



**Gray
Langur**

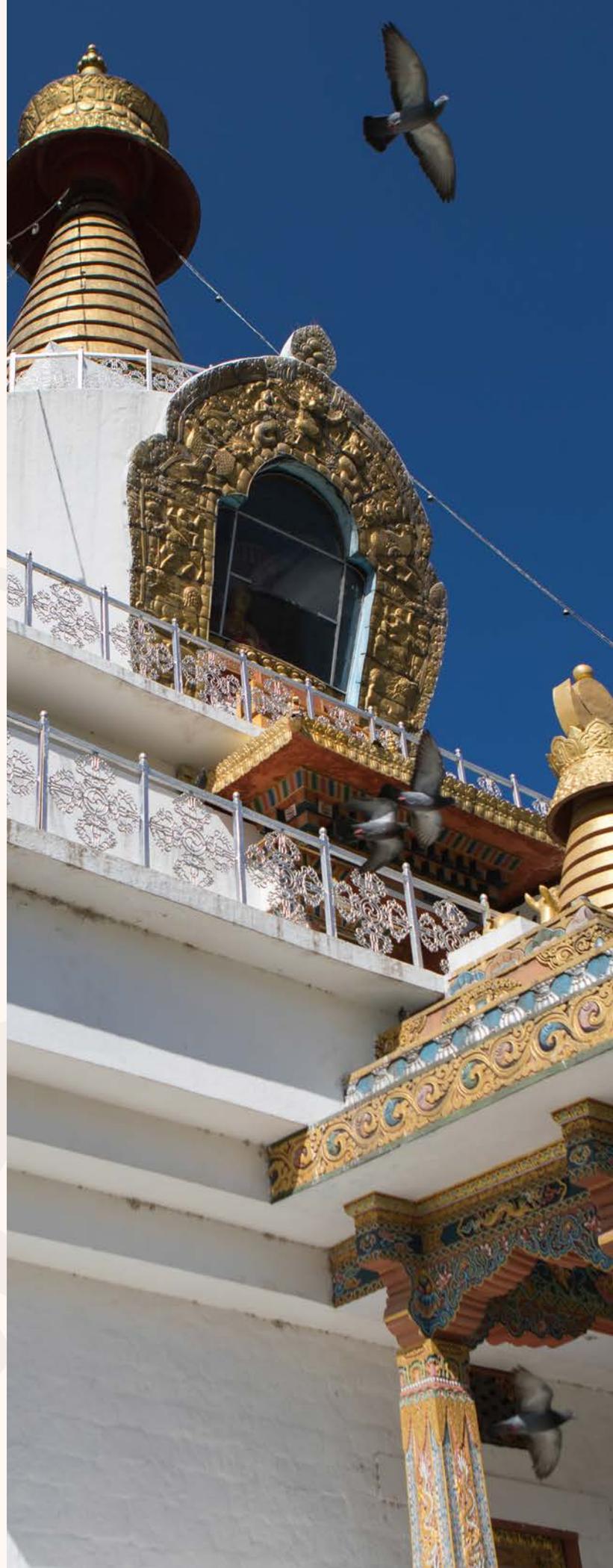
Bhutan

Dragon Kingdom Explorer

7 days, 6 nights

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Dragon Kingdom Explorer

Come with us on a journey into the “Land of the Thunder Dragon” on this seven-day tour with visits to age-old temples, imposing Dzongs and gold-roofed monasteries. On the Thunder Dragon tour, we will explore traditional architecture, discover the attractions of the Paro Valley, including the ancient Kyichu Temple and Drukgyel Dzong and take in the sights of Bhutan’s capital, Thimphu.

Enjoy hiking up 900 meters above the valley floor to the awe-inspiring Taktsang “Tiger’s Nest” Monastery. Take a walk through the Punakha Valley through rice fields and orange plantations to a hillside chorten offering sweeping valley views.

Along your journey, we’ll provide comfortable accommodations, time for relaxation and reflection, and opportunities to enjoy local entertainment and customs.

Let your journey begin today.

