

KINGDOM OF BHUTAN AND ROYAL RAJASTHAN, INDIA

BUDDHISM, MONUMENTS, TEMPLES, AND TIGERS



DATE: OCTOBER 20 – NOVEMBER 8, 2006

Friday, October 20th
Depart USA for India
Overnight spent aboard flight.

Saturday, October 21st
Delhi
Tonight upon arrival in Delhi, we are met and transferred to our hotel.
Overnight at the luxurious **Hotel Intercontinental Park**.
(Meals en route)



Sunday, October 22nd
Delhi

This morning enjoy a late breakfast followed by a sightseeing trip of **New Delhi and the Qutab Minar** (Central Vista, National Museum, and the Qutab Minar). Delhi, the rambunctious heart of India, is one of the world's most vibrant cities. New Delhi, the imperial city created by the British Raj, has spacious tree-lined avenues and imposing government buildings.

Central Vista comprises the Rajpath or the King's road with the President's palace at one end and the India Gate in the center. It is flanked by Government Buildings housing various Ministries and the Lok Sabha (Parliament House).

The National Museum has terracotta and wooden sculptures and bronzes, and paintings dating back to the 2nd - 3rd century BC. Humayun's Tomb: A mid 16th century built during the period of the second Mughal Emperor – this is an outstandingly imposing monument.

Qutab Minar: Standing 15 Km to the South Of Delhi, this is a soaring tower of Victory which was started in 1193. It stands in an impressive complex and there is a 7-meter high iron pillar dating back to the 5th century AD, which stands aloft without any traces of rust.

This evening you will enjoy a wonderful Sound and Light show at the Old Fort. Overnight at **Hotel Intercontinental Park**.
(B)

Monday, October 23rd
Delhi / Paro

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport for a late morning flight from Delhi to **Paro**, departing at 11:30 a.m. with a stopover at Kathmandu. The flight from Delhi to Paro in a 72-seater BAe 146-100 / Airbus 319 is breathtaking as you fly above the Southern slopes of Kanchenjunga and **Mount Everest**, Chomolhari and Mt Jichu Drake (6794 m) in Bhutan. Disembark at Paro International Airport and transfer to our hotel in Paro. In case there is enough natural light we will drive around Paro. Overnight at **Hotel Olathang**.
(B, D)

Tuesday, October 24th
Paro

Today we drive to Drugyel Dzong, a ruined fortress outside of **Paro**. It is here that the Bhutanese finally defeated the Tibetans. The views of Mt. Chomolhari (7329 m. 24029 ft) are gorgeous from here. Later we proceed to the road Head from where we begin our walk to the viewing point of the TAKTSANG MONASTERY – this walk is an easy ascent and it takes about one hour to get to the TAKTSANG JAKHANG (Cafeteria), from where one gets a good broadside view of the Monastery. Those who wish to continue walking another one hour to reach the Monastery, or to an intermediary view point, closer and with a side view of the steep cliffs on the sides of the Monastery may do so. Lunch at the Cafeteria. After lunch, we walk down to the bus and drive to the foot of the

Paro Dzong from where we climb to the courtyard of the Dzong A casual walk up hill takes you to the Ta Dzong, an ancient watchtower that now houses the National Museum. Drive to Paro town and dinner at a local Restaurant. Overnight in Paro at **Hotel Olathang**.
(B, L, D)

Wednesday, October 25th

Paro / Punakha / Chuzomsa

This morning we drive through thick forests of blue pine, ascending to the Dochu La Pass (3,150 m) and descending to **Punakha** at the confluence of the Pho Chu (Father) and Do Chu (Mother) river. This valley is surrounded by terraces of wheat and rice fields. Here we will visit the Punakha Dzong, a fortress built in 1637 by the founder of the State - this was the winter residence of the royal family until 1955. Overnight in Hotel at Punakha. (**Hotel Zangdo Phelri** / or at the **Kitchu Resort** at Chusomsa – 1.5 hrs drive towards Gangtey).
(B, L, D)

