Trongsa. The Trongsa Dzong is one of the most picturesque examples of Bhutanese architecture. From the original temple, which was built in 1543, the dzong has been enlarged over and over during the centuries.

**4th Day:** Drive over the mountain passes to Bumthang, the heartland of Bhutan. Here are located some of the kingdom's most precious and ancient Buddhist sites. We spend the next three nights in the town of Jakar.

**5th & 6th Days:** For the next two days explore the sights of Bumthang—the Jamgay Lhakhang (temple), where in 746 A.D. Guru Rimpoche meditated in a cave and left a print of his body; the Kurjey Lhakhang, built in 700 A.D., considered to be one of the most sacred temples in Bhutan; the 17th century Jakar Dzong (the Dzong of the White Bird); and some of the local cottage industries.

**7th Day:** In the morning return to Trongsa, with time for some local sightseeing in the afternoon.

**8th Day:** Travel to Wangdue, where we visit the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong. Founded in 1638, this massive fort, monastery and government administrative center sits on a high ridge which commands the valleys and river below.

**9th Day:** Travel to Punakha, at one time Bhutan's capital city. Built in 1637, The Punakha Dzong, suffered many fires and earthquakes over the years. Walking across the cable suspension bridge over the Mo Chhu River, you enter the massive wooden gates of the dzong to visit its courtyards, monastery, and chapels.

**10th Day:** After breakfast we return along the mountain roads, past fast-running rivers, rice-terraced valleys and small villages to the town of Paro, located in a

broad rice terraced valley beside a willow-lined river. In the afternoon we visit the many sights of Paro—The National Museum, The Rinpung Dzong, and the ruins of the Drugyel Dzong, built in 1649 to control the road to Tibet, it was destroyed by a butter lamp fire in 1951. As an alternative, you may choose to spend the day hiking up to the Paro Taksang Monastery (also known as the “Tiger’s Nest”) where according to legend, Guru Rimpoche flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger.

**11th Day:** Depart from Paro airport.

**Price per person:**

February–May, August–November:	Three or more persons	\$2990*
	Two persons	\$3390*
	One person	\$3470*



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## *Trekking in Bhutan*

Make this once-in-a-lifetime trip even more memorable by adding a trek to your Bhutan Explorer trip. Our treks are led by an English-speaking Bhutanese guide, and are accompanied by a cook, to prepare delicious campsite meals, and horses, to carry equipment and supplies—you only need to carry your camera and daypack. All equipment is included. You bring only your sleeping bag.

## ***4-day Gangtey Trek***

This trek in the beautiful Himalayas visits several remote villages and reaches an elevation of 11,300 feet. It is especially beautiful in April, when the rhododendrons are in bloom. In the winter, you can see the rare Black Necked Cranes. We camp for two nights and spend our final night in a hotel.

**Price per person:**

February–May, August–November:	Three or more persons	\$ 900*
	Two persons	\$1010*
	One person	\$1050*

## ***6-day Gasa Hot Spring Trek***

This relatively low elevation trek (7,970 feet) winds through forests, where orchids are plentiful, to a hot spring, which the Bhutanese believe has medicinal value. We camp for four nights and spend the final night in a hotel.

**Price per person:**

February–May, August–November:	Three or more persons	\$1500*
	Two persons	\$1680*
	One person	\$1750*

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## ***8-day Druk Path Trek***

This trek, beginning at Paro and ending at Thimphu, visits many trout-filled lakes, and offers spectacular views of the world's highest mountains. The trail leads through forests of rhododendron and reaches a maximum elevation of 13,800 feet. We spend five days hiking. We camp for four nights and spend three nights in hotels—including two nights before the trek to acclimatize.

### **Price per person:**

February–May, August–November:	Three or more persons	\$2100*
	Two persons	\$2350*
	One person	\$2450*

## ***9-day Thousand Lakes Trek***

This trek visits many high altitude lakes. We begin in Thimphu and end at Paro, spending six days trekking plus a couple of rest days along the way. The maximum elevation is 14,800 feet. We camp for seven nights and spend the last night in a hotel.

### **Price per person:**

February–May, August–November:	Three or more persons	\$2400*
	Two persons	\$2680*
	One person	\$2800*

\* Prices and itinerary subject to change without notice.

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## 10-day Jhomolhari Trek

This is a comparatively challenging trek taking us to a maximum altitude of 16,040 feet. We spend nine days trekking plus one rest day at the base of Mount Jhomolhari. We camp for nine nights. The itinerary modifies the 7-day Bhutan Explorer and substitutes the many settlements and historical sites along the trek for Wangdue and Punakha.