Itinerary

DAY 01

Arrive Paro

DAY 02

Explore Thimphu, the Capital City of Bhutan

DAY 03

Discover Thimphu’s “Glorious Religion”

DAY 04

Experience the Famed Fortress of Punakha

DAY 05

Stroll the Punakha Countryside

DAY 06

Climb to Iconic “Tiger’s Nest” Monastery

DAY 07

Depart Bhutan

DAY 01

Arrive in Paro

You'll land in Bhutan with glimpses of the natural beauty of Paro Valley. In clear weather, you'll be able to see the world's highest peaks give way to the lush green valley. Stepping out of the plane, you'll feel the cool, fresh air of Bhutan — an introduction befitting the beauty of the Kingdom. Gray Langur Tours will take care of all airport formalities while you enjoy the comfort of the VIP airport lounge services. You will then be transferred to your accommodations.

Once you're settled in, we will start our afternoon with a visit to one of the holiest temples in Bhutan, Duntse Lhakhang. Duntse Lhakhang was built in 1421 by the famous Tibetan Lama, Thangton Gyelpo (1385-1464), who was also known as Chagzampa, (Builder of Iron Bridges) and Drubthob (The Realized One). This temple has three floors representing Hell, Earth, and Heaven, and the paintings inside are considered to be some of the most significant in Bhutan.

Afterwards, we'll travel even further back into history at Kyichu Lhakhang, a symbolic temple built by King Songtsen Gampo of Tibet in 659 AD. This Lhakhang (temple) is one of the most sacred monasteries in Bhutan. It's believed to be holding down the left foot of a demon whose body is so large that it covers Bhutan and most of Eastern Tibet. It also contains a five-meter-high statue of Guru Rinpoche and another of Tara, who represents one of the wives of King Songtsen Gampo.

If time permits, you can explore the town of Paro, either accompanied or on your own. Your personal guide and chauffeur will be available whenever you need assistance.

In the evening, you'll be treated to a sumptuous welcome dinner, possibly accompanied by a cultural show featuring some of the liveliest festive mask dances of the Kingdom of Bhutan that originated centuries ago.



DAY 02

Explore Thimphu, the Capital City of Bhutan

In the morning, we will journey 1.5 hours to Thimphu for a day exploring some of Thimphu's many sites. These include the Memorial Chorten, built in 1974 in memory of the Third King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, who died in 1972. We'll also visit Changangkha Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in the Thimphu valley; the National Library featuring an extensive collection of Buddhist literature mostly in block-printed format, some works dating back several hundred years; the School of Traditional Arts; and the Folk Heritage Museum.

In the evening before dinner, you'll have time to stroll through the streets of Thimphu and explore the city center.

DAY 03

Discover Thimphu's "Glorious Religion"

After an early breakfast, we'll take the short seven-mile drive north toward Tango Monastery. The trail to Tango Monastery is an approximately 900-foot climb and takes about an hour. Built into the mountainside by a 12th century Tibetan saint, Tango Monastery is now a Buddhist University and the residence of that saint's young seventh reincarnation. Here, philosophy and scholarship are king: this is where His Eminence the ninth Khamtrul Rinpoche completed his studies in Master of Buddhist Philosophy in 2009.

After a relaxing lunch and some downtime, we'll take a late afternoon trip to visit Tashichoedzong, "The Fortress of the Glorious Religion." The expansive dzong houses some national ministries, His Majesty's Secretariat, and the Central Monastic Body.



DAY 04

Experience the Famed Fortress of Punakha

Arriving in the town of Punakha, we will check into our hotel and enjoy some lunch. Afterwards, we'll visit the famed fortress Punakha Dzong, built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, the unifier of Bhutan. The Shabdrung died in 1651 while he was in meditation at Punakha Dzong, and his body is preserved in one of the Dzong's temples. The Dzong is a breathtaking example of traditional Bhutanese architecture with four intricately embossed entrance pillars crafted from cypress and decorated in gold and silver. Punakha Dzong is the winter headquarters of the Central Monastic Body of Bhutan.

After exploring the town's history and traditions, we'll return to our hotel for dinner and a relaxing evening.