Thursday, October 26th

Punakha / Chuzomsa - Gangtey

Today we drive to Central Bhutan to visit the Black mountains and the Black-necked Crane Centre at **Gangtey** (approx 3 hrs). The Black-necked crane is an endangered species and here at Gangtey is a large breeding ground and winter habitat for these cranes. These large, beautiful and graceful birds migrate each year from Tibet and Siberia to this glacial valley on the western slopes of the Black Mountains. Neither electricity nor telephones are allowed here in order to keep the valley natural for these rare birds. Punishment imposed on anyone injuring a Black Necked Crane is lifetime imprisonment! The Gangtey Monastery is built atop a small hill overlooking rolling hills and green meadows surrounded by snowcapped mountains and the Phobjika Valley. The Monastery is surrounded by a large village. This is the largest Monastery of the Nyingmapa Lama sect of **Buddhism**. We visit the Black neck crane center and learn about the crane from the scientists who are stationed here for research on this endangered bird. Last year, the first batch of birds arrived on October 23rd. There are less than 200 birds today. Overnight in Gangtey at **Hotel Phuentsocholing**.
(B, L, D)

Friday, October 27th

Gangtey / Thimphu

After breakfast we travel to **Thimphu**, the capital of Bhutan. After check-in to the hotel, sightseeing will consist of Taschicho Dzong, the main secretariat building (incase the 'Je Khenpo' or Chief Abbot has moved to his winter quarters at Punakha) where the ministries offices of the King and the Throne Room are located. Overnight at Thimpu at **Hotel Riverview**.
(B, L, D)

Saturday, October 28th

Thimpu

Today we visit the Post office, National memorial chorten, mini Zoo to see the Takin – National animal of Bhutan, drive up to the vantage point from where you get a birds eye view of Thimphu. After lunch we see The Handicrafts Emporium where Bhutanese textiles can be bought; the painting and wood craft schools where traditional arts are kept alive; the National Library where ancient books are preserved and the Institution of Traditional Medicine. In the evening we attend a bonfire and dinner at the Golf Club .Overnight in Thimphu at **Hotel Riverview**.
(B, L, D)

Sunday, October 29th

Thimpu / Paro

A visit to the famous weekend market is a must in Bhutan. The marketplace is alive with fresh and organic fruits, rice, chilies, wonderful textiles, handicrafts, art, jewelry and so much color. Optional visit to the river confluence from where the climb to the Cheri Goenpa begins –this is a 45 minute drive from Thimphu, upstream along the river Wang chu past the Queen Mothers residence and through some pretty countryside to the roads end at the entrance of the Jigme Dorji national park. The Monks Monastery at Cheri overlooks the river Confluence from high above – and it takes about an hour to walk upto this commanding point at the edge of a spur. Late afternoon we drive to Paro. Overnight in Paro at **Hotel Olathang / Kitchu Resort**
(B, L, D)

Monday, October 30th

Paro / New Delhi / Agra

Today board our return flight to Delhi on Druk Air – from the International Airport at 7:00 a.m., arriving in Delhi via Kathmandu at 10:30 a.m. Upon arrival at the airport, we transfer to the bus and drive to Agra, reaching there in time for dinner. Overnight at **Hotel Trident Hilton**.

(B, D)

Tuesday, October 31st

Agra / Bharatpur

After breakfast we visit the **Taj Mahal**, built by the Emperor Shah Jehan as a memorial to his beloved queen. In the afternoon we visit the Agra Fort and in the evening visit a factory and showrooms to see a demonstration of marble inlay work as it was practiced by the families of the artisans who were involved with the building of the Taj Mahal. Overnight at Bharatpur at **Laxmi Vilas**.

(B, L or D)



Wednesday, November 1st

Agra / Fatehpur Sikri / Ranthambhor

Drive to **Fatehpur Sikri**, visiting the Palaces, monuments and courtyards of Akbar the Great's capital, the Buland Darwaza, the highest arched gateway in the world, built by the Mughals, and the mother-of-pearl tomb of the sufi saint Salim Chishti. Drive to **Bharatpur** train station for the train at 3:46 p.m. to **Ranthambhor Tiger Reserve**. Upon arrival at 6:02 p.m., we transfer to our picturesque hotel. Tonight enjoy a barbeque dinner under the stars. Overnight at the **Hotel Dev Vilas** in Ranthambhor.

