

ORIENT ODYSSEY 2009

Tour Code: SFB

11 Day Sacred Festivals of BHUTAN

USA – Bangkok – Paro – Thimphu – Punakha – Wangdue – Paro – USA

*****Escorted SMALL group with min. of 3, and maximum of 10 travelers*****
Premium service with English speaking escorts and exclusive behind scene visits
 Affordable private journeys for 2 passengers with VIP service of a private guide, a chauffeur and a car can be arranged with extra cost

A paradisiacal journey to eye-caressing landscapes, sweet people, and vibrant, proud culture
***Each listed departure incorporates a splendid Sacred Festivals**
Join thousands of villagers as they enjoy a rollicking carnival, watch the mystical masked dances
Journey to hidden valleys, ancient fort palaces, remote villages, and sacred monasteries
Specially arranged visit to interact with senior abbots, living Buddha, peasants and their families

2009 / 2010 Departure Dates	Tour Cost (US\$)				Land Only Includes domestic flights	Single Room Supplement
	Per person double occupancy departing from					
	Los Angeles San Francisco		New York			
	Tour Cost	Cash Discount Price	Tour Cost	Cash Discount Price		
Feb 12, 2009 Punakha Festival Mar 28, 2009 Paro Festival	3860	3660	4020	3820	3037	633
Sep 14, 2009 Thimphu Festival Sep 19, 2009 Punakha Festival	4199	3999	4380	4180	3386	713

US tax \$98, int'l flight fuel surcharge \$290, and Bhutan tax and government fees of \$117 per person is extra.
 Rates for departures from other major US gateway cities are available upon request.

****Private Summer departures are available! Please call 1-800-637-5778****

Enjoy Cash Discount Price and save up to \$200 per person!
To qualify, you must be among the first 10 passengers booked on your tour / departure
Initial deposit can be paid by check or credit card
Balance of the tour cost must be made by cash, check or money order

Operated by *Orient Odyssey*



*B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner, F-In flight meals,
 SL / SD-Special local flavor meal or banquet*

Day01 USA – Bangkok

Depart from Los Angeles, San Francisco or New York. Enjoy award winning in-flight meals and

services. Move our watch one day ahead as we cross the international dateline. *Prices for departing from other major gateway cities are available upon request. F

Day02 Arrive in Bangkok

After immigration and customs, take the hotel shuttle bus to the 4 star, deluxe, *Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel*. Enjoy a restful evening to recover from jetlag. F

Day03 Bangkok –Paro, Bhutan (7,400 feet)

We will depart via *Druk Air* flight KB121, leaving at 6:50 a.m.. The spectacular journey takes us over the majestic peaks of the eastern Himalaya, and Chomolhari, Bhutan's sacred mountain. We will land at 10:20 a.m.. After visa formalities, we proceed through customs and immigration. Our Bhutanese guide and driver will greet us outside the arrival hall.

Check – in at the superior, traditional styled, ***Gangtey Palace Hotel***. Kingdom of Bhutan offers an unspoiled, rare chance to wander about in naturally intact landscapes. The wandering is glorious: wildflowers bursting with health, snow peaks in the distance, idyllic farmhouses, cheery folks waving, and in the spring, swirling fields of rhododendrons and, in the fall, visits from rare black necked cranes. Our first stop is the ***National Museum***, a round conch shell shaped fortress that once protected Paro valley from Tibetan invasion. Here we will enjoy a comprehensive collections of rare Bhutanese artifacts, art, and traditional weaving.



