

# TREKking FOR KIDS

IMPROVING TODAY, SECURING TOMORROW...ONE STEP AT A TIME

## Custom Bhutan Adventure in Coordination with DAJ Expeditions

### **DAY 1 April 20: Arrive Paro from Bangkok**

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular mountain flights in the world, with a constantly changing panorama of some of the highest mountains on earth. DAJ Expeditions representative will meet you at Paro airport exit doors following customs formalities. Mini-bus drive to Thimphu, Bhutan's beautifully located capital city, which is about 1 hour drive (53 km) from Paro. Before dinner at the hotel there will be an orientation on Bhutanese etiquette by your tour guide. You will stay overnight at **Thimphu City Hotel**.

### **DAY 2 April 21: Thimphu-Punakha**

After breakfast at your hotel, travel to Punakha (1310 m) with a stop at the Dochula pass (3150 m) en-route and if the weather is clear you will enjoy spectacular views of the high Himalayan Mountains. Then visit Chimey Lhakhang located on a hillock in the center of the valley below Metsina. This lhakhang (temple) was built in 1499 in honor of the Divine Madman Lama Drukpa Kuenley (1455-1529) after he had subdued the demoness of the nearby Dochula with his 'magic thunder bolt of wisdom'. The Temple is also known as "the Temple of Fertility". A wooden effigy of the lama's thunderbolt is preserved in the lhakhang, and childless women go to this temple to receive a blessing or empowerment from the saint.

Afterwards, we will visit the Punakha Dzong built in 1637 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. This impressive dzong is situated between Pho Chu (Male River) and Mo Chu (Female River). The Punakha Dzong was the second of Bhutan's dzongs and until the mid-1950s, it served as the seat of the government. The construction of this dzong was foretold by Guru Rimpoche, who predicted that 'a person named Namgyal will arrive at a hill that looks like an elephant'. As early as 1326 a smaller building called Dzong Chung (Small Dzong) existed and housed a statue of the Buddha here. It is said that Zhabdrung ordered the architect, Zowo Palep to sleep in front of the statue. While Palep was sleeping, Zhabdrung took him in his dreams to Zangtopelri and showed him the palace of Guru Rimpoche. From his vision, the architect conceived the design for the new dzong, which in keeping with the tradition, was never committed to paper. The dzong was named Druk Pungthang Dechen Phodrang (Palace of Great Happiness). The war materials captured during the battle with Tibetans are preserved here. Punakha Dzong is also the winter residence of Je-Khenpo (Chief Abbot) and the Central Monastic Body. You will stay overnight at **RKPO Green Resort**

### **DAY 3 April 22: PUNAKHA (Project Site)**

In the morning drive to the project site, simple religious ceremony for the completion of project work with monks. Spend time with the young monks, distribute gifts, group lunch. Overnight at **RKPO Green Resort**.

#### **DAY 4 April 23: Punakha - Thimphu**

After breakfast at your hotel, retrace drive to Thimphu. From Dochula Pass we can do the hike to Lungchotse Lhakhang as good acclimatization for the trek. The location of the 18th century Lungchotse Lhakhang, (4-5 hours for the round trip), is perfect for a day hike from here. For those who do not fancy walking for hours seeking solitude and peace of mind yet would like to have that, this is the place to go. It is a perfect place to enjoy the bounties of nature. On a clear sunny day, one can see the entire Bhutan Himalaya with its snow-covered peaks.

The way to the Lungchotse Lhakhang is no less striking. It is a gentle 2 hours uphill walk from Dochu La. The route is well shaded with rhododendron trees growing in abundance. The path is well padded with fallen leaves. In May and June when the flowers are in bloom it is a magical trek amidst the various hues of white, red, pink and purple. They say heaven is a place on earth; perhaps Lungchotse is one such place. You will stay overnight at **Thimphu City Hotel**.

#### **Day 5 April 24: - Trek begins - Sample trek itinerary; hours indicates average hiking time Paro to Jele Dzong (4-5 HOURS)**

Although today's trekking day is short, we keep slow and steady pace as altitude gain is significant. After breakfast, you will drive to the road head at the National Museum (2487m) (8,159 ft) above Paro from where you will start your trek. We will walk from the Museum heading uphill through apple orchards, smallholdings of Damchena village and pine forests. Visit Jele Dzong (3,490m), perched on a whaleback ridge. Jele Dzong is mostly in ruins and there is a Lhakhang with the statue of Buddha Sakyamuni. On a clear day, the views of Paro town far below and of Mt. Jomolhari (7,314m) (23,966 ft) are breathtaking. Overnight camp at 3480m (11,417 ft)

#### **Day 6 April 25: Jele Dzong to Jigmelangtsho (8-9 HOURS)**

Begin with gradually ascent and then descend below the ridgeline to walk through the trail of thick alpine forests and rhododendrons. You may see yak herders in the area. There are fascinating views of Jhomolhari and other snow-capped mountains and you can also hear some monal peasants during the day. We continue our uphill walk to reach a yak herders' pasture at Jangchulakha (3,780m) with outstanding views of the Himalayan range.