DAY 05

Stroll the Punakha Countryside

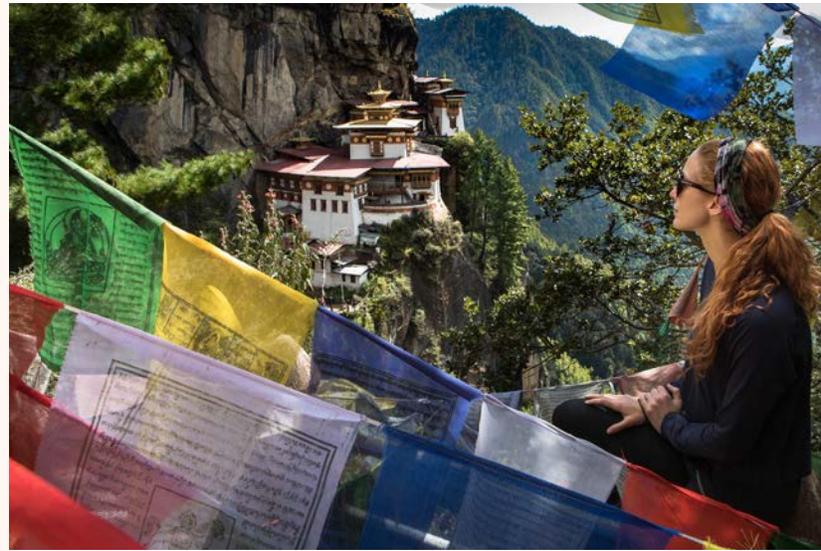
This morning, we'll start the day with a brief walk through an idyllic rural farming area. We'll arrive at a chorten renowned for its beautiful paintings and complex iconography. Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten is perched high on a hill on the opposite bank of the Mo Chhu, or "Female River," and was commissioned by Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck to protect the country.

A traditional local lunch will be served on the riverbank, accompanied by a musician showcasing traditional Bhutanese instruments.

After lunch, we'll take another off-road walk for 20 minutes to pay a visit to Chimi Lhakhang, a temple built in 1499 by Lama Drukpa Kunley, or "The Divine Madman." According to legend, the "madman" subdued the demon of Dochu La with his "magic thunderbolt of wisdom." A wooden effigy of the lama's

thunderbolt is preserved in the Lhakhang. Time permitting, we'll head even further east to visit Wangdue Phodrang Dzong, a stunning ridge-top fortress founded in 1638 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel.

To finish out the day, we'll make the four-hour trip back to Paro and check into our hotel for an evening of rest and relaxation before taking on the Tiger's Nest.



DAY 06

Climb to Iconic “Tiger’s Nest” Monastery

In the morning, we'll drive to the foothill of the iconic Taktsang, or “Tiger’s Nest” Monastery. The 8th century Buddhist Master Guru Rinpoche is said to have flown to the site of the monastery on the back of a tigress. He then meditated in a nearby cave for three months and converted the Paro Valley to Buddhism.

At this point in our journey, you'll have the option to make the climb up to the magnificent monastery perched on the side of a cliff more than 2,900 feet above the floor of the Paro Valley. You can choose to hike the trail or ride up on horseback. It takes approximately 90 minutes to complete the uphill hike to the Taktsang cafeteria, where you'll have a chance to catch your breath and take in the amazing view of the iconic Taktsang Monastery. From here, it's about another hour to a lookout point beside the monastery. Please note that we don't recommend riding on horseback down the mountain.

After indulging in a half-day of cliffside Bhutanese history, we'll return to our hotel for lunch before continuing on to explore the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong, built in 1647 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, the great “Unifier of Bhutan.” He constructed this dzong to commemorate his victory over the Tibetans in 1644. Drukgyel Dzong was featured on the cover of National Geographic magazine when John Claude White published an article about Bhutan in 1914. In 1951, a fire destroyed most of this glorious and magnificent dzong, but its ruins are a fascinating piece of history.

Afterwards, we'll visit the Rinpung Dzong, also known as the “fortress of a heap of jewels.” Built in 1646, the dzong stands on a hill high above Paro, and features beautiful architecture and ancient frescos.

In the evening, you're free to explore Paro Town to soak in that last bit of Bhutan before tucking in for your final night in Bhutan.

DAY 07

Depart Bhutan

After an early breakfast, you'll be transferred to Paro International Airport for your flight to your return destination.



A Unique and Enriching Adventure Awaits...

This sample itinerary is an example of the kinds of accommodations, activities, and experiences we can customize for you. Let us help you plan your perfect trip to the Land of the Thunder Dragon.

Just drop us an email at tours@graylangur.com, or call (646) 905-0479.