Bhumthang-Ura Festival

Enjoy an intimate Tsechu experience set in the Ura district of the Bumthang Valley, Bhutan's spiritual heartland. Tsechus (festivals) is one of the best ways to experience the ancient living culture of Bhutan. A Tsechu is a Buddhist festival in honor of Guru Rimpoche, the saint who brought Buddhism to Bhutan. Local villagers gather in a spirit of festivity, celebration and deep faith to witness unique masked dances and celebrations. Also visit sacred sites in Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, and Gangtey.

Duration: 10 days

Price: $1990

Rating: 3 Star

Group Size: Minimum Pax - 2

Grade: Strenuous

Destination: Bhutan

Activity: Tour in Nepal

Itinerary:

Day 1: Paro - Thimphu

The flight into Paro on our national carrier, Druk Air, is a befitting introduction to the spectacular beauty of our country. In clear weather, magnificent views of the world's highest peaks give way to the lush green Paro valley as you land. The first gift from Bhutan will be the cool, clean fresh air as you step out of the plane. After clearing customs and visa control you are met by your guide and transferred to Paro town for lunch. After lunch depart to Thimphu, the modern capital of Bhutan. The drive will take around 1½ hour. Thimphu has a population of about 85,000. The town is made up of just three lines of shops and is the only capital in the world without traffic lights. Afternoon visits the National Memorial Chorten, built in honor of our late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk; and the Weekly Outdoor Market, where everyone goes to buy fruits and vegetables, rice, grains, chillis, and other fresh foods. The crowded stalls offer many colorful local items such as yak tail dusters, butter teacups, turquoise from Nepal and Tibet and musical instruments and finally visit Handicrafts Emporium, which has all types of Bhutanese handicrafts for sale. Stay overnight at the hotel.

Day 2: Thimphu

Thimphu sightseeing includes a visit to the National Institute of Traditional Medicine; the National Library, stocked with priceless ancient Buddhist manuscripts and the Art & Craft School, where children still learn the ancient art of Buddhist painting. Other highlights include a visit Zilukha Nunnery; Folk Heritage Museum; Textile Museum; Bhutanese Handmade Paper Factory and Sangaygang viewpoint to view the beautiful Thimphu valley which lies at the ground floor at an altitude of 2,350 m and evening ends with a walk through the main street of Thimphu. Stay overnight at the hotel.

Day 3: Thimphu - Punakha

Morning departs to Punakha, the ancient capital of Bhutan. Leaving Thimphu the road climbs steeply through a forest of pine and cedar, festooned with hanging lichen high up near Dochula pass (3,050 m). This pass often offers panoramic views of the

Himalayan mountain ranges. After stopping for tea and the view, we descend along a series of hairpin bends to the fertile valley of Punakha. Check in at hotel Meri Puensum and lunch will be served. After lunch, drive to visit Punakha Dzong, winter seat of the Je Khenpo and the Monk Body, remarkably located between the rivers of the Mo (Female) the Chu and Pho (Male) Chu. If time permits hike to Khamsum Yuele Chorten. Stay overnight at the hotel.

Day 4: Punakha - Wangdue - Trongsa - Bumthang - Gangtey

Today we start early for the fabulous drive to the central valleys of Bhutan. The drive to Bumthang is approximately 7 to 8 hours crossing over Pelela pass (3,300 m) and Yotongla pass (3,400 m).In the morning we pass Wangdue, one of the major towns and district headquarters of Western Bhutan where we make a short stop to view the Wangdiphodrang Dzong dramatically located on the spur of a hill at the confluence of the Tsang Chu and Dang Chu rivers. We then climb steadily passing through semi-tropical vegetation and then to Pelela Pass with an alpine environment of rhododendrons and dwarf bamboo. This pass is traditionally considered the boundary between West and East Bhutan. If the weather is clear the Himalayan ranges can be seen, particularly the peak of Chomolhari to the west. En route, we cross Chendebji Chorten built many centuries ago to suppress a demon. Picnic lunch will be served en route at a very convenient spot and if time permits visit the impressive Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of the ruling dynasty. In olden days the dzong commanded the passage between East and West Bhutan. After Trongsa drive to Bumthang valley (described as “one of the most beautiful spots in the Himalayas”)across the Yotongla pass (3,400 m) and it takes around 02 hours drive. Bumthang valley is one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the heartland of Buddhism. Here many great teachers meditated and left in their wake many sacred grounds. The Guru and his lineage of Tertons (treasure finders) have led to the sprouting of many temples in the valley. Check in at hotel Rinchenling. Afternoon visit Kurjey Lhakhang (where the Guru Rinpoche subdued a local demon and left his body imprint on a rock) and Tamshing Monastery (one of the oldest monastic schools built by Terton Pema Lingpa). We also visit Jambay Lhakhang (one of the oldest temples built in the 7th century) and Jakar Dzong (seat of the district administration). Overnight at Hotel