The route then follows the ridge and at times through juniper trees and dwarf rhododendrons. The views of the mountain valleys of Thimphu and Paro are sensational. After making an ascent and then a steep descent, we arrive at Jimilangtsho Lake (3,880m) - (12,729 ft) The lake is famous for their giant sized trouts. Near the camp, you can have great views of 6,989m Jichu Drake, the peak representing the protective deity of Paro. Overnight camp close to Jimilangtsho Lake.

#### **Day 7 April 26: JIGMELANGTSHO – Robula Thang (6-7 hours)**

The route begins with gradual then steep ascent to reach Rangthaja Pass, then descend below the ridgeline to cross the Tango Chari Chu, thankfully on a new bridge, the old version being little more than a wobbly plank. The trail climbs across another forested ridge to drop into the next valley. Walk through the trail of thick alpine forests and rhododendrons. There are fascinating views of snow-capped mountains and you can also hear some monal peasants during the day. We continue our uphill walk to reach a yak herders' pasture at Rabula Thang. We camp in a yak pasture near the hillside.

**DAY 8 April 27:** Rabula Thang (Rest Day)

A rest day – our bodies need to acclimatize and catch up with the height gain of the last three days. There are a number of good side trips from camp; you can walk easily up the valley to a beautiful high lake, and climb the ridge behind lake to have majestic mountain view.

**Day 9 April 28:** Rabula Thang – Shodu (7-8 hours) We begin with a gentle but steady three hour climb following an old yak herders' trail to reach Ledi La (4700m), (15,649 ft) our second pass. Then a steady, never too steep descent leads past slopes where blue sheep graze and we follow the Thimphu Chu on a good track to Shodu. We follow the good trail which then threads its way beneath towering cliffs to reach our next camp by a yak herders' shelter at Shodu.

**DAY 10 April 29:** Shodu – Barshong (8-9 hours)

The trail follows the Thimphu Chhu through rhododendron forests, past beautiful waterfalls along the way. The valley narrows till the path takes to the slopes and gradually ascends to the ruins of Barshong Dzong.

The trail descends down to the Thimphu Chhu river valley, through dense forests of rhododendron, birch, conifer, maples and bamboos and then ascends to pasture lands. The camp is in a meadow.

**Day 11 April 30:** Barshong – Dodena (3-4 hours)

The trail continues through forested areas winding up and down and through a small pass. Langurs (monkeys) can be seen along the way. In Dodena, you will exit the Jigme Dorji National Park and reach the road and the trek end. Transport to hotel and overnight at **Thimphu City Hotel**.

**Day 12 May 1:** Thimphu Sightseeing

After restful night, today you will have a few guided sightseeing opportunities in Thimphu. Visit the National Memorial Chorten, built in 1974 to honor the memory of the 3rd King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. Then drive to the Kuensel Phodrang popularly known as Buddha Point where the world's largest and tallest statue of Buddha is built. From here you will enjoy a beautiful view of the Thimphu valley.

After lunch will do a short hike. You will then visit the Tashichho Dzong, which houses the secretariat, the throne room and offices of the King and the ministries of home & cultural affairs and finance. Part of this dzong also serves as the summer residence of the Dratshang (Central Monastic Body), including the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot of Bhutan). After sightseeing will drive to Paro for your stay at **Udumvara Resort**.

**Note:** The couple who needs an early departure from Bangkok will leave today from Paro.

**DAY 13 May 2:** Tiger's Nest

After breakfast hike to Taktsang Monastery. The walk of approximately 1.5 to 2 hours uphill takes you almost a kilometre above the Paro valley floor. (4-5 hours for round trip) The view of Taktsang Monastery built on a sheer cliff face 900 metres above the valley floor is a spectacular sight. The Monastery is an important pilgrim site for Buddhists. The great Guru Rimpoche is said to have flown here on the back of a tigress when he brought the teachings of the Buddhist Dharma to Bhutan in the 8th Century. You will stay overnight at **Udumvara Resort**.

**DAY 14 May 3:** Depart Paro

Morning drive to Paro International Airport and your guide from DAJ Expeditions will accompany you to bid farewell as you embark on your onward journey.