(B, D)

Thursday, November 2nd

Ranthambhor

After early morning tea, we take a three hour drive in the Park by Safari truck. Spend a thrilling morning viewing tigers and leopards (if lucky), deer, antelope and peacocks and other wildlife. Surrounded on one side by the Aravali mountain ranges and three large lakes, and dotted by numerous architectural remnants of the old fort, this park offers fantastic vistas almost everywhere. Return to the hotel for brunch. In the afternoon, there is an optional 3 hour drive into the Park by Jeep (with the option to visit - Ranthambhor Fort - a medieval Fort situated on a high plateau). There are ancient ruins of palaces and archways and other monuments here. Return for tea at the Castle Jhoomar Baori - the old Maharaja's hunting lodge situated on a hill with views of the cliffs surrounding the National Park. Overnight at **Hotel Dev Vilas**.

(B, L, or D)

Friday, November 3rd

Ranthambhor / Samode

This morning we have the option to take a shorter drive in the Park by Safari truck or visit the Ranthambhor School of Art to see local painters at work. Return to hotel for breakfast and depart for the Rail Station to board the train leaving at 10:35 a.m. for Jaipur -arriving Jaipur at 12:50 p.m. Transfer to bus for the drive to Samode Palace, visiting the City Palace, museums, and Observatory in the Pink City. Drive on to Samode Palace (2 hrs drive). Nestled in the Aravali Mountains, Samode Palace is a magical retreat-beautifully frescoed walls, and lavish audience halls twinkle with hundreds of mirrors and gold inlay work. The evening is free to enjoy the ambience of this Palace and its gardens. Overnight at **Hotel Samode Palace**.

(B, GALA DINNER)

Saturday, November 4th

Samode / Jaipur

Today after breakfast, we drive to the Fort and Palaces of **Amer** situated on top of the surrounding mountains. Enjoy an elephant ride to the top of the Fort and then spend the morning marveling at the fabulous palaces filled with intricate carvings, stained glass panels and gold and silver inlaid ceilings. Originally built around 1000 AD, the Fort with its dazzling complex of palaces, pavilions and terraced gardens is a combination of Mughal and Rajput architecture. After ascending to the fort on elephant back, proceed to the city of **Jaipur**, a fantastic 18th century city built entirely of red sandstone. Visit a carpet factory and see how woolen carpets are woven, also shop for handicrafts and jewelry for which Jaipur is famous. Overnight at **Hotel Trident Hilton**.

(B, L or D)

Sunday, November 5th

Jaipur / Udaipur

This morning time free for shopping for wool and silk carpets, silk textiles and jewelry at Jaipur. In the evening leave for the city of Udaipur, by plane at 6:10 pm, arriving at Udaipur at 8:00 pm. Udaipur is a romantic 16th century city. On arrival, check into **Hotel Trident Hilton**.

(B, L or D)

Monday, November 6th

Monday Udaipur

This morning we visit the City Palace, the Sahelion ki bari (garden of the maids of honor). Later in the afternoon take a boat cruise on the Pichola Lake and have Lunch at the **Hotel Lake Palace** - a white marble palace that seems to float miraculously on the still waters of Lake Pichola. Considered one of the most romantic hotels in the world by Conde Nast, this is a 250-year old Palace. Overnight at **Hotel Trident Hilton**.

(B, L)



Tuesday, November 7th

Udaipur/ Delhi / Depart

This morning after a leisurely breakfast, enjoy the ambience of the hotel. We then depart by flight to Delhi (Departing at 3:30 p.m. and arriving in Delhi at 4:40 p.m). Upon arrival at Delhi, transfer for sightseeing of the Humayun's tomb and Old Fort. The rest of the evening is free for shopping in New Delhi's emporiums. If time permits, enjoy a program on the Dances of India and then have a farewell dinner. Transfer to the airport for your flight back to USA.

(B, D)

Wednesday, November 8th

Arrive in USA

Arrive back home today.

Meals included indicated by: B=breakfast L=lunch D=dinner

Itinerary is subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control or for the convenience of our travelers.