Day 5: Bumthang - Ura

Bumthang valley is one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the heartland of Buddhism. Here many great teachers meditated and left in their wake many sacred grounds. The Guru and his lineage of Tertons (treasure finders) have led to the sprouting of many temples in the valley. Check in at hotel Rinchenling. Afternoon visit Kurjey Lhakhang (where the Guru Rinpoche subdued a local demon and left his body imprint on a rock) and Tamshing Monastery (one of the oldest monastic schools built by Terton Pema Lingpa). We also visit Jambay Lhakhang (one of the oldest temples built in the 7th century) and Jakar Dzong (seat of the district administration). Afternoon drive to Ura valley via Ura la pass (3,600m) which is marked by a Chhorten to join in the celebration of the Ura Tsechu where one of the biggest events of the year. The Tsechu, a colorful Buddhist festival will be performed over the next few days. This is a unique opportunity to see people from all over the country and witness the wonderful ancient ritual dances and the best time to interact with the local people. Also, visit the Ura Lhakhang which is dedicated to Guru Rimpoche who brought Buddhism in Bhutan during the 8th century. Overnight at farm house or drive back to Bumthang at your hotel.

Day 6: Ura - Festival Bumthang

Today in the morning join in the 2nd day of the festival and also pay a visit to Shingkhar valley which lies above the Ura valley and visits Shingkhar monastery at an altitude of 3, 400 m and founded by Nyingma master, Longchen Rabjampa around 1350 and then drives back to Bumthang. Stay overnight at the hotel.

Day 7: Bumthang - Gangtey - Wangdue

In the morning we drive to Gangtey valley via Trongsa and visit Ta Dzong, an ancient watchtower, above the main Dzong, which has an interesting display of Mongol armor. We then drive to Gangtey which lies in the flanks of the Black Mountains. There is an old monastery of Gangtey Gompa dating back to the 17th century. A few kilometers past the Gompa on the valley floor are the fascinating valley of Phobjikha. The gentle sloping hillsides of Phobjikha is described as "the most beautiful valley in the Himalayas". This is the winter home of black-necked cranes that migrate from the arid plains in the north to pass winter in milder and lower climate. Continue drive to Wangdue. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 8: Wangdue Thimphu - Paro

After breakfast, we drive to we make a short stop to view the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong dramatically located on the spur of a hill at the confluence of the Tsang Chu and Dang Chu rivers. Then we continue our drive to Thimphu and lunch served at Dochola cafeteria. Leisure time in Thimphu and afternoon drive to Paro. Overnight at Hotel.

Day 9: Paro - Paro

After breakfast, a short drive will take you to the ground floor of Taktsang Monastery from where we will hike up to the Taktsang monastery (Tiger’s nest). The hike up to the cafeteria will take around one and half hour. At the view point enjoy the stunning view of the monastery, where Guru Padmasambhava landed on the back of a tigress in the 8th century and lunch will be served at the viewpoint cafeteria and then walk back to the road point and visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan. Dinner at Dechen resort. Overnight at Hotel

Day 10: Paro - Depart

In the morning your Bhutanese escort will bid you farewell at Paro airport. Good-bye and happy journey back home.