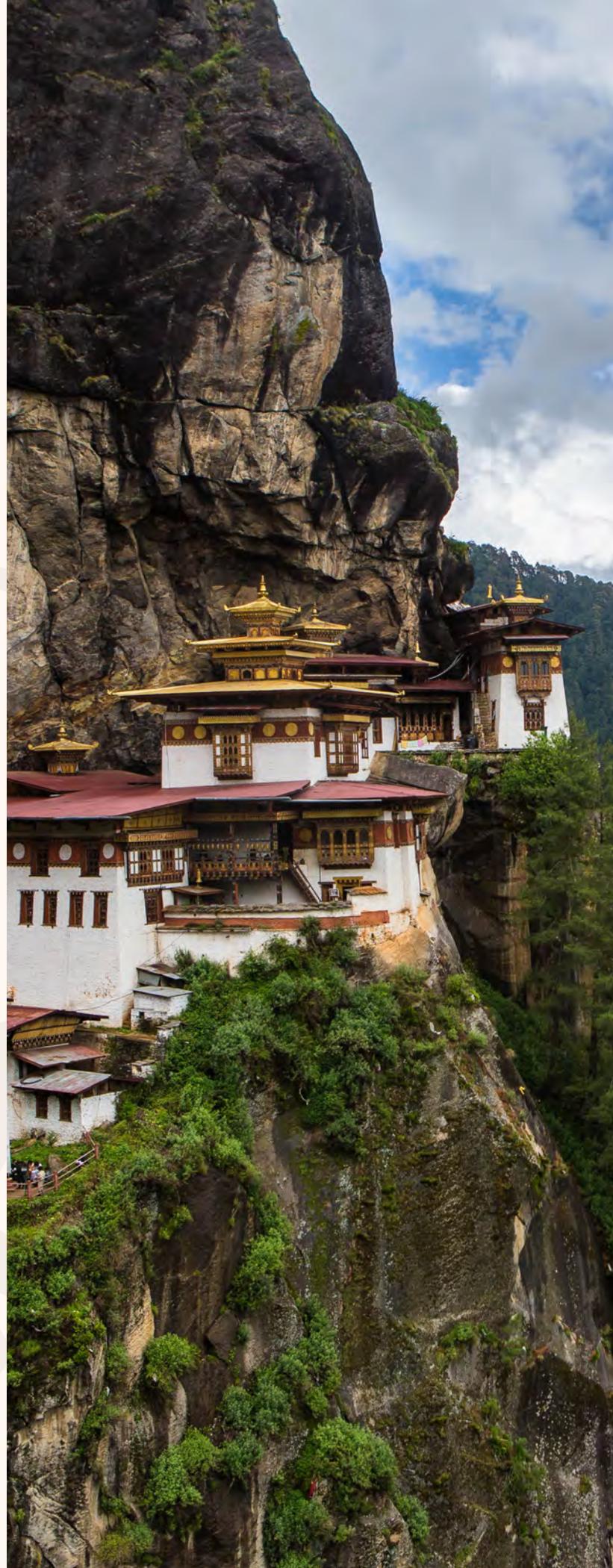




**Hidden Land
of Bhutan**

Kingdom of the Clouds Tour

October 16th - October 29th, 2018
13 days, 12 nights



212-444-8557

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The Kingdom of the Clouds Tour

Gray Langur's Kingdom of the Clouds Tour is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. In a timespan of 13 days, you'll get to experience the enchanting landscapes of Bhutan—exploring the Kingdom's most sacred sites, ancient monasteries, and imposing fortresses. And of course, you'll meet warm and welcoming Bhutanese people, making memories (and maybe friends) for life.

The Kingdom of the Clouds Tour features one of Bhutan's newest and most fascinating national events: the Royal Highlander Festival of Laya. The festival showcases the customs and hidden cultures of the remote highlands with traditional songs and dances, livestock shows, and sporting competitions.

Itinerary

DAY 01

Exploring Bangkok

DAY 02

A Bhutanese Welcome

DAY 03

Hiking to the Iconic 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery

DAY 04

Through Dochula Pass to Punakha

DAY 05

Our Trek Begins

DAY 06

Reaching Laya

DAY 07

The Royal Highlander Festival

DAY 08

Returning to the Festival

DAY 09

Back to the River

DAY 10

Relax in Punakha

DAY 11

Touring Bhutan's Capital

DAY 12

A Final Hurrah

DAY 13

Depart Bhutan

DAY 01

Exploring Bangkok

Most international flights arrive late at night into Bangkok, so we recommend that guests arrive 1-2 days prior to the starting date (if you need additional nights, please contact us).