We then head to the magnificent ***Paro Rinpung Dzong***, “fortress on a heap of jewels”. Built in 1644, it is the finest

example of Bhutanese architecture, commanding sweeping views of the valley below. It now houses both the monastic body and district government offices, including the local courts. A short walk takes us to the base of the dzong and across a traditional, ***cantilevered, covered bridge***, featured in one of the scenes in ***Bernardo Bertolucci’s*** 1995 film “*Little Buddha*”. Our coach will pick us up from the other side of the river and take us to the center of Paro Town. Before dinner, we enjoy a ***stroll on the colorful street of Paro***, take in the traditional styled buildings, and interact with local residents. ***F/L/D***

Day04 Tiger’s Nest Excursion

After breakfast we embark on an excursion to discover the most famous of Bhutan’s monasteries, and the most sacred pilgrimage site in the Himalaya, ***Taktsang Lhakhang***, known as The ***Tiger’s Nest***. This magical monastery miraculously perched on the side of a sheer cliff 2,000 feet above the valley floor. Legend says



that Guru Rinpoche flew to the site of the monastery on the back of a tigress, a manifestation of his consort Yeshe Tsogyal, to subdue the local demon,

Singey Samdrup. He then meditated in a cave here for three months. Tradition says that the original building was anchored to the cliff-face by the hairs of *khandroma* (*dakinis*, or female

celestial beings), who transported the building materials up onto the cliff on their backs. Today the only way up to the Tiger’s Nest is to walk, or fly on the back of a magic tiger (the latter generally reserved for Tantric magicians). We first ***hike along a trail*** that slowly rises above the valley. The trail climbs through blue pines, then switchbacks steeply up the ridge, where we can enjoy excellent views across the valley. After about an hour we reach a ***ridge at 9,200 ft.*** Enjoy a rest at a ***small wooden tea house (Taktsang Cafeteria)***, where we can have a wonderful panoramic view of the monastery. One can ***relax here*** and enjoy lunch. For those interested, it is possible to get a closer view by ***hiking another mile or so***. This segment is rather steep, but one will enjoy a more ***dramatic picture-perfect view*** of the “Tiger’s Nest” across the valley. Today’s lunch is a ***traditional Bhutanese buffet*** served at the Taktsang Cafeteria. Don’t miss the famous ***Emadatsi***, a chili cheese dish. Late afternoon we enjoy a short hike to the ruins of ***Drukgyel Dzong*** (8,100 feet), built in 1649 to commemorate the victory of the Bhutanese armies over the Tibetan intruders. One of the features of the dzong was a false entrance that was designed to lure invaders into an enclosed courtyard. This is said to have worked successfully during the second attack by Tibetan invaders in 1648. On route we will stop at the 7th century ***Kyichu Lhakhang***, adorned with beautiful carvings and paintings, the temple is popularly believed to have been built in 659 by King Songtsen Gampo of Tibet, to pin down the left foot of an giant ogress who was thwarting the establishment of Buddhism into Tibet. ***B/SL/D***

Day05 Paro - Thimphu

This morning we enjoy the scenic drive to ***Thimphu***, the capital of Kingdom of Bhutan. The journey winds along the ***Pa Chu*** (river) downstream to its confluence with the ***Wang Chu***, with a spectacular view of both Paro and Thimphu valley.

Thimphu is the seat of the royal government, homes of the royal family, and main offices for international aid organizations. It



has a youthful exuberance that constantly challenges the country’s conservatism and proud tradition. The ever-present juxtaposition of old and new is just one of its appealing qualities.

After check-in at the superior, [River View Hotel](#), we will visit a [traditional handmade paper factory](#), and [Bhutan Post](#). Well known among the philatelists, Bhutan's colorful stamps are among the country's delightful and most sought-after exports. We then head to the [Memorial Choeten](#), a stupa honoring the memory of the 3rd king, his late majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck who is known as the "Father of Modern Bhutan". The modern developments began during his reign. Next stop is the beautiful [Changangkha Lhakhang](#), the focus of daily worship for locals. After a short drive we will reach [Sangaygang](#), the "[Lover's Point](#)", where young couples come to enjoy the solidarity and the birds' eye view of the spectacular [Thimphu valley](#). Last stop is the [Dubthob Gompa Nunnery](#) built by Dupthob Thangthong Gyalpo, also known as the "Iron Bridge builder". There are over 70 practicing nuns living here today. Before dinner, we will have time to also visit the [Government Handicraft Emporium](#) and pass several [archery grounds](#). Archery is the national sport of Bhutan, and most men grow up learning it. We might even [observe a match in action](#) if we are lucky. B/L/D