### Price per person:

February–May, August–November:	Three or more persons	\$2700*
	Two persons	\$3020*
	One person	\$3150*



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# A Little About Bhutan

**BHUTAN:** Located between China and India, the kingdom measures 110 miles from north to south and 200 miles from east to west. The country is all mountainous with the exception of the southernmost end which is a continuation of the plains of northern India. Bhutan's population is around 750,000. The government is a monarchy and the king, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, makes himself accessible to all of his subjects and is well liked. The official language is *Dzongkha*, but English is taught in the schools. The religion, *Drukpa Kagyu*, a form of Tantric Buddhism, regulates all aspects of life. Bhutan's economy is agricultural and the majority of people live in small rural villages. The Bhutanese dress in their ancient traditional styles, the men wearing the *gho*, a long robe tied around the waist, and the women the *kira*, an ankle length dress made of colorful finely woven fabrics.

**DZONG:** The word "Dzong" loosely translated means a fortress. For over three hundred years these formidable looking castles, built mostly on mountain spurs overlooking valleys, have served as a defense against attack or invasion. The dzongs house monasteries and also serve as government administrative centers.

**GURU RIMPOCHE:** Guru Rimpoche ("Precious Master") is one of the most important religious figures in Bhutan. He was a Tibetan lama who arrived in Bhutan in the Seventh Century and introduced Tantric Buddhism to the country. He is credited with many magical feats.

**PARO:** Located in the Paro Valley in western Bhutan, Paro is the location of the country's only international airport. In the 19th Century, Paro was the seat of government and the commercial center of the country. Many important religious and historical sites are located in Paro.

**THIMPHU:** The capital city of Bhutan, Thimphu lies in a wooded valley along the banks of the Thimpu Chhu (river). This tiny capital city has a population of only 40,000 people and is probably the only world capital with no traffic lights.

**WANGDUE PHODRANG:** Founded in 1638, the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong stands on a ridge which commands a view of two river valleys. Zhabdrung, the religious leader who unified the country in the 17th Century, was told by a diety that he could bring the whole country under his rule if he built a dzong on this ridge, which has the shape of a sleeping elephant. He built the dzong and named it Wangduephodrang, "wangdue" meaning "to bring under one's power."



**PUNAKHA:** The Punakha Dzong lies at the junction of the Phochhu and Mochhu rivers. Built in 1637, the dzong played an important role in the country's history. It was here that the hereditary monarchy was established on December 17, 1907, when Sir Ugyen Wangchuck became the first monarch. Today the dzong is the winter residence of the *Je Khenpo*, the chief abbot of Bhutan.

**BUMTHANG:** Bumthang is a region in central Bhutan and is often referred to as the country's cultural heartland. Monasteries, ancient temples and palaces are found throughout the countryside.

**JAKAR:** The major trading center for the Bumthang region, Jakar is a base for visiting the many sights of central Bhutan. The site for the Jakar Dzong was chosen when a white bird rose into the air and settled on a cliff overlooking the valley. This was looked upon as being a good omen, and the Jakar Dzong, "the Dzong of the White Bird," was constructed in 1549.

**TRONGSA:** Trongsa is located in the center of the country and is surrounded by high mountain passes. The Trongsa Dzong, the most impressive in the kingdom, is said to be one of the most magnificent works of traditional Bhutanese architecture. Its location was chosen because, while meditating, a member of the ruling family had a vision of a butter lamp burning, signifying that this was a sacred place.

# Terms, Conditions and Stuff Like That

## **RESERVATIONS:**

Please reserve as early as possible as space is limited on all of our trips. A \$300 deposit is required at the time of booking. Airfare not included in packages must be paid in full at time of booking. Final payments are due 60 days prior to the trip date. All deposits and payments are **nonrefundable**. For your convenience, we accept most major credit cards.

## **CANCELLATIONS:**

In the case of cancellation by participants **no refunds** will be made. To protect yourself against unforeseen illness or other emergencies we encourage you to purchase travel insurance.

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE:**

We offer optional travel insurance.

## **RESPONSIBILITY:**

The California Native is acting only as an agent for the particular airlines, lodgings and other providers of services. Accordingly, these arrangements are made for you upon the express condition that neither The California Native nor its officers or employees shall have any responsibility for, nor shall they be liable for, any claim or loss whether or not arising from any personal injury, illness, property loss or damage, wrongful death, monetary loss, accident, delay, inconvenience, irregularity, omission, failure to provide adequate service, additional charge, failure to warn, defect or failure in any vehicle, facility, roadway or structure or by any breach of contract, negligence or wrongful act by any person.

## **SUBSTITUTIONS:**

We reserve the right to substitute accommodations, transportation and itinerary when we deem it necessary or advisable.

**CST 2027100-40**