We'll enjoy a half-day tour of some of Bangkok's splendors. Lunch and dinner will be provided.

DAY 02

A Bhutanese Welcome

The adventure begins early. We'll meet at the hotel at 2am for your transport to the airport.

You'll experience Bhutan's unique spirit long before you land in Paro. You'll fly over soaring Himalayan peaks, hear Bhutan's national language, Dzongkha, and get a first taste of Bhutan's distinctive cuisine.

At the airport, you'll meet some of Gray Langur's friendly staff, and your guide, who will be your key to Bhutan for the next two weeks. A shuttle will bring you to your hotel in Paro.

After an opportunity to freshen up, guests will meet in the lobby for a briefing on the tour schedule and some do's and don'ts of Bhutanese etiquette. Then we head out for the first part of our tour!

We start with a visit to Paro's Rinpung Dzong (fortress) followed by lunch at a small family-owned restaurant. After lunch, the evening is yours to relax or walk around Paro's market area, accompanied by your guide.

The day concludes with a welcome dinner at the hotel.

Accommodation: Naksel Boutique Hotel
Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner



DAY 03

Thimphu, Dochula Pass, and Gasa

After breakfast at the hotel, it's a two-hour-climb up to the magnificent and iconic Taktsang "Tiger's Nest" Monastery, perched on the side of a cliff, more than 2,900 feet above Paro Valley. On the way up, we'll stop for snacks at Taktsang cafeteria, and lunch will be served after the descent.

The rest of the day is yours to explore. We'll meet again for dinner and a night tour of Paro.



Accommodation: Naksel Boutique Hotel

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

DAY 04

Through Dochula Pass to Punakha

Today we head to Punakha (Bhutan's capital until the 1960s). On the way, we'll make a short stop at Dochula Pass, and you'll see why this mountain pass is one of the most popular spots in Bhutan. At the top of the pass, there are 108 chortens (small monuments) built in memory of Bhutanese soldiers killed in the 2003 war against insurgents from India. And on a clear day, the 10,000-foot elevation grants an unparalleled 360-degree view of the Himalayas.

As you arrive in Punakha, you'll be treated to gorgeous views of Punakha Dzong, which sits at the meeting of the Mo Chhu and Pho Chhu rivers. Before lunch, we'll tour the dzong; one of the the country's most breathtaking. Bhutan's dzongs are hundreds of years old and have been converted into administrative buildings shared equally between government and religious offices, and Punakha Dzong is where Bhutan's grandest national ceremonies take place. You'll get to see where Bhutan's coronations, royal weddings and funerals, and other large national religious ceremonies happen.

After exploring the town's history and traditions, we'll enjoy a half-hour 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 was commissioned by Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck to protect the country.

For the adventurous (and if weather permits), we'll offer a whitewater rafting excursion in the Mo Chhu River.

Accommodation: Dhensa Boutique Hotel

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner



DAY 05

Our Trek Begins

After an early breakfast, we'll start the drive to Gasa, our starting point for the two-day hike to the Royal Highlander Festival. Our first night's campsite is a beautiful spot next to a peacefully-rushing river. Our wide sleeping tents—suitable for up to two people—will be waiting to welcome you after the day's trek. You'll also notice a dining tent, and toilet and shower tents.

After a delicious dinner cooked by our licensed chef, you'll be ready to retire to your tent for a well-earned night's sleep snuggled under down comforters.

Accommodation: Tents

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner



DAY 06

Reaching Laya

A 7 a.m. wake-up call will start the day: your guide will be waiting by your tent to offer you a hot water basin as well as coffee, tea, and juice. Once you're up, there's breakfast in the dining tent.

Make sure you eat well, fill up your water bottle, and grab some snacks from the dining tent—today's hike will be slightly more intense than yesterday's, with steeper inclines along the way. We stop for lunch at a military camp, where you'll be able to meet members of Bhutan's army. From there, it's only another two hours' hike to Laya, the site of the festival.