Day06 Thimphu

We visit the [Textile Museum](#) and the [Folk Heritage Museum](#) in the morning, both sponsored by her majesty the Queen. Here we can obtain the interesting insight into rural Bhutanese life, and traditional arts and crafts. We then tour the [National Library](#), a tall stately building in the traditional Bhutanese style. It houses repository of precious historical and religious manuscripts written in gold. Next stop is the [Zorig Chusum Institute](#), a painting school where the traditional style of [Thangka painting](#) is passed on to the next generation. We will also enjoy a close look at [Textile Weaving](#), and [Wood Carving](#) - art forms that are cherished and used by the Bhutanese for thousands of years. The highlight of the day will be an [exclusive visit to the Tango Monastery](#), a prominent college for learning higher Buddhist Philosophy. It was founded in the 12th century by Lama



Gyalwa Lhanampa. After about an hour of



After about an hour of moderate hiking on a trail that takes us through the gradual ascends, we reach the monastery, now home to over 200 practicing monks. We will have time to enjoy the beautiful paintings that almost adorned every surface of the temple. Through the special arrangement of *Orient Odyssey's* "[People to People Contact](#)" program, we [enjoy tea](#) and [interaction with senior monks and abbots](#), and gain authentic insight into their daily life. Please feel free to ask any questions. B/L/D

Day07 Thimphu – Punakha

This morning we enjoy a drive to [central Bhutan](#), heading east over the [Dochu La](#) (la means "pass") at 10,171 feet, where we will stop for tea and enjoy [magnificent views](#) of surrounding 200 miles of formidable [Himalayan summits](#). Nearby is a massive [Choeten](#) (Buddhist pagoda) surrounded by 108 smaller ones. Thousands of [prayer flags](#) rustle in the wind. The vegetation changes dramatically as we descend from the pass, from oak, maple and blue pine to a moist mountain forest of rhododendron, alder, cypress, hemlock and fir.

There is also a large growth of daphne, a bush that is harvested for making traditional paper. After a few



hours, we reach the lush green fields of [Punakha](#). Check-in at the superior, family run, [Hotel Y.T.](#). We begin today's sightseeing with an excursion to [Chimi Lhakhang](#), a Buddhist temple dedicated to one of Bhutan's favorite saints, the "divine mad man" Lama Drukpa Kinley (1455 – 1529). He traveled throughout Bhutan and Tibet using songs, humour and outrageous behavior to dramatize his teachings to the common man. His outrageous, often obscene, actions and sexual antics were a deliberate method of provoking people to discard their preconceptions. We stroll



in a leisurely, comfortable pace through the beautiful [rice fields of Yuwakha village](#). The kingdom's old capital of Punakha is the heart and soul of Bhutanese culture.

Mountain views are crystal clear, and the landscape is bursting with color: bright yellow mustard alternates with winter wheat and rice on the steeply terraced fields, the ubiquitous red chilies (a staple of Bhutanese cuisine) dry on rooftops, and a glorious array of wildflowers carpets the forest covered ridges. This evening, through special arrangement with *Orient Odyssey's* "People to People Contact" program, we will have an opportunity to [visit a local farmhouse](#), a home of a Rinpoche, meaning "Living Buddha" or "Holy Man". [Enjoy yak butter tea](#), snacks and an opportunity to [interact with the family members](#). We will obtain a closer and [in-depth look at the Kingdom's unique culture](#), which dictates simple hospitality extended to all guests, even perfect strangers. B/L/D

Day08 Wangdue – the Grand Celebration of the Wangdue Tshechu (Festival)

Today is the highlight of our journey! We join [the grand celebration of Wangdue Tshechu](#) at the massive [Wangduephodrang Dzong](#). It is at



these festivals that the vibrant culture kicks up its heels. We will see the joyous expressions at ceremonies and the mysterious mask

dance. We hear the beating of the drums, and observe dancers with colorful costumes and masks performing mysterious rituals.