Tonight and for the two following nights, you'll have a chance to stay in the homes of local families, who are eager to meet and talk with travelers. Your guide will be with you to help you and your host family get to know each other, ask questions, and share stories. (You can also choose to stay in a tent for the next few nights, but we recommend the homestay!)

Accommodation: Homestay or Tents

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner



DAY 07

The Royal Highlander Festival

Today we wake up with even more excitement: it's the first day of celebration! After breakfast and a short walk, you get your first glimpse of the festival grounds. The views are incredible, and the festivities begin with the Royal Family's arrival. The festival continues throughout the day with events, dances, and competitions.

We'll enjoy lunch on the grounds along with locals, as volunteers walk around carrying and serving huge portions of traditional Bhutanese dishes and drinks. Then, back to the party!

Your guide will be by your side explaining the symbolism and significance of each part of the festival, helping you explore more of what interests you. You can watch the region's best-kept yaks, horses, and puppies (puppies!) compete for a multitude of prizes. You can also see locals challenge each other in traditional Bhutanese games like khuru (darts), archery, and wrestling.

After dinner, we invite the area's head astrologer to give us a glimpse into his magical life, and learn what astrology means to the Bhutanese.

*Accommodation: Homestay or Tents
Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner*

Returning to the Festival



You can eat breakfast with your Bhutanese host family, or join us at the dining tent. Afterwards, we return to the festival grounds for the second day of festivities. Winners from yesterday's competitions will be announced in between more cultural shows and dancing. On the second day, everyone gets a prize as the King comes out of his tent to meet and converse with all the attendees of the festival!

After lunch, you can choose to remain at the festival, or join us for a short hike further up the mountain for majestic views of an incredible mountain lake. You're even invited to take a dip in the freezing waters—if you dare!

*Accommodation: Homestay or Tents
Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner*

DAY 09

Back to the River

After breakfast, we say goodbye to Laya and our gracious hosts, and start our journey back down the mountain (and to the welcome comforts of hotels!). We'll celebrate our last day of camping with a bonfire and s'mores, accompanied by the loud and joyful singing of your guides.

Accommodation: Tents

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner



DAY 10

Relax in Punakha

The last leg of this hike will be short and easy, so we'll take our time this morning, departing our campsite at about 10 a.m. to meet up with our buses in Gasa for our drive to Punakha.

After our mid-afternoon arrival at the hotel, you'll have time to rest and enjoy a luxurious dinner and spa treatment, on us.

Accommodation: Dhensa Boutique Hotel

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner



DAY 11

Touring Bhutan's Capital

Today, we wake up for a final stop in Punakha before departing to explore Bhutan's capital, Thimphu. Chimi Lhakhang (otherwise known as the fertility temple) was built in 1499 by the cousin of Lama Drukpa Kunley, commonly known as the 'Divine Madman' in his honour after the Lama subdued the demoness of the nearby Dochula with his 'magic thunderbolt of wisdom'.



After checking into our hotel, we leave for a tour of one of the largest Buddha statues in the world! Buddha Dordenma is a magnificent work of art and a recent addition to Thimphu's landscape. We'll also check out the textile museum and take a stroll through the weekend market.

Dinner tonight is at a local restaurant that offers a delicious Bhutanese twist on Chinese food. The evening ends with a night tour of Thimphu and a taste of the Bhutanese nightlife.

*Accommodation: Termalinca
Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner*

DAY 12

A Final Hurrah



Starting with a hearty breakfast at the hotel, we head to Bhutan's only animal preserve to hopefully catch a glimpse of the country's official animal, the takin. After that, we'll visit with the nuns of Zilukha Nunnery before lunch in town—yak ribs and traditional momos at local pub The Zone. It's a perfect prelude to our stroll through the farmers' and craft markets, Thimphu's paper factory, and the Voluntary Artist's Studio, a hangout for some of the best contemporary local artists in Bhutan. You'll have a chance to support local artists and artisans and buy really cool souvenirs!



We end the day—and this journey—with a farewell dinner and party.

Accommodation: Termalinca

Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

DAY 13

Depart Bhutan

Today, we say goodbye our guides as they drive us to the airport in Paro for the flight back to Bangkok, and from there, home.

Accommodation: -

Breakfast



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.