This afternoon we will hike through the rice fields to [Khamsum Yuelay Namgyal Choeten](#),



where we enjoy an stunning view of the [Punakha valley](#). On route back to the hotel, we stop at the

impressive [Punakha Dzong](#), sits in a fertile, warm and beautiful valley at the junction of the Mo Chhu (Mother river) and Pho Chhu (Father river). Punakha



served as Bhutan's capital for over 300 years and the first king was crowned here in 1907. It was built by Shabdrung

Ngawang Namgyal in 1637 and is now the [winter home of the Central Monk Body](#). We will

admire the [fine Bhutanese architecture](#), and the [elaborately painted gold, red and black carved woods](#) that add to the artistic lightness of touch. The massive wood building was constructed completely by hand and without a single nail! B/L/D

Day09 Wangdue – Weekend Market - Paro

The scenic drive takes us through lovely valleys, passing villages, towns and farm houses. We will cross Dochu La for a second chance to take in the spectacular Himalaya. Early afternoon we arrive in Thimphu for lunch. Today is Sunday. *Orient Odyssey* had carefully planned the tour logistics so we are able to visit a colorful [weekend market](#), held on both banks of the Wang Chhu, just north of [Changlimithang stadium](#). Every week vendors from throughout the region come here. Village people jostle with well-heeled Thimphu residents for the best and cheapest vegetables and foodstuffs.



There is also a collection of stalls housing clothing, fabric and handicrafts including religious objects, and remarkable hats from various minority groups. Enjoy [a wonderful opportunity to mingle with the Bhutanese](#). After a [stroll on the street of Thimphu](#) we continue our journey and arrive in Paro and check-in at the *Hotel Gangtey Palace*. Tonight we enjoy a [farewell dinner](#) to celebrate our majestic Bhutan Odyssey. B/L/D

Day10 Paro – Bangkok

After breakfast, our guide will assist our check-in for *Druk Air* flight KB124, departing at 11:40 a.m., arriving in Bangkok at 5:10 p.m.. We will be met and transferred to the 4 star deluxe



Century Park Hotel. Enjoy a restful evening. Get ready for tomorrow's long flight home. B

Day11 Bangkok – USA

Savor the memory of our **Bhutan journey** that explores the sacred festivals. The guide will accompany us to the airport and assist check-in for our homebound flight. We arrive in USA on the same day. B/F

***Optional Extension**

Our programs are flexible! You can extend your stay in Bangkok, or enjoy an excursion to the "golden triangle" in Northern Thailand to explore ethnic tribes. You can also go to Phuket or island of Samui to relax on the white sandy beach, or, connect this package with an expedition to Burma or India..... Please contact us for more information.

***International Flights**

Orient Odyssey features *Eva Air, Japan Airlines, China Airlines, Asiana Airlines* and / or *Northwest Airlines / Delta Airlines* as the international carrier for this package. Based on your departure cities and tour logistics, Orient Odyssey reserves the right to secure other major international carrier for your journey. Flight arrangements will be finalized at least 60 days before departure.

Sample international flight schedules are as follows. Schedules are subject to change.

From Los Angeles (LAX):

BR011	Los Angeles – Taipei	1515 / 2205
BR061	Taipei – Bangkok	2245 / 0135
BR212	Bangkok – Taipei	1235 / 1700
BR012	Taipei – Los Angeles	1820 / 1450

From San Francisco (SFO):

BR017	San Francisco – Taipei	0005 / 0615
BR067	Taipei – Bangkok	0915 / 1150
BR212	Bangkok – Taipei	1235 / 1700
BR018	Taipei – San Francisco	1940 / 1440

From New York (JFK):

JL007	New York – Tokyo	1000 / 1410
JL703	Tokyo – Bangkok	1600 / 2105
JL704	Bangkok – Tokyo	2330 / 0715
JL006	Tokyo – New York	1130 / 1015

***Note**

Fuel surcharges and taxes are subject to change. Due to lowered fuel cost, actual fuel surcharge might be less than quoted. Updated and accurate amount will be advised before the final payment due date. Tour cost is quoted based on current foreign exchange rate as of Dec 1, 2008. Price is guaranteed once full payment is received.

Kindly refer to General Terms & Conditions

For inquiry, please feel free to call

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